

'FINISHERS' FACE OFF AGAINST 'BOMB SQUAD' IN WC FINAL

Tokyo: England coach Eddie Jones has long asserted that 21st century rugby is a 23-man game and the battle between his eight "finishers" and South Africa's "Bomb Squad" bench could have a big influence on Saturday's Rugby World Cup final. Only injury substitutions were initially allowed in rugby but tactical replacements were gradually introduced with now eight players available off the bench because of the necessity of covering front row injuries.

Top coaches now build the use of those replacements into their game plans, allowing them to bring off fatigued or injured starters as well as introduce key impact players for strategic reasons.

After causing a ripple of surprise by naming George Ford on the bench for the quarterfinal against Australia, Jones cheekily promised to e-mail some English journalists to explain how the game had changed over the last 30 years. Lock George Krus, who will be one of the eight England replacements at Yokohama International Stadium on Saturday, said Jones' position was not just a sop to make players not selected for the starting XV feel a bit better about their role.

"We have a massive role as finishers. We are confident in our bench, in our finishers.

South Africa's split of six forwards and only two backs on the bench enables the Springboks to almost completely overhaul their pack for the last half an hour of the game. They have forged a specific identity as the Bomb Squad because, as coach Rassie Erasmus explained, "they either come in and fix it when it is not going well on the park or it is a false alarm and maybe they don't even get onto the park. We named it the Bomb Squad last year," captain Siya Kolisi said on Friday.

"They have their own little ways to get each other up and when they come on, the difference that they make.

"They've been huge for us this year, as you've seen, we know we can give everything on the field because the next guy coming is only going to lift it." AFP

SCRUM FOR ALL



England player Ben Youngs passes from the scrum during the semifinal against New Zealand

Remarkable rags to riches tale of Bok captain Kolisi

Cape Town: South Africa captain Siya Kolisi did not have a television at home the last time the Springboks played in the Rugby World Cup final but 12 years on leads his team out in Saturday's decider against England in a remarkable rags to riches story.

From growing up in a poverty-stricken township on the eastern coast of South Africa to the Yokohama International Stadium caps a remarkable journey for Kolisi, the first black man to captain the Springboks and now increasingly a new symbol for South African unity.

"For a young kid from Zwide township in Port Elizabeth to rise above circumstances and become Springbok captain and lead the way, he has just been inspirational to South Africans from all walks of life," teammate Tendai Mtawarira said in the build-up to Saturday's final in Japan.

Kolisi grew up in one of the few black areas where rugby is as popular as soccer, raised by his paternal grandmother, but did not pick up a rugby ball until he was seven. His talent was quickly recognised, though for Kolisi rugby was no more than a distraction from life's daily toil.

"It's tough to stay on the right path because sometimes hunger makes you do things that you never thought you would do," he explained before the kick-off of the World Cup last month.

But Kolisi's talent gave him an opportunity to get away from temptation as he won a bursary to Port Elizabeth's top boys school Grey High, but even then going onto be a Springbok and play in a World Cup was fur-



SIYA KOLISI

thest from his mind. "You don't dream about that where I am from," he said.

"He adapted well to the posh school but it was on the rugby field where he excelled. Siya was rewarded with a call-up to the South African Schools team and a contract to join Western Province," added his biographer Jeremy Daniel.

Kolisi was 16 when South Africa edged England in the 2007 final in Paris.

"I was watching it in a tavern, because I didn't have a TV at home."

Saturday's final marks a 50th cap for Kolisi, who made his debut for his country in 2013 and participated at the 2015 World Cup where South Africa finished third.

"I'm very happy that I have reached 50 - not a lot of Springboks have achieved that - but the most important thing is that I do my bit for the team and everything else will fall into place," he told a news conference in Tokyo on Friday.

"It would be huge to show our country that no matter where we come from, if we can bind to one plan, we can achieve our goals," Kolisi added. AFP

Hyderabad FC look to bounce back against Kerala Blasters



GAME ON: Hyderabad FC coach Phil Brown and Marcelinho address the media on Friday

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Hyderabad: With two successive away defeats, Hyderabad FC have their task cut out when they take on Kerala Blasters in their first home match of the season at the Gachibowli Stadium on Saturday.

The season-opener proved a disaster for Hyderabad - basically a team of erstwhile Pune FC players - as they lost 5-0 to ATK in Kolkata and were trounced 3-1 by Jamshedpur. The team showed positive signs in the first-half against Jamshedpur, creating goalscoring chances. Marcelinho scored the first goal for the new club, but two quick goals cost them dear against Jamshedpur.

Hyderabad FC head coach Phil Brown looked at the glass half-full. "We are in for the long haul. The players have been putting their bodies on the line," he said on Friday.

"Some of our players like Bobo and Rafa are on the stands. If you take the best players out of any team in the world, they will struggle to perform well. I think Robin Singh is doing a great job with Marcelinho playing alongside him. Over the two games, we did not get to the final third with equal quality and we are

working on that."

A lot then will depend on how ISL veteran Marcelinho and midfielder stalwart Marko Stankovic fare against the Blasters.

Bobo, Giles Barnes and Rafa apart, Hyderabad have also lost midfielder Nestor Gordillo due to suspension.

Meanwhile, Kerala Blasters go into the match on the back of a 1-0 loss to Mumbai City FC. Kerala fell to a goal by Amine Chermiti in the 82nd minute. Kerala's fortunes rest with star forward Ogbeche and midfielder Sergio Cidoncha.

Kerala Blasters head coach Eelco Schattorie hoped his team would make the most of the depleted Hyderabad side. "The last match against Mumbai City FC was a painful loss. We are not playing the football I want yet. Hyderabad FC are struggling with injuries. There is no psychological advantage over Hyderabad despite their losses. Both teams are hungry for three points," he said.

Kerala Blasters will be missing defender Sandesh Jhingan for the rest of the season due to injury, while midfielder Mario Arques is also out injured.

KNOW HYDERABAD FC

Founded: August 27, 2019

Owners: Vijay Madduri (IT entrepreneur, was CEO of Incesant Technologies) and Varun Tripuraneni (CEO of Kerala Blasters from 2017-2019, heading operations of Chennaiyin FC from 2015-2017)

Home: GMC Balyogi Stadium, Gachibowli

Head coach: Phil Brown

Asst coach: Mehrajuddin Wadoo

Captain: Kamaljit Singh

Foreign players: Matthew Killgallon (England), Rafa Lopez Gomez (Spain), Nestor Gordillo (Spain), Marko Stankovic (Austria), Marcelinho (Brazil), Bobo (Brazil), Giles Barnes (Jamaica)

Predicted formation: 3-4-3

Tactical approach: Possession-based

The 25-man squad (with jersey numbers):

Goalkeepers: Kamaljit Singh (1, capt), Anuj Kumar (21), Laxmikant Kattimani (33). Defenders: Sahil Panwar (3), Rafael Lopez Gomez (4), Matthew Killgallon (6), Gurtej Singh (13), Nikhil Poorya (27), Mohammad Yasir (32), Tarif Akhand (34), Ashish Rai (44). Midfielders: Adil Ahmed Khan (5), Sahil Tavora (8), Deependra Negi (12), Marko Stankovic (15), Shankar Sampingiraj (16), Rohit Kumar (19), Gani Nigam (22), Nestor Gordillo (14). Forwards: Giles Barnes (7), Devision Rogerio Da Silva/ Bobo (9), Marcelo Leite Pereira/ Marcelinho (10), Abhishek Halder (11), Laldanmawia Raite (17), Robin Singh (23)

HOME MATCHES: Nov 2: vs Kerala Blasters. Nov 6: NorthEast United FC. Nov 29: vs Bengaluru FC. Dec 8: vs FC Goa. Dec 21: vs ATK. Jan 10, 2020: Chennaiyin FC. Jan 15: vs Odisha FC. Jan 24: vs Mumbai City. Feb 12: vs Jamshedpur.

PLAYERS TO WATCH

All eyes will be on seasoned players such as Marcelinho, Stankovic, Adil and new signing Bobo to spur Hyd FC in their debut season.

KAMALJIT SINGH:

An able shot-stopper and has good leadership skills. The 23-year-old Indian goalkeeper is the captain of the team.



ADIL KHAN: An experienced player. Can play as defender or defensive midfielder. The 31-year-old joined FC Pune City in 2017 and made 37 appearances for them during 2017-2019.



MARCELO LEITE PEREIRA: The 32-year-old Brazilian can play as right-winger and attacking midfielder. He scored 24 goals in 46 matches in ISL.



MARKO STANKOVIC: The 33-year-old Austrian midfielder joined FC Pune City on a free transfer, and made 15 appearances across the season, working with current Hyderabad FC manager Phil Brown.



NESTOR GORDILLO: The 30-year-old Spanish midfielder had played a key role in Chennai City FC's I-League triumph in 2018. He has been known for his ball-playing skills, strong vision.



DEVISION ROGERIO SILVA OR BOBO: The 34-year-old Brazilian has been described as a goal machine and has earned praise for his ability to contribute in the build-up play and deliver assists.

McIlroy threatens in Shanghai golf

Shanghai: World No.2 Rory McIlroy was all smiles after capping a roller-coaster round with an eagle on Friday to move within a stroke of the half-way lead at the WGC-HSBC Champions in Shanghai on Friday.

Coming off his strongest season in years, McIlroy matched his opening-round five-under-par 67 to get to -10 in east Asia's premiere golf event, where he hopes to gain ground on the world's top-ranked golfer, Brooks Koepka. The Northern Irishman goes into the weekend a stroke behind leader Matthew Fitzpatrick of England, who jumped into the lead with a late blitz of sweet putting at Sheshan International Club.

McIlroy started hot, with four straight birdies on the front nine, but then struggled to hold things steady through several tense holes

in the middle of his round.

Still, he was gunning for the lead down the stretch before badly pulling his tee shot on the par-4 16th, losing it deep in the forest. He ended up dropping a shot.

But two holes later McIlroy lashed a perfect drive down the fairway of the par-five 18th followed by a 218-yard iron that settled a couple feet from the pin.

Lahiri makes a good start:

Southampton (Bermuda): Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri got off to a flying start to a five-under 66 in the first round of the PGA Tour's inaugural Bermuda Championship here. Lahiri, who has had a modest start to the new season, is now lying tied-seventh while his senior colleague Arjun Atwal (69) was T-23rd and Daniel Chopra (74) was at 102nd spot. AGENCIES

'Owners want more races in the US'

The Circuit of the Americas holds happy memories for Max Verstappen, who surged from 18th on the grid to a podium finish in 2018. Now, almost exactly 12 months on, the Belgium-born star is back in Austin looking forward to returning to the track for a weekend which will also bring up the 100th Grand Prix for the 22-year-old. Excerpts....

This weekend will bring up your 100th grand prix, what does that stand mean to you? Yeah it was a good beginning and it happened all very quickly. To realise and see that you are about to do your 100th grand prix at 22 years old, I would've never expected that, but I guess it's a good thing. Those five years have gone very quickly.

What are your expectations this time around? I think we can again have a good race. Last year, coming from the back and then finishing on the podium was a very good result. Do you think it is important for the sport to get more exposure in the US? In general, I think it's good for the sport. I also think the owners want more races in the US, so I think what we're doing at the moment is trying to make the sport more popular. PMG



WHAT THEY SAID

I'm happy that ISL has come to Hyderabad. It's not easy to revive the game overnight, but ISL will definitely help revive football culture here. Players can take inspiration from watching quality football. It can be a good platform for everyone involved with the game to take the game forward.

-Victor Amalraj | FORMER INDIA CAPTAIN

It's good that Hyderabad is back on Indian football map. I hope something good will happen for football in the city. I have been with Telangana football team for the last two years. I want professional clubs like Hyderabad FC in ISL and Fateh Hyderabad in second division to give chance to local players as they are not really that bad as our results have shown.

-Nawab Shabbir Ali | FORMER INDIA PLAYER AND DHYAN CHAND AWARDEE

It's good that professional football has come to city. For youngsters, it's an opportunity to learn from watching top players in action as some foreign players will also be playing in the league. My advice to youngsters is to play more and practice hard. I also request all the parents to encourage their children to play the game.

-G Palguna | TFA SECRETARY

ISL helped improve football infrastructure

Bhaichung Bhutia

The sea of yellow in Kochi on the opening day of the Hero Indian Super League was a treat for the eyes. Look right or left, all you could see was yellow. It was packed and loud - the perfect platform - all for the home team to win, and they seized it.

Such an environment always brings in an unmistakable adrenalin rush for the players. The beauty of football stays and one doesn't need to stop for rain. But the untimely,

torrential rain on an opening day played a bit of spoilsport. After all, in all your practice sessions, build-up, and analysis, one never takes untimely rain into account.

The rain, however, did not confine itself solely to Kochi,

and there was quite a down-pour in many other centers in the first few days.

On the field, nevertheless, it was all green and no slush. Excellent drainage facilities nowadays prevent puddles, separating Indian grounds

from what they were some 10 years back. No doubt, the improvement of infrastructure has been one of the biggest contributions of the league.

However, it's still early days. There have been glimpses of quality on display, and it will take further directional shape as we move ahead. At the same time, there have been situations where individual mistakes have cost their team dear: So far, NEUFC, ATK, FC Goa, Bengaluru FC, and Jamshedpur FC have looked good.

GAMEPLAN

To placate India, UK explores separate CW shooting event

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New Dehi: To assuage India's concern over non-inclusion of shooting at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, Britain has asked the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) and British Shooting to consider hosting a separate event for the sport in 2022.

India has been protesting the exclusion of shooting from the 2022 CWG and has even threatened to boycott the Games over the issue. In a bid to placate the Indian sports administrators, British sports minister Nigel Adams, has been in contact with "both the Commonwealth Games Federation and British Shooting to see if some common ground could be found on the matter."

Replying to a Sept 3 letter by India's sports minister Kiren Rijiju to his British counterpart on concerns over the exclusion of shooting at Birmingham, British secretary for digital, culture, media and sports, Nicky Morgan, wrote: "While the decision to include shooting in CWG ultimately rests with the Birmingham 2022 Organising Committee and the CGF the government understands the strength of feeling in the matter."

Morgan's correspondence to Rijiju, a

copy of which is with TOI, added that Adams "has asked that CGF and British Shooting to consider the options to host a separate Commonwealth shooting event in the UK in 2022". Morgan further said: "I hope this could provide a means for a shooting event to be held outside of the Commonwealth Games, which will allow Indian shooters to compete in the UK in 2022."

The UK sports secretary also said that since shooting was not a core sports under the CGF constitution, and was not included in the original bid that was accepted by CGF in 2017, a comprehensive review was carried out by the Birmingham Games organisers looking at possibility of adding additional sports following interests and support from different quarters.

"The review was fair and transparent and conducted as an open tender review process" she wrote. "Key criteria were set, written submission were made to the assessment panel, which consisted of representatives from Birmingham 2022 OC, DCMS, Birmingham City Council and Commonwealth Games England by representatives of each sports. The panel offered the shooting community to explore options for a partial or wholly Birmingham-based option, delivering some disciplines outside of Bisley."

Ministry takes SGFI to task

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New Delhi: The sports ministry has show-caused the School Games Federation of India (SGFI), headed by double Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar, for gross mismanagement and negligence during the Pacific School Games in Adelaide, Australia in December 2017, an unannounced event. TOI has also learnt the ministry is contemplating revoking the recognition of the SGFI for its failure to run the Agra-based institution in a professional manner and the same has been communicated to its top bosses. "An order in this direction will be passed soon," a source informed.

Coming down heavily on the SGFI, the ministry has rapped the federation for not providing complete information related to the event when a ministerial-level inquiry is still underway into the matter. A 187-member Indian contingent had participated in the event, which was neither recognised by ISSF nor sanctioned by the sports ministry

Djokovic crushes Tsitsipas to set up Dimitrov semifinal

Paris: Novak Djokovic produced a magnificent performance to thrash seventh seed Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-1, 6-2 on Friday and set up a Paris Masters semi-final against Grigor Dimitrov. The 32-year-old, battling Rafael Nadal for the year-end world No. 1 spot, dispatched Greek star Tsitsipas in only 58 minutes.

The 16-time Grand Slam champion went into the match with a 2-1 losing record against Tsitsipas, but put the youngster in his place with a commanding victory.

"It was a really good match for me today," said Djokovic. "All week and all year here, it's great to play in Paris."

Djokovic will be usurped by Nadal at the top of the rankings next week, but can ensure the fight to be the best player at the end of the year reaches the ATP Tour Finals in London by winning a record-extending fifth title at Bercy. Djokovic holds an 8-1 win-



Rafael Nadal reacts after defeating Stan Wawrinka 6-4, 6-4 on Thursday

ning head-to-head record against Dimitrov, who saw off unseeded Chilean Cristian Garin 6-2, 7-5 earlier in the day.

Pliskova, Svitolina in semis

Shenzhen: Karolina Pliskova overcame a mid-match stutter to book a semi-final showdown with world No.1 Ashleigh Barty after a three-set vic-

tory over Simona Halep at the WTA Finals on Friday.

The world No. 2 won 6-0, 2-6, 6-4 to secure the Purple Group's second spot. Defending champion Elina Svitolina will play Belinda Bencic in the other semi after she capped off an unbeaten record robin campaign with a 7-5, 7-6 (12/10) win over Sofia Kenin. AFP

Manvir rescues point for Goa

Guwahati: FC Goa came up with yet another injury-time equaliser to salvage a point against NorthEast United FC in a 2-2 draw in an Indian Super League match on Friday.

Hugo Boumous (31st minute) put Goa ahead in the first-half before NorthEast United came up with two second-half strikes from Asamoah Gyan (54th) and Redeem Tlang (74th). But Manvir Singh bagged a late equaliser for Goa. PTI

Leonard shines in Clippers' win

Los Angeles: Kawhi Leonard delivered 38 points, Montrezl Harrell chipped in 24 and the Los Angeles Clippers defeated San Antonio 103-97 on Thursday to knock the Spurs off their undefeated perch. Leonard also grabbed 12 rebounds for his first double-double this season. Results: Miami 106, Atlanta 97, New Orleans 122, Denver 107, LA CLIPPERS 103, San Antonio 97. AFP