

BRIEFLY



Players engaged in their respective games at Karnavati Club on Monday – Dhaval Bharwad/DNA

Top seed stunned

Round sixth of the 25th National Chess Championship currently underway at Karnavati Club did not prove too productive for the state as Gujarat's Jwalin Mehta remained on four points after suffering a loss against Barath M. Meanwhile, unseeded Prathish A from Tamil Nadu stunned top seed (5.5 points) and chess master title holder Puranik Abhimanyu (4.5) of Maharashtra. Following the basic principle, "Play the board against a superior rival," Prathish clinched full points with Sicilian Defense. With this stunning victory, Prathish is now joint leader with state-mate Rathavel VS and Grahes Y of Andhra Pradesh, who drew their game against each other on the top board. In girls section, Khushi Dharewa of West Bengal and Vishwa Shah of Maharashtra are sharing the top spot with an individual score of 5.5 points each. Khushi, who was sole leader on Monday, had to surrender her lead on Tuesday after being held to a draw Sunyuktha CM.

Rush, Meet script A'bad win

Ahmedabad District's bowlers once again put up an impressive show to guide their team to a comprehensive innings and 49 runs win against Bulsar district on Tuesday, the final day of the three-day U-19 match of Reliance Inter district cricket tournament. Bulsar, who resumed their second innings at the overnight score of 25-0, found the going tough against the duo of Rush Kalaria and Meet Shah. Bulsar, who could only manage 133 in the first innings were once again guilty of a poor batting show. In the second innings, they added only 5 more runs to be bowled out for 138. For Ahmedabad, Meet Shah picked up a five-wicket haul and was well supported by Rush Kalaria, who picked 2/22.

Women players get kits

Women's Cricket Association of Gujarat distributed free kits to women players who participated in their coaching camp held in Gandhinagar district recently. Close to 25 female players had participated in the camp.

SPCC advance to semis

Sports Promoters CC (SPCC) crushed AMC/SAG by 107 runs on Tuesday to advance to the semi-final of the U-16 SPCT T20 Sports Zone Cup being held at MG Science College Ground. Deciding to bat first after winning the toss, SPCT posted a stiff total of 173-3 in 20 overs courtesy Drushant Soni's unbeaten 62 off just 34 balls. Kavin Patel was pick of the bowlers, taking 3/35. In reply, AMC/SAG faltered in the chase, managing only 66-9 from 20 overs. Jaydev Parmar, Dharm Chandora and Harsh Shashtri shared two wickets each. Meanwhile, in another match Shahin CC beat Ahmedabad Cricket Coaching Camp (ACCC) by 3 wickets in a low-scoring tie.

Coaching camps at SGVP

SGVP Gurukul will be conducting regular coaching camps for cricket, football, basketball and lawn tennis at its facility from June 1. The camp will be conducted in morning and evening batches under the guidance of Bimal Jadaja. Those interested call: 992559121 and 9913548769.

Newcastle eye Berbatov

Newcastle are eager to sign Dimitar Berbatov in the wake of media reports that he wants to move out of Old Trafford. Newcastle boss Alan Pardew is ready to meet United's £7.5 million demand.

Hiddink prefers club

Turkey coach Guus Hiddink heightened speculation of a possible return to Chelsea when he said he would prefer the tempo of a club role to a national coaching job in an interview published on Tuesday.

Puyol to undergo surgery

Barcelona skipper Carles Puyol will undergo surgery on June 1 to treat a left-knee injury that has troubled him over recent months. The club said on Monday that Puyol would be operated on in the city's Quiron Clinic to 'resolve trouble he has been having in the left knee.'

Scholes retires

Manchester United midfielder Paul Scholes retired on Tuesday, ending speculation over whether the 36-year-old would continue for another season.

Convenience VS Commitment

The most impressive players of the NBA playoffs – LeBron James and Dirk Nowitzki – come face-to-face when Miami Heat take on Dallas Mavericks in the finals



LeBron James



Dirk Nowitzki

Karen Crouse MIAMI

The NBA finals starts on Wednesday, and they are being served up as a delicious contrast — convenience vs commitment, with LeBron James's Miami Heat representing professional basketball's version of a precooked meal and Dirk Nowitzki's Dallas Mavericks a team that was lovingly made from scratch.

James, 26, and Nowitzki, 32, are players with superlative but hardly identical skills whose post-seasons have been highlight reels of which dreams are made. The 6-foot-8 James is averaging 26 points a game, and the 7-foot Nowitzki 28.4. Both are making their second appearance in the finals; neither has a ring. But one will now gain the validation that a championship confers, and with it, membership on the short list of the game's greatest players.

The Mavericks have won 14 straight regular-season games against the Heat, including a 98-96 triumph in December that stopped the Heat, including a 12-game Miami winning streak. The Heat players say they found their footing after the calendar turned, establishing a chemistry in the new year that was nonexistent in those first few frenzied months of the season.

The argument could be made that the quests of James and Nowitzki, dramatic as they are, are not as compelling as that of Jason Kidd, who at 38, is also seeking his first NBA title after 17 years and 105 career triple-doubles.

But Kidd is no longer a dominant star in the way James and Nowitzki are. They are fighting for the same territory, James with his drives to the basket, Nowitzki with his uncanny outside touch, but with overall strategies that have set them apart.

In the free-agent frenzy of 2010, Nowitzki, without much fanfare, decided to remain with the franchise that first signed him and for whom he has toiled for 13 seasons. He re-signed with the Mavericks, he told reporters on Monday, because "ultimately, that was where my heart

was at." He added, "It almost felt like we had unfinished business."

Nowitzki, a native of Germany, was referring to the Mavericks' loss to the Heat in the 2006 finals. Dallas won the first two games before losing the next four in a series that made a superstar of Dwyane Wade and a scapegoat of Nowitzki, who uncharacteristically struggled with his offence. James, a native of Akron, Ohio, led the Cleveland Cavaliers to the finals a year later only to be swept by the San Antonio Spurs. His home remains north-eastern Ohio, but last summer, he very publicly took his talents to South Beach, joining Wade and Chris Bosh, another free-agent acquisition, in what struck many people as less an act of free will than a wilful act of superstar collusion.

Now, less than a year after following their hearts, James and Nowitzki will meet on the game's biggest stage, with nothing less than their career legacies on line. James may even be asked to defend Nowitzki in the fourth quarter, when the outcome could be hanging in the balance. —NVT

HOW THEY STACK UP	GUARDS		FORWARDS		CENTERS		THIS SEASON	
	MIAMI HEAT	DALLAS MAVERICKS	MIAMI HEAT	DALLAS MAVERICKS	MIAMI HEAT	DALLAS MAVERICKS	MIAMI HEAT	DALLAS MAVERICKS
	Shooting guard Dwyane Wade averaged about 12 points fewer against the Bulls than he did against the Celtics. Will this trend continue in the NBA Finals? Wade, who admits to being "banged up," received some much-needed rest in the days leading up to Tuesday's series opener. Mike Bibby is still a threat from long range	Mavericks point guard Jason Kidd, 38, is in the twilight of his career but leads the team in steals (33) by a large margin in the playoffs. Dallas starting shooting guard DeShawn Stevenson could pose some problems defensively with his height but isn't much of a threat offensively	LeBron James and Chris Bosh give the Heat the edge. James enters the finals leading the Heat in scoring (26.0 per game) and assists (5.5 per game). James is tied with Bosh in rebounds (8.9 per game). Bosh has been one of the playoffs' most consistent players, averaging 18.6 points	Mavericks forward Dirk Nowitzki has played brilliantly throughout the season and playoffs. The German averages 28.4 points and shooting 51.7 per cent from the field. Even more impressive, the 7-footer is 16 of 31 from three-point range in the post-season	Heat center Joel Anthony has been a consistent deterrent against attacking slashers throughout the playoffs, averaging over two blocks in the post-season. The Mavericks' three-point shooters, whose misses create long-rebound opportunities, could marginalise Anthony to a degree. But he still will be a potent force to reckon with	Tyson Chandler gives Dallas the edge here. The physical center has provided the Mavericks with a much-needed defensive presence in his first season with the team. He averaged nearly four offensive rebounds in the Conference finals and has the potential to dominate on the glass against the Heat's shorter frontcourt	Miami Heat G REB AST STL BLK PTS LeBron James 79 590 554 124 50 2,111 Dwyane Wade 76 485 346 111 87 1,941	Dallas Mavericks G REB AST STL BLK PTS Dirk Nowitzki 73 513 190 38 47 1,681 Jason Terry 82 153 334 93 13 1,293 G: Games, REB: Rebounds, AST: Assists, STL: Steals, BLK: Blocks, PTS: Points



Hamilton apologises

Alan Baldwin LONDON

McLaren's Lewis Hamilton has apologised to angry fans and Formula One rivals Felipe Massa and Pastor Maldonado for comments he made after Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix.

The 26-year-old Briton had blasted race stewards after collecting two drive-through penalties, one imposed after the race, for collisions with Massa of Ferrari and Williams' Venezuelan rookie.

"Massa held me up in qualifying. I got the penalty," he fumed afterwards. "He turned in to me (during the race). I got the penalty. These drivers are ridiculous. It's stupid."

Hamilton made peace with the stewards after the race and then made a separate apology to Massa and Maldonado on his Twitter page. "2 Massa & Maldonado, with the greatest respect I apologise if I offended u. Both of u r fantastic drivers who I regard highly," said the Briton, second overall in the championship but 58 points behind Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel.

After the race, Brazilian Massa, who crashed in the tunnel after a collision at the hairpin, called for Hamilton to face further sanctions. Maldonado, who had been sixth and heading for his first points in Formula One but ended up with nothing, told Venezuelan television that Hamilton's race was "not that of a champion".

BLATTER STAYS DEFIANT

FIFA president says game is not in crisis; problems will be solved in-house

Mike Collett ZURICH

FIFA president Sepp Blatter, facing a deepening corruption scandal including accusations that Qatar bought the right to stage the 2022 World Cup, denied there was a crisis and described the problems as local difficulties on Monday.

Blatter began a week in which he should be re-elected as president for a fourth term in combative mood, berating media for their lack of manners and giving Qatar his public backing.

FIFA general secretary Jerome Valcke earlier issued a statement denying he meant to suggest anything corrupt about the Qatar bid for 2022. While all the talk outside FIFA House has been of a drip-feed of corruption allegations creating the worst crisis the game has faced, Blatter said his organisation was merely experiencing local difficulties they could solve internally.

It did not feel that way earlier in the day when CONCACAF president Jack Warner made an email public in which Valcke wondered if Mohamed bin Hammam, who planned to stand against Blatter, thought he could buy the presidency as Qatar "bought" the World Cup. Qatar issued a flat denial of any wrongdoing and Valcke later said he only meant that the Gulf state's financial muscle meant they



Sepp Blatter

were able to mount an effective lobbying campaign.

Blatter said he regretted the recent "damaging" allegations but said the problems could be solved in-house. "Football is not in a crisis," said Blatter. "Football is in some difficulties and they will be solved inside our family."

Turning to other allegations, Blatter said there was no case to answer against four FIFA executive committee members accused of corruption during a British parliamentary hearing this month. Blatter also said there had been no evidence from the *Sunday Times* newspaper over a claim that Issa Hayatou and Jacques Anouma had been paid to vote for Qatar's 2022

World Cup bid.

Last November, executive committee members Reynald Temarii and Amos Adamu were banned for agreeing to sell their votes to undercover newspaper reporters, the first in what turned out to be a wave of allegations. Blatter, cleared by a FIFA ethics committee on Sunday, distanced himself from his executive committee, whose members are elected by their respective confederations rather than from within FIFA itself.

Blatter has faced challenges to his position before, notably in 2002 when secretary general Michel Zen-Ruffinen claimed his 1998 election victory was based on bribery and corruption. Blatter subsequently won re-election and Zen-Ruffinen was soon out of a job. Bin Hammam, who is appealing against the decision to suspend him, dismissed the allegation that he had handed over money in exchange for votes.

British sports minister Hugh Robertson said FIFA should bow to growing international pressure and bring about internal reform. "Even if you consider that FIFA lives in an ivory tower you could not help but notice the clamour around the world for change at the moment," he said.

—Reuters

AFTERMATH

FIFA warns Caribbean bodies

Caribbean football officials were on Monday warned by FIFA to pay back any cash that they may have been given during a controversial meeting in Trinidad or face investigation as part of the corruption probe rocking the world governing body. Five associations have told investigators that they rejected the offers of individual payments of \$40,000 in \$100 bills.

Allegations will hurt game: Sponsors

Sponsors Coca-Cola and Adidas on Monday expressed concern about allegations of corruption within FIFA and warned that it could harm the game. "The current allegations being raised are distressing and bad for the sport," Coca-Cola spokesman said. "The negative tonality of the public debate surrounding FIFA is neither good for the game nor for its partners," said a spokesman for Adidas.

FA wants elections postponed

The English Football Association (FA) urged FIFA on Tuesday to postpone a presidential election planned for Wednesday because of a deepening corruption scandal. "First, to postpone the election and give credibility to this process, so any alternative reforming candidate could have the opportunity to stand for president," FA chairman David Bernstein said.

Readying for cricket during off season

With cricketing calendar stretched to limits, the number of tournaments has also seen a massive rise

DNA Correspondent AHMEDABAD

The fag end of the May is normally the conclusion of the cricketing season in most parts of the country. However, for some corporates, the end of season period is the build-up time for the upcoming season. With cricketing calendar stretched to limits, the number of tournaments has seen a massive rise, meaning little preparation time. Similarly, the stakes too have gone high with the increase in prize money.

On Tuesday at Motera C ground, the final of the 2nd Sardar Patel national cricket tournament was held where four zonal teams (East, West, South and North) took part. The five-day selection tournament was won by West Zone, which was dominated by players from Ahmedabad. "Last year, we made it to the quarters of the BCCI Corporate trophy and boys performed excellently against the likes of Gambhir, Kohli and Mishra and even beat their team convincingly. That win changed it all for us," explained Siddhartha Mukherjee, commissioner of Income Tax, Ahmedabad.

"Our performance was the turning point and it helped us push for creation of sports culture within the organisation. We are quite serious about sports and want to be among the leading teams this season," Mukherjee added.

The 25 short-listed players from the tournament will now be part of the Indian Income-Tax team. The team will soon be participating in India Post Cup, 2011, an inter-institutional cricket tournament, organised by the department of posts. "We now have a good group of players and hope to do well in the JP Atray tournament and also in the Buchi Babu invitational cricket tournament," said Dhiren Barot, state U-14 coach and coach of the winning west zone side.



Former Test cricketer Anshuman Gaekwad gave away the awards at the Income-Tax inter-Zonal cricket tournament on Monday. Also seen is GCA vice-president Parimal Nathwani – Dhaval Bharwad/DNA