

Paralympics champion Sumit Antil defends F64 Javelin World Title, India jump to third

KOBE: Reigning Paralympics champion Sumit Antil on Tuesday defended his F64 javelin throw world title while Thangavelu Mariyappan and Ekta Bhyan also grabbed gold medals in their respective events as India jumped to third place in the World Para Athletics Championships here.

With five medals won on a productive fifth day, India's tally swelled to 10 (4 gold, 4 silver, 2 bronze) and the country is currently placed below China (15 gold, 13 silver, 13 bronze) and Brazil (14 gold, 6 silver, 5 bronze).

Antil, who had won gold medals in the Tokyo Paralympics and 2023 World Para Athletics Championships, sent his spear to a distance of 69.50m to stand on top of the podium.

The 25-year-old Haryana athlete thus continued his global domination in the F64 javelin event. He is the current world record holder also, courtesy his massive 73.29m throw while winning gold in the Para Asian Games in Hangzhou, China last year.

He also holds the World Para Athletics Championships record of 70.83m which he had produced while winning the gold in the last edition in Paris in



2023. Compatriot Sandeep won the bronze medal in the same event with a throw of 60.41m. Sri Lanka's Dulan Kodithuwakku took the silver with a throw of 66.49m.

Antil was the leader all through the event in the nine-man field as he opened with a 68.17m effort before coming up with his day's best jump of 69.50m in the second attempt. His next four attempts read 64.04m, 65.58m, 69.03m and 68.08m.

Sonipat's Antil wanted to pursue a career in wrestling, but in 2015, when he was 17, his motorbike was

hit by a speeding truck while he was returning home from a tuition class.

As a result, his left leg was amputated and he had to abandon his dream of becoming a wrestler. His father, employed in Indian Air Force, died when he was seven.

Tokyo Paralympics silver winner Mariyappan also grabbed a gold in T63 high jump with a championship record of 1.88m. This was his first gold in a major event in eight years.

The 28-year-old Mariyappan won gold in T42 high jump in the 2016 Rio Paralympics and a silver in the Tokyo edition in 2021 in T63. He also won

a silver in the T63 class in the Hangzhou Para Asian Games last year.

The T63 classification is for athletes with single through knee or above knee limb deficiency competing with a prosthesis.

Americans Ezra Frech and Sam Grewe won silver and bronze with jumps of 1.85m and 1.82m respectively.

Hailing from Salem district in Tamil Nadu, Mariyappan was raised by his daily wage labourer mother who also sells vegetables after his father abandoned the family.

At the age of five, Mariyappan suffered permanent disability in his

right leg when he was run over by a drunk bus driver while walking to school. Before taking up sport, he would do the job of newspaper hawk and work at construction sites to help his mother run the family.

Earlier in the day, Ekta Bhyan secured the gold medal with a season's best throw of 20.12m in the women's F51 club throw competition. Another Indian Kashish Lakra took the silver with an effort of 14.56m in the same event.

Ekta, a Haryana Civil Services (HCS) officer, had won a bronze medal in the Hangzhou Para Asian Games.

The 38-year-old Ekta, who took up sports after her selection in the Haryana government as HCS officer, also won gold medal in the club throw event at the 2018 Para Asian Games in Jakarta.

Ekta wanted to pursue a career in medicine but an accident in 2003 cut short her dream. The accident happened near Kundli in Sonapat district when a truck overturned on her cab on the Delhi-Haryana border.

While she suffered quadriplegic spinal cord injury and remains wheelchair-bound, six other students were killed in the accident.

Pakistan Cricket Board wants Viv Richards as mentor for national team during T20 WC

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is eager to enlist the legendary Vivian Richards as a 'Mentor' for the national team during the upcoming World T20 Cup in the Americas.

Richards has served as a mentor for the Quetta Gladiators in the Pakistan Super League since 2016. According to PCB sources, current chairman Mohsin Naqvi is particularly interested in associating a prominent figure with the national team.

Additionally, with many of the Super Eights games taking place in the Caribbean, Richards' expertise in those conditions could prove invaluable.

"Sir Viv Richards has some prior media commitments for the World Cup but things are being worked out as the Pakistani players have great respect and regard for him," the source said.

He said if the deal goes through Richards will mentor the team in the World Cup a role fulfilled by former Australian opener, Matthew Hayden in the last two T20 World Cups in



2021 and 2022 where Pakistan reached the semi-final and final.

A PCB source also informed that PCB Chairman Naqvi had also given orders for the appointment of a foreign chief curator and Australian curator Tony Hemmings is seen as a strong candidate for the position. Hemmings is presently employed with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), where he started in July of last year under a two-year contract.

"He applied for the Chief Curator position with the PCB and is ready to come to Pakistan," he said.

Tony Hemmings has served as an International Cricket Soil Advisor and Consultant for the Western Australia Cricket Association (WACA) in Perth and also as the Head Curator at the ICC Cricket Academy and the Dubai International Stadium.

"The PCB Chairman has given priority to improving the behavior of pitches in the country before the start of the next domestic season so Hemmings has been short-listed," he said.

PCB wants Viv Richards as 'Mentor' for national team during T20 World Cup.

Football Australia names Matildas squad for China



CANBERRA: Football Australia (FA) has announced the Matildas' squad for the Olympic send-off friendlies against China.

Tony Gustavsson, head coach of the national women's team, on Tuesday revealed his 23-player squad for the games against the Steel Roses in Adelaide on May 31 and Sydney on June 3.

The matches will mark the Matildas' final games in Australia before the Paris Olympics and the first

time they have played the Chinese national women's team since a 1-1 draw in 2020.

Australia's squad features 21 of the 23 players who helped the Matildas qualify for the Olympics, including veteran goalkeeper Lydia Williams who earlier in May announced she will retire from international football at the conclusion of the Paris games.

"The squad we have named for this upcoming series against China is

based on their performances for their respective clubs and also in our national team environment," Gustavsson said in a statement.

"With the Olympics approaching, selection is about looking at the overall picture spanning four years of performance and assembling the best team possible."

In announcing the squad, FA confirmed that Matildas captain Sam Kerr - Australia's all-time leading goal scorer - has been ruled

out of the Olympics due to a long-term knee injury.

Midfielder Katrina Gorry, who underwent ankle surgery in April, was also not included in the squad for the China matches but has not been ruled out of the Olympics.

More than 130,000 fans are set to attend the two games between Australia and China after general public tickets for both matches sold out within days of going on sale in March.

Valencia left-back Gaya likely to miss Euro 2024 due to muscle injury

MADRID: Valencia left back Jose Luis Gaya is in danger of missing out on a place in the Spain squad for the European Championships after suffering a relapse of a muscle injury in his right quadriceps.

The defender had only been on the pitch for 11 minutes as he returned from two months out with the injury, when he signalled for a change and had a scan on the injury on Monday.

The muscle tear leaves Gaya with little time to recover for the European Championships, which kick off in the middle of June and Spain coach, Luis de la Fuente will have to decide whether or not to take a risk on the defender, when he names his 26-man squad on May 27.

LONDON: Liverpool's Egyptian footballer Mohamed Salah has hinted at staying at the club amid rumours of his departure. Salah, who enters the final year of his contract next month, hasn't signed an extension yet. Notably, in the last summer window, a bid amounting to \$190m from Saudi Pro League club Al Ittihad was rejected by the club.

Salah, however, seems determined to stay at the club and wrote on social media: "We know that trophies are what count and we will do everything possible to make that happen next season. Our fans deserve it and we will fight like hell."

He also posted a heartwarming message for Jürgen Klopp, who left the job after the end of Premier League season a few days ago after spending about nine years at Anfield. Salah had had a heated discussion with Klopp a few weeks ago on the sideline during the game against West Ham.



The 31-year-old, however, seems to have moved forward from incident and wrote on social media for Klopp: "It was great sharing all those trophies and experiences with you over the past seven years," Salah wrote alongside a picture of him and Klopp.

"I wish you the best of luck for the future and hope we meet again," his post further read.

Dutchman Arne Slot has replaced Klopp at the Premier League club and will

take the charge on June 1st. Slot, who has moved to Liverpool from Feyenoord, has the first game as manager against Real Betis in pre-season friendly.

Salah is expected to be available for the game as he will not be playing any international tournament this year. Some of his teammates, however, will be unavailable for national duties in Copa America and Euro 2024. Euro 2024 starts on June 15 while Copa America starts in June 21.

Star striker Sam Kerr to miss 2024 Paris Games, Football Australia confirms

SYDNEY: Talismanic Australian striker Sam Kerr was officially ruled out of the Olympics Tuesday, almost five months after a serious knee injury derailed her season with Chelsea.

The Matildas captain, one of the biggest names in women's football, ruptured her anterior cruciate ligament in January and her father declared months ago that she would not be fit for Paris.

But there had been no official confirmation until national coach Tony

Gustavsson unveiled a 23-player squad for upcoming friendlies against China in Adelaide and Sydney.

"Attacker Amy Sayer (ACL) and forward Sam Kerr (ACL) remain on the sidelines with long-term injuries," the squad announcement said. "Kerr and Sayer will continue their rehabilitation programs in their home club environments and subsequently will not be available for selection for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games."

Kerr, who was on hand to cele-

brate Chelsea's fifth consecutive FA Women's Super League title at the weekend, is Australia's most prolific striker with 69 goals in 128 appearances.

In March, she was charged with a "racially aggravated offence" in Britain following a dispute involving a police officer.

She has pleaded not guilty with outgoing Chelsea boss Emma Hayes on Saturday reiterating that the club had given her their "full support".

Regardless of FA Cup result, 'Ten Hag will be sacked,' claims former Man United player

MANCHESTER: Former Manchester United player Rio Ferdinand believes that Erik ten Hag will be sacked, regardless of the result of Saturday's (May 25) FA Cup final against Manchester City. The Dutch manager has endured a turbulent season at Old Trafford where United finished eighth in the Premier League and remain on the precipice of being out of Europe for the next season. Winning against City could grant a place in Europa League but the form Pep Guardiola's men have displayed in recent months, it looks highly unlikely that a disjointed United could topple them. "The more and more I think about it, win or lose, I don't think Ten Hag will be there come next season," said Ferdinand. The fans have been slowly losing patience with Ten Hag who has failed to stamp his authority over the team. Despite being at the helm for two seasons now, United still do not have a characteristic style of play. The team looks shaky with bunting the ball forward being the only noticeable tactic from Ten Hag. "I'm not saying that's what I want, I'm just saying what I believe is going to happen, and I believe that the club are going to look elsewhere I think," said the former United defender. "I don't think (winning the FA Cup) changes anything in the eyes of INEOS. I've not spoken to anyone there, this is just an assumption, this is what I think. I keep saying this, I sound like a broken record: performance level can drop but your style of football should be there to identify. It's not," he added. Jim Ratcliffe's INEOS Group which recently acquired a 25 per cent stake in United will be looking to assert its authority over the club and getting rid of an under-performing manager appears to be the best bet.

Toni makes shock retirement announcement; Real Madrid star to hang up boots after

MADRID: Legendary Real Madrid and German midfielder Toni Kroos has announced he will be retiring from football after next month's European Championship. The 34-year-old midfielder took to his Instagram account to announce his decision which has come as a shock to fans.

Kroos joined Real Madrid in 2014 from Bayern Munich and went on to have a staggering career that most footballers can only dream of. However, his retirement comes amid reports that Madrid were offering a one-year extension on his current contract.

"July 17th, 2014 - the day of my presentation at Real Madrid, the day that changed my life. My life as a footballer - but especially as a person. It was the start of a new chapter at the biggest club in the world," Kroos wrote.



"After 10 years, at the end of the season this chapter comes to an end. I will never forget that insolent successful time! I would particularly like to thank everyone that welcomed me with an open heart and trusted me. But

especially I would like to thank you, dear Madridistas, for your affection and your love from the first day until the last one."

Real Madrid confirmed the decision on its website and wished good luck to the German

who had become "part of the history" of the club.

"Real Madrid CF announces that Toni Kroos has decided to end his career as a professional football player after Euro 2024."

"Real Madrid wants to express its gratitude and affection to Toni Kroos, a player who is already part of the history of Real Madrid and who is one of the great legends of our club and world football," read the statement. As a Madrid player, Kroos won 22 titles in his 463 appearances which includes four European Cups, five Club World Cups, four European Super Cups, four LaLiga titles, one Copa del Rey and four Spanish Super Cups.

Club president Florentino Perez said that Real Madrid will always be Kroos' home in the statement.

"Toni Kroos is one of the

great players in the history of Real Madrid and that this club is and will always be his home," said Perez.

Kroos, who already has five Champions League titles to his name, would be hoping to add a sixth one when he takes the field at Wembley on June 1 against Borussia Dortmund in the final.

Despite being in the final leg of his career, Kroos has been a pivotal part in Madrid's push for another UCL title. His assist to Vinicius Junior in the semifinal first leg against Bayern Munich was the key moment in the tie that helped the Los Blancos eventually prevail and book a final berth.

Apart from Real Madrid, Kroos will be in action for Germany as he came back from retirement to don the national jersey for the continental championship.