

Defending champions Hyderabad Hunters start their campaign with a win as Vodafone PBL season 4 kicks off on a grand note

Our Correspondent
Mumbai, Dec 23

Hyderabad Hunters proved that they are primed to defend the title they won last year when they took an unassailable lead of 4-(-1) over newcomers Pune 7 Aces even before PV Sindhu and Carolina Marin took the court for the marquee encounter of the fourth season of Vodafone Premier Badminton League at the NSCI Dome on Saturday.

The Pune team sprung a surprise by fielding junior world championship bronze medalist Lakshya Sen for the opening men's singles tie and the 18-year-old almost pulled off an upset against world number 35 Mark Caljouw. The youngster was solid in defence and showcased some of his trick shots but it was Caljouw who had the last laugh as he bagged the first point for Hunters 10-15, 15-12, 15-14 on the decider point. Sen kicked off the



proceedings of the fourth season with a mixture of sliced drops and down the line smashes and followed them up with quick tap on the net to win points in the opening game.

The Asian junior champion went into the mid game interval of the first game leading 8-6 and though Caljouw tried to fight back with an aggressive game plan, the Indian was always in

control and wrapped up the game 15-10. In the second game, Sen opened up a 4-0 lead before Caljouw fought back with four straight points and then started to test the Indian's patience by playing longer rallies. The ploy worked as he managed to win four of the next six points to open up an 8-6 lead at the midgame interval and it looked like the Dutchman would runaway

with the second game when he opened up a 13-9 lead. Lakshya, however, managed to close the gap to just one point before a slip between the rally cost him the point and Caljouw wrapped up the game on the first opportunity. But the late fightback seemed to have rejuvenated Sen who raced to a 5-0 lead in the decider and changed ends with a

five-point advantage at 8-3. However, it was the experience of world number 35 Caljouw that mattered the most in the final analysis as he forced the youngster out of his comfort zone and pulled the match off on the decider point by suddenly changing the speed of the rally. Pune 7 Aces then suffered a major reversal when they lost their trump match. Team skipper Mathais Boe and Chirag Shetty won the opening game but could not maintain the momentum and lost 13-15, 15-10, 15-10 against Kim Sa Rang and Bodin Isara. Boe and Shetty played well in patches but Kim came up with some exceptional shots under pressure to turn the tables to reduce the Pune 7 Aces to 1-1 on the points table. The experienced Lee Hyun Il wrapped up the tie for the Hunters when he defeated Brice Leverdez 15-14, 15-12 in a rather one-sided encounter.

Rockets ready for 'home' launch against Dashers Saina-led NE Warriors look to avenge loss to Smash Masters

Our Correspondent
New Delhi, Dec 22

If the Mumbai Rockets are ready for the launch their Season 4 campaign in the Vodafone Premier Badminton League (PBL) against Delhi Dashers, Ahmedabad Smash Masters are equally upbeat about their chances against North Eastern Warriors in the first doubleheader of the fourth edition at the NSCI courts on Sunday.

The gala opening preceding the clash on Saturday between new entrant Pune 7 Aces and Hyderabad Hunters notwithstanding, Mumbai Rockets are feeling at home and expect their team to do a thorough job of proving with a perfect start for them. In their efforts, they will also bank on the lung-power of the team supporters.

The doubleheader would witness 30 tough matches with each contest having five ties, guaranteeing a grand feast for the Sunday crowd that is expected to flock into the stadium. Mumbai Rockets, who have a good mix of Indian and foreign players, including Beijing Olympics champion in mixed doubles, Korean shuttler Lee Yong Dae, and they will look forward to carrying their form in their last meeting against the Dashers in the previous edition when they beat them 4-1.

The highest paid Korean, who has been the pillar of strength for the last two seasons with Rockets, sounded confident about a good start to their campaign tomorrow. "We start our season from Mumbai and I am really looking forward to it. I have been associated with the Mumbai franchise for the past two seasons and



I am confident of a good outing this year, especially with a strong team to back us in doubles and men singles, our mainstay," said Lee. Equally upbeat was the H.S. Prannoy led Delhi Dashers who felt that their strength lay in a combined effort of the team, with Tommy Sugiarto. "We are playing in Mumbai against the home team. The pressure will be equal for both teams despite the crowd supporting the Rockets," said Prannoy. But he does realize the importance of the team

getting a good start. "It's going to be crucial for Delhi to start on a winning note and keep the momentum going. We have a balanced team with Sugiarto and Chai Biao's experience adding value. I am confident of a good start."

NE Warriors positive
The talent-oozing North East Warriors, with London Olympics bronze medalist Saina Nehwal as its spearhead, have a tough task at hand when they take on Ahmedabad Smash Masters in the late evening clash of the day. The experienced Saina,

who got married recently to P. Kashyap, would want to begin with a clean slate in the new season with a new team and for that she would largely depend on the decent mix of experience and talented team. Additionally, the motivation for them would be to avenge the narrow 3-4 loss they suffered at the hands of Smash Masters in the last edition. The Ahmedabad franchise, on the other hand, would want to carry the psychological edge they have against NEW. But they are, apart from Saina, relying on the

combination of Yoo Yeon Song and Kim Ha-na to provide win in the doubles and Tian Houwei in singles attack. "I am really happy with the team we have, it is a good mix of experience and talent. We have Yoo Yeon Song and Kim Ha-na in the doubles department and Tian Houwei in singles. I am sure we will put up a strong display and play like the real Warriors," said a confident Saina. Ahmedabad's Viktor Axelsen, the only player to have a cent percent record with the highest number of trump matches (3) in the previous edition, knows the significance of giving his team a strong opening with all tenacity. "It's important to start strong and stick with your winnings ways, especially when you are playing a league. We have shaped up a competitive squad and have requisite firepower in our attack. NE Warriors, too, have some of the finest shuttlers and this surely will be a keenly-contested tie. But we would like to take one match at a time with a positive start to our PBL4 campaign tomorrow," said Axelsen.

AR Conducts Medical Camp At Aigejang Village

IT News
Imphal Dec, 23

As part of the continued endeavor of the Assam Rifles towards improving health care, Sajik Battalion under the aegis of HQ IGAR (S), under OP SADBHAVANA Project 2018-19 organised a Medical Camp at Village Aigejang, Chandel Dist on 22 Dec 2018. Keeping in mind the problems faced by the villagers due to the prevalent socio-economic conditions and



remoteness of the location, a complete checkup of every individual was carried out

and this attempt was profoundly appreciated by all. Regimental Medical

Assam Rifles Organizes Educational Field Trip For Children

IT News
Imphal Dec, 23

Tulihal Battalion of 9 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) organized an educational field trip for the students of Azad English School, Meitram to the leading media houses of Manipur. The trip was aimed at giving a first hand experience about news making and production in both electronic and print media. The battalion which comes under the aegis of IGAR(South) organized this field trip to the printing press of Sangai Express and Impact TV. At Sangai Express, the students were given a live demo on working various machines in tandem to produce the coloured set that they read every morning. Students were fascinated to know that a combination of just four basic colours- Cyan, Yellow, Magenta and Black are used to produce the entire colour set. The trip to the printing press of one of the largest selling newspapers in Manipur was followed by visit Impact TV Office and their news broadcast room. The students were excited to see the large cameras and the studio room used for broadcasting the news. Raj Nongthombam,



Executive Editor at Impact TV explained the importance of Media in today's world and it being the 4th pillar of democracy. He explained the nuances of news making, how news is telecasted, the way teleprompters work, and how news is collaborated & verified before it is broadcasted. The enthusiastic students gladly took turns in sitting at the news reader's chair and reading the news through the teleprompter. The educational field trip to these media organizations will go a long way in encouraging these students to take up journalism as a career. The students were given examples of prominent personalities like Hon'ble

CM of Manipur Shri N Biren Singh who has himself served as the editor of a local daily (Naharolgi Thoudang) and as President of AMJWU. The field trip had a strong element of experimental learning by seeing the insides of media organizations and having direct contact with those who work in them. At the same time, it encouraged critical scholarly thinking. The educational trip not only inspired and encouraged students to take up journalism but also gave an insight on how media functions. The school authorities as well as the students were overwhelmed by the initiative taken by Tulihal Battalion.

Assam Rifles Illuminating Christmas By Empowering Youth

IT News
Imphal Dec, 23

In their efforts towards enabling youth by empowering them, Shangshak Battalion of 10 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South), distributed four computers with accessories and one printer to the remote village of Wunghon on 22 December in addition to 15 solar lights.

The program was attended by all the villagers and Christmas greetings were exchanged with the soldiers of Assam Rifles. This was followed by interaction with village



authorities and the youth in the villages. The youngsters were encouraged to join the armed forces and to participate in the youth training capsules being carried out for recruitment

by the Battalion. The villages were delighted for such a gift from Assam Rifles on the occasion of Christmas. The interaction at the villages concluded with a thanks giving speech by the Head man.

Spreading Cheer During Christmas

IT News
Imphal Dec, 23

To mark the onset of upcoming festive season and to further strengthen the bond with locals in 10 Sector Assam Rifles, friendly volleyball matches

were organised at Litan by Shangshak Battalion with the teams from the villages of Leingangching, TM Kasom and Sikibung Tangkhul. A church meet was also organized at Asang Khullen by Somsai

Battalion, with the pastor of Nungbi, Kalhang, Kuirei and Awangkasm villages attending the event. Cakes were presented to the churches followed by interaction and lunch with the pastors.

Pak a land of atrocities against minorities: Naqvi

Agency
New Delhi, Dec 23

The BJP Sunday lashed out at Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan over his barb at India on treatment of minorities, terming his country "a land of atrocities against minorities" who have been "persecuted" there since its birth in 1947. Minorities Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi used a Hindi proverb and

described Khan's comments as a case of a cat going on a pilgrimage after eating 100 mice (Sau chuhe khake bill Haj ko chali). In hard-hitting remarks against Pakistan, Naqvi said that number of minorities like Hindus, Sikhs and Christians have fallen by almost 90 per cent in that country since its birth in 1947 as they were hounded by Islamic

fundamentalists in collusion with its government. Unlike Pakistan, where minorities were killed, forced to convert or persecuted out of the country, in India they have grown and are an equal partner in development, Naqvi asserted. In the neighbouring country, minorities are barely two to three per cent of its population, he said.