

## Short Takes

**Women boxers to participate in Ahmed Comert meet**

**New Delhi, Sep 12 :** India's women pugilists will begin their preparation for the AIBA World Youth Boxing Championship to be held in Guwahati later this year by taking part in the Ahmed Comert International Boxing Championship this week.

A 10-member squad took off for Istanbul in the early hours of Monday in the hope of getting valuable match practice against some of the best boxers in the world.

Soniya and Jyoti (48 kilogram), Deepa and Parveen (54kg), Shashi Chopra (57kg), Ankushita Boro (60kg), Lalita (64kg), Tilotima Chanu (60 kg), Manisha (64 kg) and Niharika Gonella (75 kg) will participate in the week-long tournament which began on Monday.

The Ahmed Comert championship is an invitational event organised by the Turkish Boxing Federation every year which attracts all the top boxing nations.

"We have been training very hard for the last three months and the boxers are all set for the task at hand. Our aim is to clinch at least six to seven medals," Bergemesco Raffael, the Italian coach of the team, said.

"We have brought in some major changes and the boxers are using new tactics and styles. Everyone is performing better now. Although we will be looking more at gaining experience in this championship, we would still like to not lose sight of the medals either," the optimistic Italian added.

**Ronaldo back as Madrid look to ease striker worries in Champions League**

**Madrid, Sep 12 :** Spanish football giants Real Madrid will look to get back to winning ways in front of their fans when they open their defence of the Champions League with a home game against Apol Nicosia on Wednesday.

Zinedine Zidane's men go into the game after two draws in the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium which have provoked fears that despite having signed promising young talent over the summer, the departure of Alvaro Morata and Mariano Diaz has left them short of a striker, reports Xinhua news agency.

Those worries got worse on Saturday when Karim Benzema limped out of the 1-1 draw against Levante with a knee injury that will keep him out of action for around six months.

The return of Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo should go a long way in easing those worries as he is available for the first time since his sending off in the Spanish Supercup.

Ronaldo still has another of the five-game ban he was given for pushing the referee to serve at the weekend, but his return in Europe should give Madrid both firepower and a confidence boost.

Rafael Varenne is still struggling with a muscle injury, but Marcelo is available before he too starts a ban for the red card he saw for kicking out at a rival in the Levante game, while Luka Modric and Keylor Navas are also back after being rested as part of Zidane's squad rotation policy at the weekend. Apol are the 'Cinderellas' of the group, but the Cypriot side has a wealth of European experience and have reached the quarter-finals of the Champions League in the past. They showed they are no pushovers last season when they knocked Athletic Club Bilbao out of the last 32 of the Europa League. Madrid may have to be patient in order to break them down, although with Ronaldo no doubt keen to show what they have been missing without him, they should get their campaign for a third successive Champions League off to a smooth start. Elsewhere, Sevilla kick off their Champions League campaign with a trip to face Liverpool at Anfield on what promises to be an emotional night.

**Hosting FIFA U-17 World Cup will help sport grow in India: Saha**

**Kolkata, Sep 12 :** India Test wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha on Tuesday said he is excited to watch the Indian team perform at the FIFA U-17 World Cup, adding it should help not only football but sport to grow in the country.

"It is great that the U-17 World Cup is taking place in India and we will play in a World Cup," Saha told reporters here on the sidelines of an event.

"It will help not only football but sport as a whole in India. When I was coming here, I saw the Salt Lake Stadium and the roads and there is a sense of thrill around the tournament.

"I will watch the



matches on television. I hope the U-17 boys will

go on to play for the senior team," the 32-

year-old said.

Chess Grandmaster

Dibyendu Barua said the revamped Salt Lake

Stadium which was on Sunday handed over to FIFA by the local stadium authorities is a must-visit for everybody.

"It's looking lovely now. Everyone must go. The U-17 World Cup final will be in Kolkata and we are all looking forward to it and also the other nine matches."

Kolkata will host five Group F and one Group E fixture besides hosting a round-of-16, a quarterfinal and a third-place tie. The final will be held here on October 28.

The World Cup kick-starts on October 6. England play Chile in Kolkata's first game on October 8.

**Indian eves hold Belgium junior men for 2-2 draw**

**New Delhi, Sep 12 :** The Indian women's hockey team held on to a 2-2 draw against the Belgium junior mens team in a closely fought match of the ongoing Europe Tour here.

India, led by captain Rani Rampal, started the match on a positive note earning a penalty corner within 40 seconds of the start but could not convert it and again failed to convert another PC, two minutes later on Monday.

However, it was the young Belgium team who got three PCs in a span of six minutes, but goalkeeper Savita did well to keep the home side from taking an early lead. Forward Vandana Katariya created a beautiful chance for India inside the striking circle but could not score as the first quarter ended goalless.

The second quarter saw both sides taking a more direct approach as Belgium enjoyed more possession giving them the lead through Stan Branicki in the 19th minute. India soon earned a penalty corner but their effort was saved



by the junior World Cup finalists' goalkeeper which meant Belgium led by a goal at the end of second quarter.

The third quarter started on a brighter note for India as Nikki Pradhan levelled the score in the 36th minute. India dominated the third quarter as midfielder Neha Goyal came close to scoring but was denied by another brilliant save by Belgium's goalkeeper.

However, the home

team took the lead again in the 43rd minute as they rallied for a wonderful field goal scored by Matthieu de Laet.

The hosts started the fourth quarter swiftly as Indian goalkeeper Rajani Etimaru had to make a reflex save. The visitors fought back into the match in the dying stages as Vandana (54th minute) scored with just few minutes left to full time and equalise the scores at 2-2.

However, few minutes later Belgium managed to get another PC which was well saved by Rajani and cleared by defender Sunita Lakra. The home team forced Rajani into making yet another impressive save in the dying minutes as the Indian defence held on to a well-deserved 2-2 draw.

India will play Ladies Den Bosch in their third match of the Europe Tour on Thursday.

**Virat better limited over batsman than Smith, feels Clarke**

**New Delhi, Sep 12 :** Former Australia cricketer Michael Clarke said on Tuesday that India skipper Virat Kohli is a better batsman than Steve Smith in the Twenty20 International (T20I) and One-Day International (ODI) formats.

Smith and Kohli will lead their respective sides in a five-match ODI series, which will be followed by three T20Is scheduled from September 17 to October 13.

Kohli averages 55.76 in ODIs and 53.82 in T20Is, while Smith has recorded an average of 44.26 in ODIs and 21.55 in the shortest format of the game.

"Virat is a better limited over batsman, only just; Steve Smith is a better Test batsman, in my opinion. About their captaincy I can't say. Two young captains, two very good players," the 36-year-old told reporters during a panel discussion ahead of Australia's limited overs tour of India.

Australia registered a 1-1 draw in the recently-concluded Test series in Bangladesh. Clarke feels that despite the disappointing result -- which included their first-ever Test defeat to Bangladesh -- the current Australian team has plenty of potential to play better cricket.

"I think this Australian team has huge potential, I think it's now time to turn that potential into consistent performance. We have got match-winning players, there are

enough talented players to beat any team in the world," Clarke contended.

Former India batsman V.V.S. Laxman favoured Kohli as a better captain and said: "For me, Virat Kohli is a better captain; both of them are young and both of them are young in their captaincy career. But when I saw Steve Smith in the Test series, I felt he was not as pro-active as he should be."

"Some of the bowling changes were not that good and I feel Virat Kohli is learning with each and every match and (he) has also the advantage of playing with someone like Mahendra Singh Dhoni -- probably one of the most successful captains on the field," he added.

Laxman heaped praise on India all-rounder Hardik Pandya but reckoned he should be consistent with his bowling.

"One player who has impressed me a lot is Hardik Pandya, because... he is a tough player. A lot of the burden was on Yuvraj (Singh), Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Suresh Raina to finish the matches, but the way he (Pandya) finishes the innings is very crucial," he said.

"Hardik is a player who is very exciting and with each and every match he is improving. If at all he can be more consistent with bowling, in which he is showing positive signs, he will be my MVP (most valuable player)."

**Leipzig striker Werner reminds me of young Messi, says Vogts**

**Berlin, Sep 12 :** Debutants RB Leipzig could be the surprise of this football season's Champions League campaign, former Germany head coach Hans-Hubert Vogts has said.

"They have brilliant and speedy players. Timo Werner even reminds me of the young Lionel Messi," Vogts stressed, reports Xinhua news agency.

The 70-year-old expects the East-German side to play a vital role despite their young and inexperienced team. "For me, Leipzig is one of the secret favorites to win the Champions League," Vogts said in a recent column.

Vogts is impressed by Leipzig's unorthodox game style. "They don't care much about ball possession. The plan is to get to the opponents box as fast as possible. Some of the big clubs are not used to that anymore," the former German international and 1974 world champion commented.

Leipzig, Vogts said, play a modern form of football, not many clubs can play, and are not easy to defend as they are constantly attacking.

It is no disadvantage that the club counts on a young and inexperienced



team. "Why should that be a disadvantage? I think it is an advantage. The team is acting without any worries and second thoughts," Vogts said.

RB Leipzig was founded only eight years ago and made it to the Bundesliga within five years from the fourth division. The club is supported by an Austrian bil-

lionaire. For 21-year-old Werner, Vogts predicts a brilliant future. "He can make it to the top. And today I am convinced Timo will make it. Just take a look at the speed he has in one-to-one situations. He is not the tallest, and he has instinct for the right moment," Vogts said.

In Vogts' perspective, Werner has what is called

"a nose" for goal situations just like the great German strikers such as Gerd Mueller and Uwe Seeler. Werner has an exceptional talent like all the great footballers in history.

Werner so far has scored 25 goals for Leipzig in 36 games. According to Spanish media reports, Real Madrid are interested in

Werner. In Germany Bayern Munich are said to have Werner on their watch list.

Leipzig does not intend to sell Werner, said club CEO Oliver Mintzlaff. "He has a contract until 2020, and we provide all for his next development step. Why should he think about other clubs," Mintzlaff told a German TV station.

**Delhi Dynamos sign Edu Moya and Guyon Fernandez**

**New Delhi, Sep 12 :** Two-time Indian Super League (ISL) semi-finalists, Delhi Dynamos on Tuesday added Spanish full-back Edu Moya and Dutch forward Guyon Fernandez to their football squad ahead of the upcoming season.

Commenting on the signing, coach Miguel Angel Portugal said: "I am delighted to welcome Guyon and Edu Moya to the club. Moya comes with a huge amount of experience after having played in the Spanish top division for so many years and his presence in the squad will definitely come in handy this season. Guyon meanwhile will bring goals to the side. His signing adds further steel to the attacking line-up of Delhi Dynamos." 31-year old Guyon joins the club after completing his second stint with Dutch Eredivisie side ADO Den Haag. He went onto represent Curacao on the international stage where he was part of the squad that played in the 2014 Caribbean Cup and was called up by the then head coach Patrick Kluyvert for the World Cup Qualifiers. The striker started his professional career with ADO Den Haag back in 2007, before joining the likes of Excelsior, Feyenoord, NAC Breda in the Dutch top division and Perth Glory in the Australian League.

**Associations, Clubs, Players come together for India Learn Golf Week**

**New Delhi, Sep 12 :** As many as five industry associations, star Asian Tour professionals like Gaganjeet Bhullar and Rahil Gangjee, and 28 golf clubs across 16 cities have come together to lend their support to a unique initiative -- The India Learn Golf Week (ILGW)-- aimed at further popularising the sport in the country.

The ILGW, scheduled between September 25 and October 1, will aim to initiate 20,000 new golfers to the game, making it the largest such initiative to infuse new talent into the sport at one go, it was announced on Tuesday.

"All the Industry bodies have had a plan to work together for a while now and we are glad that the India Learn Golf Week has given us this

opportunity finally," GIA president Devang D. Saha said here.

"I hope that we can make it a big success. We are trying to build this proposition as a strong base for finding golfing talent in India."

It will be an initiative of the Golf Industry Association (GIA) in partnership with the Indian Golf Union (IGU), the Women's Golf Association of India (WGAI), the National Golf Association of India (NGAI), Golf Course Superintendents and Managers Association of India (GCS & MAI) as well as the globally acclaimed Professional Golfers Association (PGA) of America.

The ILGW will aim to attract 100,000 new golfers over a period of five years.