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MCC in favour of retaining five-day Tests

LONDON: The influential Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has thrown its weight behind five-day Test cricket as debate swirls over the future of the longest form of the game.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) will in the coming months discuss a proposal to reduce Tests to four days as part of structuring the global calendar beyond 2023.

But the latest proposal, part of an effort to tackle the crowded international cricket schedule

Test cricket should continue to be played over five days.

"MCC has noted the recent discussion regarding the future of Test cricket and the ICC's desire to debate the introduction of four-day Test cricket to replace the current five-day format in the World Test Championship from 2023," it said in a statement. "The MCC Cricket committee and MCC World Cricket committee have recently discussed the issue and although they can see some benefits that four-day Test cricket



and save on costs, has divided players and fans, many of whom consider Tests the gold standard.

The ICC allowed four-day Tests in 2017 and they have been tried in one-off games between South Africa and Zimbabwe and England against Ireland.

But they are not allowed in the ICC Test World Championship, which is currently led by Virat Kohli's India. The MCC Cricket Committee and MCC World Cricket Committee both believe

could bring, both committees believe that Test cricket should continue to be played over five days."

The MCC, founded in 1787 and based at its ground Lord's in London, is the custodian of the laws of the game.

Federation of International Cricketers' Associations executive chairman Tony Irish last week stressed there was 'currently a lot of negative sentiment' concerning the four-day proposal.



Concussed Pant not to travel with Team India to Rajkot for 2nd ODI

Press Trust Of India

Rajkot: Diagnosed with a concussion, wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant will not travel with the Indian team to Rajkot for the second ODI against Australia.

Pant didn't take the field for the second half of the first ODI in Mumbai on Tuesday after getting hit on the helmet while batting. He remains under observation.

"Rishabh Pant will not be travelling to Rajkot today with other members. He will join the team later," a BCCI source told PTI.

"Normally 24 hours is the time to keep someone who has suffered concussion under observation," he added.

There is still no clarity on whether he will be available for selection or rested in the next game. The 22-year-old was struck on the helmet by a Pat Cummins bouncer in the 44th over of India's innings, which also resulted in his wicket. The injury forced K.L. Rahul to take his position behind the stumps when India came out to field. On Tuesday night, the BCCI said in a statement that Pant is under observation and he would be monitored overnight. Pant made 28 off 33 balls during India's 255 all out after being sent in to bat by Australia. While Rahul kept wickets, Manish Pandey came in as an on-field replacement for Pant.

Kohli Named Captain Of ICC's ODI And Test Teams Of The Year

Press Trust Of India

DUBAI: India skipper and batting mainstay Virat Kohli was on Wednesday named captain of the International Cricket Council's ODI and Test teams of the year, capping off a memorable season for the world No.1.

Apart from Kohli, there were four other Indians who were picked in the ICC's Test and ODI Teams of the Year.

While the Test team featured double-century Mayank Agarwal, opener Rohit Sharma, speedster Mohammed Shami and left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav found a place in the ODI side.

Kohli enjoyed a tremendous run in both the formats in 2019. The 31-year-old hit his seventh Test double

hundred on the way to a career-best unbeaten 254 against South Africa in October last year. It was a breakthrough year for opener Agarwal, who smashed two double tons, one century and went beyond the fifty-run mark twice. He hit a career-best score of 243 against Bangladesh in November.

Limited overs vice-captain Rohit had a splendid ODI World Cup campaign, slamming a record five hundreds and a half century in the United Kingdom. Kuldeep, too, enjoyed a memorable year as he joined the golden list of bowlers with two hat-tricks.

The chinaman claimed his second ODI hat-trick of his career against the West Indies last month.

In the absence of Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, Shami rose to

the occasion making the best in the business hop, skip and jump with his pace, swing and bounce through the season. He scalped 42 wickets in 21 ODIs over the last 12 months.

The ICC's Teams of the Year 2019:

ODI Team of the Year (in batting order): Rohit Sharma, Shai Hope, Virat Kohli (captain), Babar Azam, Kane Williamson, Ben Stokes, Jos Buttler (wicketkeeper), Mitchell Starc, Trent Boult, Mohammed Shami, Kuldeep Yadav

Test Team of the Year (in batting order): Mayank Agarwal, Tom Latham, Marnus Labuschagne, Virat Kohli (captain), Steve Smith, Ben Stokes, BJ Watling (wicketkeeper), Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Neil Wagner, Nathan Lyon.



Rohit wins ICC ODI Cricketer of the Year award

DUBAI: India's swashbuckling opener Rohit Sharma was on Wednesday named the ICC's '2019 ODI Cricketer of the Year' for his incredible run of form through the year. Indian captain Virat Kohli won the 'Spirit of Cricket' award for stopping fans from booing Australia's Steve Smith during their World Cup match at the Oval, the ICC said in a statement. England's World Cup-winning all-rounder Ben Stokes got the 'Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy' for Player of the Year. The 32-year-old Rohit had a memorable 2019 when he scored 10 hundreds across formats, including five in the World Cup.

Stokes named ICC player of the year after landmark 2019

DUBAI: Ben Stokes has been named the International Cricket Council player of the year, capping an unforgettable 2019 for the swashbuckling England all-rounder that included a match-winning knock at the World Cup.

Stokes was the unanimous choice for the coveted Sir Garfield Sobers trophy — thanks to his unbeaten 84 in a dramatic final against New Zealand in July followed by a brilliant 135 not out to win the third Ashes Test against Australia six weeks later in Leeds. Stokes, 28, said it was a huge honour for any cricketer to receive such an award. "To be recognised and be the person to win that (award) it's pretty amazing," he said in a video statement.

During the voting period, Stokes aggregated 719 runs and bagged 12 wickets in 20 ODIs. He also scored 821 runs



and took 22 wickets in 11 Tests.

Indian opener Rohit Sharma was named the ODI cricketer of the year while captain Virat Kohli bagged the Spirit of Cricket award for his ges-

ture to stop fans from booing Australia's Steve Smith during a World Cup match.

Smith was returning to international cricket from a one-year suspension for changing the condition of the ball.

"I'm surprised that I have got it, after many years of being under the scanner for the wrong things," Kohli said in a statement put out by ICC.

"That moment was purely understanding an individual's situation. I don't think a guy who is coming out of a situation like that needs to be taken advantage of." Kohli was also named captain of both the ICC Test and ODI teams of the year.

In other major awards, Australia fast bowler Pat Cummins was named the Test player of the year and teammate Marnus Labuschagne was declared emerging cricketer of the year.

Bushfire smoke hits Australian Open again, but rain raises hopes

Agencies

SYDNEY: Bushfire smoke disrupted the Australian Open build-up on Wednesday for a second straight day to deepen concerns about the fate of the year's first tennis Grand Slam, but a cool change late in the day raised hopes of rain soaking the blazes.

The toxic haze that descended on Melbourne, where the Australian Open is due to begin next week, drifted down from out-of-control fires that have endured for months in eastern and southern Australia.

The bushfires, unprecedented in their duration and intensity, have claimed 28 lives while raising awareness about the type of disasters that scientists say the world will increasingly face due to global warming. In Melbourne, a picturesque bayside city famed as one of the most liveable in the world, the bushfire smoke raised pollution levels to "hazardous" at the start of the week. Smoke from the Victoria bushfire fills the sky over Melbourne city on January 14, 2020. — AFP

The bleak conditions continued on Wednesday, with residents donning face masks while dozens of flights were cancelled at Melbourne airport because of poor visibility.

Australian Open organisers pushed ahead with qualifying rounds on Tuesday. But dramatic scenes of players dropping to their knees and choking, and one retiring due to the smoke, led to complaints about them being forced to stay out on the court.

With the air still tasting and

afternoon under better but still hazy conditions.

Rain hopes

Thundery weather then swept in late on Wednesday afternoon, bringing heavy rain that forced play to be cancelled for the day but raised expectations of clearer air for Thursday.



smelling of smoke on Wednesday morning, organisers suspended qualifying rounds until 1:00pm (local time) on Wednesday. Racing Victoria also cancelled two-horse race meetings on Wednesday.

With the pollution levels improving slightly, Australian Open organisers restarted play on Wednesday

There were also hopes that the rain would extend to other parts of southern and eastern Australia where dozens of fires are still raging out of control and threatening to devastate many more rural towns.

Some bushfire and drought-hit areas could see 50-100 millimetres of rain, the Bureau of Meteorology said.

INDONESIA MASTERS

Sindhu advances to second round, Saina, Praneeth, Srikanth bow out

Press Trust Of India

JAKARTA: World champion P V Sindhu advanced to the second round of the Indonesia Masters with a hard-earned victory over Japan's Aya Ohori but defending champion Saina Nehwal suffered a shock exit from the Super 500 tournament, here on Wednesday.

It was also curtains for world championships bronze medallist B Sai Praneeth, Kidambi Srikanth and Sourabh Verma.

The fifth seed Sindhu clawed back from a game down to notch up a 14-21 21-15 21-11 victory over Ohori.

Sindhu has never lost to the world No.20 Japanese in their 10 meetings so far. Ohori had lost to the Indian last week in the second round of the Malaysia Masters.

The 24-year-old will take on Japan's Sayaka Takahashi, who defeated Saina, in the second round.

Saina, who won this tournament last year before going through a lean patch, lost 21-19

13-21 5-21 to Takahashi in a gruelling 50-minute contest.

The London Olympics bronze medallist had reached the quarter-finals of the Malaysia Masters last week.

World No.12 Srikanth went down to local favourite Shesar Hirani Rhusavito 21-18 12-21 14-21 in a match that lasted one hour and three minutes.

This was Srikanth's second consecutive opening-round defeat this season. He had earlier also made a first-round exit from the Malaysia Masters.

Praneeth, who like Srikanth had also been ousted in the opening round of the Malaysia Masters, lost to the eighth seeded Chinese Shi Yu Qi 21-16 18-21 10-21. Sourabh lost 21-17 15-21 10-21 to China's Lu Guang Zu.

In the mixed doubles, Pranaav Jerry Chopra and Sikki Reddy went down in straight games to the South Korean combination of Ko Sung Hyun and Eom Hye Won 8-21 14-21.

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DHAWAN SAYS READY TO BAT ANYWHERE

MUMBAI: Regular India opener Shikhar Dhawan says he is ready to bat anywhere after skipper Virat Kohli's move to drop himself down at No. 4 to accommodate him and K L Rahul backfired in the first ODI against Australia.

The visitors crushed India by 10 wickets in the first of the three-match series, chasing down a 256-run target with plenty to spare here on Tuesday.

"If they ask me to bat at No.3, of course I'll do it. Anything for my country, for sure," Dhawan said after the game in which K L Rahul came in at the critical position.

"You have to be mentally strong, all the boys are mentally strong, that's why they've been playing international cricket and it's part of the journey, sometimes

you've to switch numbers as well."

The senior player said it was completely the captain's decision to drop himself down at No.4 from his usual No.3 slot. "See that is a captain's choice, KL is batting well, he did well in the last series and he played really well and he played well today."

"I feel it is the captain's choice where he wants to play and he has done amazing at No. 3, maybe I feel, he will think about it to go at number three again," he said. After the game, Kohli said he might have to rethink his plans going into the second and third ODIs.

Dhawan blamed the loss of four wickets in the middle overs for the mauling.

David Warner and Aaron Finch slammed unbeaten tons to power the visitors to a convincing win at the Wankhede Stadium.

"We handled those first 10-15 overs very nicely. We lost four wickets in a go, that is where the game changed for us, then we were behind and then we were trying to cover it, so that is where we went wrong," said Dhawan, who made 74 off 91 balls, said.

Australia pulled things back to bowl India out for 255 and Warner (128 not out) and Finch (110) then did the rest.

India lost five quick wickets after Dhawan and K L Rahul (47) added 121 for the second wicket.

"K L (Rahul) got out. That time we planned to accelerate and those four wickets we lost, that's where we lost the momentum. We were targeting 300 runs but we ended up scoring less runs. In bowling, we could not take early wickets. They outplayed us," admitted Dhawan.

