



NZ's Jamieson to make international debut against India

WELLINGTON: Towering fast bowler Kyle Jamieson will make his international debut for New Zealand against India in the second one-day match in Auckland on Saturday, the team have said.

The 2.03m (6'8") tall Jamieson was called into the national squad for the final two tests against Australia but did not play and was not in the side for the opening one-day match against India in Hamilton on Wednesday.

Bowling coach Shane Jurgensen, who is temporarily in charge of the team with Gary Stead taking a week off, told reporters on Friday that Scott Kugeleijn would not be considered due to flu-like symptoms.

Legspinner Ish Sodhi's release to play for New Zealand 'A' had also meant Jamieson would make his debut at Eden Park.

"He's obviously a huge man, at 6 foot eight he's quite an imposing sight, so we are looking forward to seeing what he can do," Jurgensen said.

"He's got good skills with the new ball, he's a good athlete and he can bat a bit as well, so has a lot of potential."

Jamieson played three one-day matches for New Zealand 'A' against India 'A' in Christchurch last month where he had figures of 0-60, 2-69 and 4-49.

The New Zealand side also received some welcome news on Friday with injured captain Kane Williamson (shoulder) and fast bowler Lockie Ferguson (calf) attending training at Eden Park.

Ferguson's calf strain after bowling just 11 overs in the first test against Australia in Perth last December was the catalyst for Jamieson's surprise elevation to the national squad.

Williamson was ruled out of the first two games of the three-match one-day series because of a shoulder injury he sustained in the Twenty20 matches against India.

New Zealand ended an eight-match losing streak in the first game at Seddon Park with Ross Taylor's 21st one-day century leading them to a four-wicket win. [N-4N2A5212]

The final one-day match is at Mt. Maunganui next Tuesday before a two-test series starts in Wellington on Feb. 21.



REAL KASHMIR DESPERATE TO REMAIN ON COURSE FOR GLORY

KOZHIKODE: In an enticing face-off between north and south, Gokulam Kerala FC will host on Real Kashmir FC at the EMS Corporation Stadium in Kozhikode on Saturday, February 08. The match is slated for a 7 pm kick-off and will be broadcast Live on 1Sports, with online streaming available on the Fancode app and website.

There's not a lot to segregate between the two sides, with Gokulam Kerala resting on fourth with 14 points and while Kashmir are two places below on sixth with 12 points, having played a game fewer than their Saturday

hosts. Gokulam still remain title hopefuls and have produced some incredible displays to support their ambitions, like their impressive away win against Quess East Bengal, but inconsistency has cost the Malabarians on quite a few occasions. They dropped points at home to TRAU, drawing 1-1 in their last fixture and will be hopeful of getting the job done this time.

"Kashmir are a formidable side, but they will be playing at our home and we will play for our pride in front of our fans. My team

wants to make the fans happy," voiced an upbeat Marcus Joseph, Captain, Gokulam Kerala FC.

On their title aspirations, he added, "This is a crucial match for us and we need to win. We have a game in hand if we win that too then, we still have a chance."

Real Kashmir made an inconsistent start to their Hero I-League campaign this year which saw them drop to as low as ninth in the standings at one point.

Since their 0-1 loss to Neroca, the Snow Leopards have bounced back and have now registered two wins on the trot against Indian

Arrows and Aizawl, winning both fixtures 2-0.

The Northerners will be further aided by the acquisition of full-back Sena Ralte and veteran forward Robin Singh on loan.

"I felt we had to bolster our squad a bit during the window with a bit of experience. Robin is a top striker. It's almost like having an extra foreign player. Ralte is a great fullback and gives me more options in that area," says David Robertson, Head Coach, Real Kashmir FC on his new winter signings.

Speaking about their oppo-

nents, he added, "Gokulam are always a tough team to play against and more so at their home. We know it will be one of the toughest games we will have this season. They are a very good team and we will have to be at our best to come away with something."

A win for Real Kashmir will see them leapfrog three places to third in the standings, while a win for the Malabarians could see them rise to third as Punjab FC will be able to hold onto their second position based on their superior head-to-head record over the Malabarians.



Real Sociedad edge Madrid in a seven-goal thriller

LONDON: Real Madrid were knocked out of the Copa del Rey on Thursday as Martin Odegaard put on a creative masterclass against his parent club to lead Real Sociedad to a thrilling 4-3 victory.

Madrid conceded as many goals in 69 minutes as they had in their last 11 matches, torn apart at the Santiago Bernabeu by an electric La Real side, who deservedly advanced to the semi-finals.

Odegaard, on loan from Real Madrid but allowed to face his own club, scored the opener before the superb Alexander Isak hit two to give Real Sociedad a remarkable 3-0 lead. Marcelo and Rodrygo both scored late in the second half and while Mikel Merino added a fourth for the visitors, a Nacho Fernandez header set up a pulsating final three minutes, in which Andoni Gorosabel was also sent off.

Ten-man Real Sociedad held on for a sensational win to progress to the last four while Madrid's run without success in Spain's domestic cup extends to six years.

"It hurts, we have to be honest, nobody likes a defeat," said Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane.

The only consolation might have been the display of the 21-year-old Odegaard, who is beginning to live up to the hype after signing for Madrid aged 15.

On loan at Sociedad, the plan was for Odegaard to stay one more year at Anoeta but this glittering display, that earned him a standing ovation

from the home fans when he went off, may well persuade Madrid to recall him early.

Their 21-game unbeaten streak comes to an end after an uncharacteristically careless performance in which a rotated side highlighted the importance of the likes of Casemiro, Raphael Varane and Thibaut Courtois. Courtois' replacement Alphonse Areola was at fault for at least one of the goals while Marcelo was typically unpredictable at left-back, a position the more dependable Ferland Mendy has made his own in recent weeks. Eden Hazard is training again but the wait for his return goes on while Gareth Bale was again left out of the squad completely.

Yet Zidane's changes should take nothing away from Real Sociedad, who showed why they were pushing for a place in La Liga's top four earlier this season, before a dip in form has seen them slip to eighth.

"It is the second time in 32 years we've reached the semis," said their coach Imanol Alguacil. "We were convinced we could do it. But we haven't achieved anything yet."

Even in injury-time, victory was not safe. Nacho headed in Karim Benzema's cross with three of the six allotted minutes left before Gorosabel was shown a second yellow card.

Sergio Ramos might even have made it 4-4 but headed straight into the hands of Remiro.



Barca in turmoil trying to make up for Messi's lost time

LONDON: Lionel Messi admitted in December he could soon retire but Barcelona's frenzied attempts to make the most of his final years appear to be having the opposite effect.

As Athletic Bilbao's players celebrated Inaki Williams' 94th-minute winner at San Mames on Thursday night, Messi stood still in the centre circle, hands on his hips and staring down at the ground in front.

He had missed a chance to win it, his shot saved by Unai Simon, just moments before Williams' flicked

when Messi misses, Barca are there to be hit, their insecurities known and ready to be exposed.

The political turmoil now engulfing the club stems in part from desperation, not to waste Messi's final years or at least to be seen to be trying to make the best of them.

He will be 33 in June and said at the Ballon d'Or presentation retirement was "approaching" but a sense of time running out has long lingered at Camp Nou.

When Messi won the Champions League in

Liverpool were not down to their coach.

After the clumsy appointment of Quique Setien, in which Xavi Hernandez was approached but not persuaded, and then a botched January transfer window, when strikers were targeted but not signed, frustration grew.

In an interview with Diario Sport on Tuesday, the club's sporting director Eric Abidal then called out Xavi, who remains close to many in the dressing room, and shifted responsibility onto the players.

- Alba speaks out -

on Thursday night. "Those facing the music are the players and the coaching staff," he said. "Enough shit is thrown at us from the outside, we don't have to throw it at ourselves from within."

In the middle of it all, Setien is trying to usher in a new style of play mid-season, more in-keeping with the club's DNA and better suited to Messi.

Setien said on Wednesday his "obligation" was to focus on football but that has been a concern as well, two defeats in his opening six games leaving Barcelona out of the cup and three points behind in the league.

A clause in Messi's contract means he could leave for free at the end of the season but the situation is likely to need to deteriorate further for that to become a realistic possibility.

No club in Europe can offer guaranteed success in the Champions League and Messi said in October he was against uprooting his family and three children from the city he has called home for close to two decades. But lurking over the next month is a Champions League tie against Napoli and the Clasic against Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu, when failure would be harder to swallow.

He hit back, insisting "everyone should take responsibility for their actions" and that not naming names "tarnished all the players".

header crept inside the post to send Barca out of the Copa del Rey before the semi-finals for the first time in 10 years.

Messi has been the inspiration and saviour of this Barcelona team, his finger prints on their string of La Liga titles more than anyone else's.

But as Bilbao proved,

2015, aged 27, the assumption was there would be more but instead there has been only disappointment, three quarter-finals and one semi-final, the last two tournaments ending in capitulation. The fear of a repeat and another year squandered was instrumental in the decision to sack Ernesto Valverde last month, even if players insisted losses to Roma and

As the most powerful among them, Messi was implicated most. He hit back, insisting "everyone should take responsibility for their actions" and that not naming names "tarnished all the players".

Jordi Alba joined in the rebuke

