



DHAKA: No handshakes Mahmudullah does the elbow shake with a team-mate during Premier Division Cricket League.

PCB enforces WHO SOPs against COVID 19 at Gaddafi

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has implemented World Health Organization instructions to protect players, people and staff against COVID 19 (coronavirus) during the Lahore Qalandars and Multan Sultans match at the Gaddafi stadium. The precautionary measures are being observed across the globe after the coronavirus was declared a pandemic by the WHO. Playing HBL Pakistan Super League 2020 matches under closed gates was part of the precautionary measures. The PCB had allowed foreign players the option to leave the country of their own accord. The last league match at the Gaddafi stadium was held under closed gates as no spectators were allowed to enter the stadium after the same was already being implemented in Karachi matches while security has been further beefed up. The PCB staffers at the Gaddafi stadium have been exempted from bio-metric attendance while the officials with symptoms of flu, cough and fever were asked to stay at home. Health Desks have been set up outside the offices and media center where hand sanitizers have been placed and all are required to disinfect their hands before entering the offices or the media center. Placards bearing special instructions have been displayed at the entrances in which players, broadcasters and stadium staffs besides journalists have been asked not to shake hands, sit at a distance from each other and wash hands often. The staff also checked temperature of the journalists in the media center during the match at the Gaddafi stadium. Chris Lynn, after the post-match press conference at the Gaddafi stadium, did not take selfies with the media-men and maintained a safe distance during interviews. —APP



Pakistan-Bangladesh series postponed due to coronavirus

LAHORE: The Pakistan and Bangladesh cricket boards have decided to postpone the upcoming one-day international and Test in Karachi for a later date, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said in a statement on Monday.



The two boards will now work together to identify a future opportunity to complete the ICC World Test Championship commitment. The first Test of the series was played in Rawalpindi from 7-10 February, which Pakistan won by an innings and 44 runs. The Bangladesh men's national cricket team was due to arrive in Karachi on March 29 to play an ODI on April 1 and the second ICC World Test Championship Test from April 5-9. Earlier, the PCB had accepted the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) request to reschedule a one-off ODI to allow its team more time to prepare for the second Test between the two sides. The Pakistan Cricket Board has also indefinitely postponed the Pakistan Cup one-day tournament, which was scheduled to start from March 25. —APP

Australia's A-League to play on with fan bans

MELBOURNE: Australia's top flight A-League soccer competition has banned fans from matches for the rest of the season as part of efforts to contain the spread of coronavirus, Football Federation Australia (FFA) said on Monday. Local media had speculated that the league would be suspended due to government travel curbs that will force two teams, Wellington Phoenix and Melbourne Victory, to be quarantined for 14 days upon re-entering Australia after their match in New Zealand. But FFA chief James Johnson said the teams' matches would be rescheduled after their quarantine period and New Zealand-based Wellington had agreed to remain in Australia to allow the season to continue. "The decision to play the remainder of the Hyundai A-League 2019/20 season, and the Westfield W-League 2020 Grand Final behind closed doors was made in consultation with the clubs and in accordance with the latest Federal Government advice," Johnson said in a statement. There are six rounds left in the A-League regular season before the playoffs. —Agencies

A statistical look at third week of HBL PSL 2020

LAHORE: The action-packed group-stage of the HBL Pakistan Super League 2020 concluded on Sunday and such has been the intensity of the competition that it took all 30 games for the semi-final line-up to be decided. Over the course of the last week, players and teams tumbled many individual records as fans continued to enjoy riveting contests. Statistician Mazher Arshad here on Monday recaps the third week of the HBL PSL 2020.

Chris Lynn's best: Chris Lynn took Lahore Qalandars to the HBL PSL 2020 semi-finals with his T20 career-best performance. The Australian batsman smashed 113 not out off 55 balls, his highest score in the format, in a must-win game against Multan Sultans at the Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday. This was also his only second century in T20 cricket. This was the first-ever century by a Lahore Qalandars' batsman in the history of HBL PSL and eighth overall. Previously, highest score by a Qalandars' batsman was registered by Ben Dunk when he thundered his way to 99 not out against Karachi Kings at the Gaddafi Stadium in the ongoing edition. Lynn reached 50 off 22 balls which is the joint-fastest for Qalandars along with Umar Akmal's 22-ball 50 against Quetta Gladiators in Dubai in 2016.

Most sixes in an innings Lahore Qalandars batsman Ben Dunk broke his own record of most sixes in an innings in HBL PSL from the previous week. Dunk had hit 10 sixes against Quetta Gladiators in Lahore. He bettered it by hitting 12 sixes this time against Karachi Kings and helped his team to chase 188. The Australian batsman finished at 99 not out becoming the first batsman in T20 history to have two scores of 99 as he had registered a similar score for NMB Giants in the Mzansi Super League last year.

Lahore's chasing record: Lahore Qalandars are the first team in HBL PSL to successfully chase 180-plus targets on four occasions. Three of those instances have come in this year's edition as they scaled 188 against Karachi Kings and

Peshawar Zalmi and 187 against Multan Sultans (all three at the Gaddafi Stadium). Last year, they chased 201 against Sultans in Sharjah. Quetta Gladiators have chased 180-plus targets thrice, Karachi Kings have done it twice and Islamabad United have done it once. Peshawar Zalmi and Multan Sultans are the two teams who are yet to achieve the feat.

New finalist: As the HBL PSL 2020 semi-finals will be played between Multan Sultans and Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi Kings and Lahore Qalandars, there will be at least one new finalist this year. Sultans, Kings and Qalandars have never featured in a final. In the last four editions, only three teams played the HBL PSL finals. Zalmi and Quetta Gladiators have featured in three finals, while Islamabad United have played in two.



It is also first time in the HBL PSL that Gladiators and United have failed to go beyond the group-stage.

Six to start the innings: Karachi Kings' opener Sharjeel Khan achieved a unique feat in HBL PSL when he hit six off the first ball of the innings against Islamabad United at National Stadium Karachi. No batsman before Sharjeel had kicked off the innings with a six. He hit one more six and two fours in that over taking the overall tally to 20 runs.

It was first time in PSL that Kings scored 20 runs in the first over of an innings.

10-wicket win: Sharjeel Khan also had an unbeaten opening partnership of 151 runs with Babar Azam in

Karachi Kings' home match against Lahore Qalandars, making it the only second instance in HBL PSL where a team won by 10 wickets. Previously, Peshawar Zalmi was the only team to win by 10 wickets, also against Qalandars, at Sharjah in 2018. The unbeaten 151-run partnership between Sharjeel and Babar was the fourth highest for any wicket in HBL PSL.

Youngest to score 50 in HBL PSL: At 19 years and 160 days, Peshawar Zalmi's emerging player Haider Ali became the youngest to score a half-century in the tournament when he smashed 69 off 43 balls against Lahore Qalandars at the Gaddafi Stadium. Haider is the first teenager to register half-century in HBL PSL.

The previous record belonged to Islamabad United's Husain Talat, who was 20 years and 74 days old, when he hit 56 off 39 against Quetta Gladiators in Dubai in 2017.

Best Power-play performance: Banking on Samit Patel's career-best T20 figures of four for five, Lahore Qalandars had the best Power-play outing as a bowling unit when they reduced Quetta Gladiators to 21 for six in six overs in Lahore. Only once before had a team (Peshawar Zalmi against Qalandars in Dubai in 2017) had taken six wickets in the Powerplay but that came at cost of 45 runs.

350 wickets milestone: Sohail Tanvir's match-winning spell of three wickets for Multan Sultans against Peshawar Zalmi made him the first Pakistani and only sixth in the world to 350 wickets in T20 cricket. Among pacers, Tanvir (351 wickets) is now only behind Lasith Malinga (390) and Dwayne Bravo (497) whereas Shakib Al Hasan (354), Imran Tahir (365) and Sunil Narine (379) are the three spinners who have more wickets than him. Another feature of Tanvir's bowling in this year's HBL PSL has been his economy rate. Of players who have bowled at least 20 overs in the tournament, he is the only bowler with an economy rate below 7.00 with 6.80. —APP

Football: Manchester United's Fernandes named league's player of the month after stellar debut

MANCHESTER: Manchester United's January recruit Bruno Fernandes beat the likes of Marcos Alonso and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang to be named the Premier League's player of the month for February after an exceptional first month with Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side. Portuguese midfielder Fernandes joined United for an initial fee of 55 million euros (US\$61.2 million) and he has thrived as a playmaker in the middle of the park, winning over the fans to also be named the club's player of the month. The 25-year-old has been pulling strings in



United's attack to bag two goals - against Watford and Everton - and three assists in the league since his debut last month, helping the club beat top four opponents Chelsea and Manchester City. "Since I was a kid it was a dream to play for Man United, and to be there at Old Trafford is the biggest dream of my career," Fernandes said. "When you come to a new club you always want to score, and the first goal is special. It doesn't matter how the goal is scored, but important is the goal's worth. I'm happy with my start but from now I need to give more to be better." —Reuters

Golf: Woods, Park outside Olympic qualifying as tours halt



LONDON: No changes are planned to the Olympic golf qualifying system, the International Golf Federation (IGF) which runs the event said after the sport shut down due to the coronavirus. This could deal a hammer blow to the chances of Tiger Woods qualifying for Tokyo 2020, and for Park In-bee's hopes of being eligible to defend her title from Rio 2016.

Based on the current rankings, Woods (United States) and Park (South Korea) would not qualify for their respective teams. However, scrambling the equation is that even if the Olympics go ahead, many golfers could opt out, much as they did from Rio 2016 due to concerns over the zika virus.

Eligibility for the Tokyo 2020 men's and women's events will be determined by world ranking points compiled over almost two years from July 1, 2018 until June 22 (men) and June 29 (women) this year. The list essentially mirrors the world rankings in determining the 60-player fields, with a maximum of two players from any single country (four if inside the top 15). But the halting of the professional tour schedules for an undetermined time frame will have winners and losers, because there will be little week-to-week flux in the rankings. Those on the outside looking in will for the most part continue looking in, and vice-versa.

"This has proven to be a fair and equitable

system," the IGF said of the qualifying system in an email to Reuters. "The IGF is monitoring the challenges faced by our athletes to participate in events, which continues to change daily, and we currently believe that the system still remains fair to all athletes who are vying for qualification to the Tokyo2020 Olympic Games."

In other words, bad luck if you're outside the qualifying cut line and hoping to play your way in. Though Park is 11th on the overall women's world list, she is only the fifth-ranked Korean behind Ko Jin-young, Park Sung-hyun, Kim Sei-young and Lee Jeong-eun. The LPGA Tour has cancelled three tournaments in Asia, and postponed three U.S. tournaments that were scheduled over the next month. Even if rescheduled, it is unlikely these American tournaments will be played before the Olympic cut-off.

LAST OLYMPIC CHANCE: An even bigger question from a global marketing aspect is what the PGA Tour shutdown, at least through next month's Masters, means to Woods's hopes. He is sixth on the American list, behind Brooks Koepka, Justin Thomas, Patrick Cantlay, Webb Simpson and Patrick Reed. Dustin Johnson has ruled himself out, citing a busy schedule, though he could be joined by others wanting to keep their travel to a minimum unless the coronavirus abates quickly. —Reuters

At 80, Russian great grandmother fired up by passion for ice hockey

BEREZNIK, Russia: When 80-year-old Valentina Fyodorova spotted a group of children skating across a fresh sheet of ice, she was determined to give it a try herself.

The former school principal was keen on keeping fit but had never shot a puck, let alone laced up a pair of skates. She could have never dreamed that she would become the captain of a senior women's hockey team in her village in northwestern Russia. "It was a little scary at first, but when we started to play we forgot everything," said Fyodorova, who learned how to skate at 79. "We forgot our fear and that we are old."

Fyodorova is the captain and oldest member of "Ustyanochka", a team composed mostly of women in their fifties and sixties who train three times a week in the gym and on the ice. Fyodorova, who has three great

grandchildren, said that although she is much slower and less skilful than many younger players, she enjoys the camaraderie with her team mates.

"She leads by example. By skating and playing hockey, she shows that even at that age, you can do anything," said Maria Onolbayeva, a former Russian national team player and Olympian who coaches Fyodorova's team. On her red jersey, Fyodorova proudly wears number 80. It is not a homage to one of Russia's hockey greats, but a tribute to her age. All her team mates, in fact, wear their age on their backs. "We are old people. We aren't embarrassed to show our age," she chuckled. "Let everybody see it." Fyodorova had initially been scared to fall and break a bone, but gradually felt stronger and more confident on her skates the longer she spent on the ice. —Reuters

