

Athlete-couple Siddhi Hiray and Tejaswin Shankar chart a course for India’s NCAA aspirants

MUMBAI, JUN 13: Rubbing shoulders with the best university track and field athletes in the United States this week are four Indians — two triple jumpers, a long jumper and a discus thrower. The prestigious National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) outdoor track and field championships are underway at Hayward Field in Oregon. Thousands of miles away, at their Hauz Khas residence, the athlete-couple of Tejaswin Shankar and Siddhi Hiray watch the results closely.

Former swimmer Siddhi and decathlete Tejaswin have a role in the record turnout of Indian athletes in the finals of the championships. Two of the four, triple jumpers Selva Prabhu and Sharvari Parulekar, consulted Siddhi’s firm, specialising in admissions for student-athletes. Tejaswin, a two-time NCAA high jump champion, has the



‘expertise’, while Siddi, he says, is the ‘brains’ behind starting Kings Sports Group in 2024. The couple have gained recognition as the go-to people for

Indian athletes aiming for US university scholarships.

Along with the six Indians they placed in the NCAA, their footprint has expanded with two Sri Lankans and a Croatian also living the American college dream. Siddhi, without a guide to help crack the admission process, missed the NCAA bus. But brighter fate was around the corner.

In 2015, Siddhi and Tejaswin first met as teenage athletes at the World School Games in Wuhan, China, and in time friendship blossomed into love.

When Tejaswin went on a full scholarship to Kansas State University in 2017, the NCAA piqued her interest again. A student of business psychology at the Loughborough University, Siddhi travelled to Kansas in 2021 to figure out the collegiate system in which Tejaswin thrived — by excelling in academics and high jump.

Pakistan selectors rule out T20 role for Babar, Rizwan and Afridi in near future



NEW DELHI, JUN 13: Pakistan selectors have ruled out any role for senior players — Babar Azam, Muhammad Rizwan and Shaheen Shah Afridi — in the team’s upcoming T20 series against West Indies and Bangladesh.

The Pakistani selectors including Aaqib Javed, Aleem Dar, Azhar Ali and Asad Shafiq are likely to announce

the T20 squad for the series in the West Indies and Bangladesh next week. The two series will be played in July-August.

The selectors and head coach Mike Hesson have already conveyed to Babar, Rizwan and Shaheen that they are not required for the upcoming T20 series and should focus more on the ICC World Test Championship and ODIs.

Pakistan is due to tour the West Indies in the last week of July to play three T20 internationals and three ODIs.

Pakistan, after playing in the Caribbean, fly to Bangladesh for a three match T20 series but suggestions have been made to convert into a five match series in August.

Sensational Suruchi Singh nails third successive ISSF World Cup gold

MUNICH, JUN 13: The sensational Suruchi Singh dominated a quality field to win her third straight individual ISSF World Cup gold medal in a thrilling women’s 10m air pistol final here on Friday, reaffirming her position as Indian shooting’s latest golden girl.

The 19-year-old shot 241.9 in the eight-woman final to leave France’s Paris Olympic silver medallist Camille Jedrzejewski (241.7) 0.2 behind in second place.

China’s Yao Qianxuan (221.7) bagged the bronze medal.

National champion Suruchi had earlier won the event in the year’s first two World Cup stages in Buenos Aires and Lima as well. Buenos Aires was in fact her tournament debut and she has now won gold in all three of her first ISSF World Cup stages.

Continuing a run of form that stretches back to the Nationals in December, the Haryana girl shot 588 in qualification to equal the national record held by double Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker.

Yao topped the 110-field with a junior world record score of 589. Bhaker ended 21st with a total of 574, while Palak was 30th with 570. In the final, a 52.1 in the first series set her on course but by the end of the second five-shot series she was down to second. A 9.7 for her 11th brought her down to fourth and that seemed to have spurred her. A cracking 10.8 gave her the lead back after the 12th and thereafter it was a battle of attrition.

Camille and Yao were the prime chasers and the Frenchwoman took advantage of a few 9s by the Indian to go into the lead after the 18th shot. Then Yao fired a 9.4 in her 22nd shot and the Indian took the second spot behind Camille going into the final two shots. She was 0.5 behind at that stage of the final.

‘Very grateful and fortunate to be able to get this opportunity again’: Karun Nair on India comeback



MUMBAI, JUN 13: Karun Nair, who returned to the national set up after 8 long years for India’s upcoming tour of England, said that he was grateful for the opportunity to represent India again. “Feels really special,” Nair told bcci.tv. (I’m) Very grateful and fortunate to be able to get this opportunity again.

team. Welcome back, Karun Nair,” the coach was seen saying.

His longtime statemate KL Rahul, with whom he has played since his U-14 days spoke about his resilience when chips were down.

“I’ve known him for a very long time,” Rahul said. “The months he has spent here in the UK playing cricket and how hard and how lonely it was.

“For him to be able to do all of that and come back into the Indian team is special for him and his family, and friends like us who’ve seen his journey.” Rahul termed the journey inspirational for one and all.

“It’s very inspiring as well. Hopefully his experience and learnings from County cricket here will hold him in good stead when he plays the Test matches.”

For Karun, it still feels surreal that he is back in the Indian dressing room.

WTC Final: Why Lord’s put Kagiso Rabada’s 5-fer on famous home board?

NEW DELHI, JUN 13: The BBC reported why Kagiso Rabada has joined Gordon Greenidge as the unique holders of a distinct mark in Lord’s’ 141-year-old history.

After claiming 5-51 against Australia in the first innings and another 4 in the second, the 30-year-old has drawn comparisons with some stellar names, but had another “cool” honours bestowed on him.

Players who take five wickets or score a century get their name etched on to an honours board in gold lettering. The BBC reported that Gordon Greenidge was the first. The BBC wrote: “Before the first day of the World Test Championship (WTC) final, only one other Test player in the storied 141-year history of the longer format at Lord’s has appeared on the honours board in both the home and away dressing rooms. That quirky mark of cricket trivia



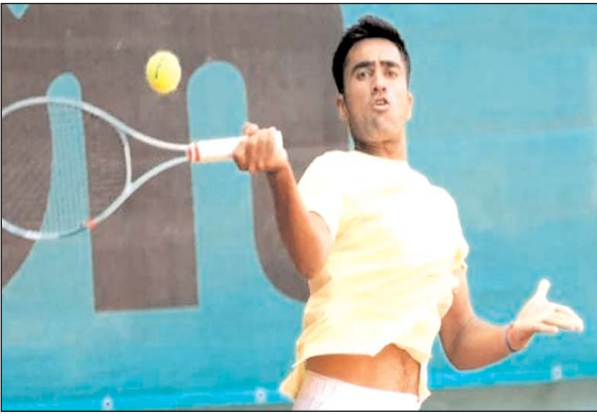
belonged to legendary West Indies opener Gordon Greenidge. His knocks of 214 not out and 103 against England in 1984 and 1988 respectively adorn the board in the away dressing room. But less well known is the fact he is also on the home dressing room for the 122 he made for the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) against the Rest of the World in 1987.”

Hitesh Chauhan, first Indian to reach second round of French Open juniors since 2016, gets lesson in holding nerve on big stage

NEW DELHI, JUN 13: When 17-year-old Hitesh Chauhan started his boys’ singles second-round match at the French Open against American sixth seed Ben Willwerth last week, a handful of people were peppered around the stands. By the time word went around that he was about to win the second set, the atmosphere was significantly different.

“When we started it was just me, my coach and his coaches and a few people there,” Chauhan tells. “Can’t be more than 10 or 15 in the stands. But by the time the third set started, all the seats were full. They were hooting, ‘let’s go Hitesh let’s go, Alle!’” Chauhan felt that a significant majority of the crowd was supporting him even though he lost 2-6, 6-2, 6-7 (6) over two hours and six minutes. “It was so good. When I went off the court, they were shouting for me more than the guy who won. After I went off the court, there were a bunch of people around me outside, a lot of kids, taking photos with me,” he said.

It was the first time since



2016 that an Indian singles player had advanced that far at the Roland Garros juniors, and the first time since 2015 that a male player from the country had achieved this feat. Chauhan admits that he didn’t expect to get to that stage himself, especially in his first Grand Slam. His journey ended by the second round, but Chauhan got a taste of two pretty fundamental aspects of big-ticket tennis — digging deep, something one would probably have to do in any tournament, and feeding off

the crowd, which a player in the juniors rarely gets to experience. Hailing from Ludhiana, Punjab, Chauhan trains under Aditya Sachdeva, who had mentored Yuki Bhambri to the 2009 Australian Open junior title. He said that he called Sachdeva after that second-round defeat. “Of course, I cried a bit because it was a very close match. He picked up the phone, saying, ‘haan mere sher!’ He said he was very proud of me and that I made everyone over there proud,” Hitesh said.

Chauhan says that the player he idolises the most is Rafael Nadal; he had to channel some of the dogged determination that the Spaniard was famous for during his second match in the qualification rounds.

“My legs, my arms, they were all cramping. I just thought you don’t get these chances again and again, just play. I was taking medical breaks whenever possible in the third set, that was a very tough match that day. But once the match started going, I got into the groove of it...” And Hitesh went on to win the match 7-5, 2-6, 7-5.

Chauhan now gets into the grass court swing and is eyeing Wimbledon. He says that clay is his favourite surface and the one that he has played the most on growing up. However, he had just two days to adjust to the clay courts of Roland Garros, which he said was far slower than anything he had experienced earlier. Now comes an even bigger switch to grass but Chauhan is leaning on what Sachdeva told him as a starting point to the process.

Making of India’s sprint sensation Animesh Kujur: Stories of Jesse Owens, controlled diet and faster competitors

MUMBAI, JUN 13: Swag has always been Animesh Kujur’s second skin.

At the Army School in Ambikapur in Chhattisgarh, the rookie footballer used to put up a show for his friends, impressing them by kicking the ball as high as he could. “It would go up to one floor high, sometimes two... then everyone was happy,” he smiles.

His audience has now expanded beyond the tiny city to far corners of the country. But he continues entertaining — the sprinter, who was once fascinated by heights, now enralls with his speed.

The 22-year-old has broken the 200m national record twice in two months. To put it in context, the 200m NR was broken two times in seven years before Kujur decided to take matters into his own hands — rather, his feet.

Kujur first rewrote the national mark in April, completing the 200m in 20.40 seconds. He thus erased the earlier record of 20.52 seconds held by Amlan Borgohain in 2022,



who bettered Mohammed Anas Yahiya’s 2018 time of 20.63 seconds. Then, last week in his first international tournament, Kujur improved his own timing by running 20.32 seconds to become only the second-ever Indian to win a 200m medal at the Asian Championships in close to half a century.

And he might just be warming up, his coach Martin Owens suggests. “This is the

Lee Evans, Tommie Smith and Ronnie Ray Smith.

“I’m a big, big, big fan of the tradition of where athletics comes from. You’ve got to know your event and go all the way back,” Owens says. “You’ve got to see what Jesse Owens was doing. How did he run? He set six world records in 45 minutes. That’s quite outstanding. You’ve got to learn something from him. We talk about the starts and the toe drag. That goes back to a coach called Bud Winter.”

For Kujur, who’d grown up in a vastly different world, this knowledge was gold dust. In his early years, he wouldn’t even understand event combinations in track and field — he’d once chosen 100m and shot put, two very different events, before switching to 100m and 200m.

He’d look up the theories professed by Winter and study Jesse Owens’s starts. Of course, his starting point in the 200m was still way off and a lot more rudimentary.

De Bruyne signs with Serie A champion Napoli after 10 seasons at Man City



NEW DELHI, JUN 13: Two-time Premier League player of the season Kevin De Bruyne signed as a free agent with Serie A champion Napoli.

“KING KEV IS HERE,” Napoli declared in a series of posts on X. The 33-year-old De Bruyne’s contract at Manchester City expired. Napoli did not announce the

length of his new contract.

Around 150 fans welcomed De Bruyne on his arrival at a clinic in Rome for his medical. They chanted his name before also singing about Napoli being champion after the player had gone into the facility.

At Napoli, De Bruyne will reunite with Belgium teammate Romelu Lukaku. And

follow in the footsteps of former Napoli great Dries Mertens, an ex-Belgium international.

In Napoli’s midfield, De Bruyne can team with Serie A player of the year Scott McTominay, who made a highly successful move from Manchester United.

Known as one of soccer’s most complete midfielders, De Bruyne was named the best player in the Premier League for the 2019-2020 and 2021-22 seasons.

In 10 seasons at City, he helped the English club to six Premier League titles, two FA Cups and a Champions League trophy.

The addition of De Bruyne may have been one of the reasons that convinced Napoli coach Antonio Conte to stay on for another season after considering rejoining Juventus.

19 sixes, 150 in 49 balls! New Zealand’s Finn Allen breaks T20 world records in MLC 2025 opener

MUMBAI, JUN 13: New Zealand opener Finn Allen wreaked havoc in the opening game of the Major League Cricket (MLC) 2025 season as he smashed the record for most sixes in a T20 innings for the San Francisco Unicorns against the Washington Freedom at the Oakland Coliseum.

Allen clobbered his record 19th maximum to bring up his 150 in only 49 balls, the fastest 150 in T20 cricket. Allen’s maximum to reach the milestone broke the previous best of Chris Gayle and Estonia’s Sahil Chauhan of 18 sixes each to set the new world record for sixes in a men’s T20 innings.

Batting first at the tournament’s newest venue after losing the toss, Allen butchered the ball from the outset, waltzing to 40 off 14 deliveries inside the Powerplay with five sixes. The onslaught only got



bigger from the 26-year-old who went past 50 in 20 deliveries. Twice the hard-hitting Kiwi opener smacked three sixes in an over as he sped to his fourth T20 century in only 34 deliveries, the fastest MLC century and the quickest T20 hundred by a New Zealand batter.

Allen doubled the damage

Golf: Modest start with an even-par round for Diksha at Hulencourt

NEW DELHI, JUN 13: Diksha Dagar, one of the seven Indians on show this week at the Hulencourt Women’s Open, began with a modest even par 72 in the first round of the event being played in Belgium. Diksha, who has been in fine form this season and has been in the Top 10 of the Ladies European Tour’s Order of Merit, had three birdies and three bogeys in her round.

She started on the back nine and bogeyed the 14th, but turned in one-under with birdies on the 16th and the 18th. A bogey on the second followed by a birdie on the third meant she was still under par. A bogey on the seventh, which was her 16th hole, saw her finish at even par.

Rookie Avani Prashanth was 1-under through seven holes, while Amandeep Drall, playing her first LET event this season, and Sneha Singh, playing her second event, shot 2-over 74 each and were T-67th, though the position will change as the round is still in progress.

Tvesa Malik carded 76 as did Vani Kapoor, and both were T-106, while Hitaashee Bakshi struggled to 79 and was T-128. All three will need very low rounds on the second day.

Leading the field was Australia’s Kelsey Bennett (67), who had nine birdies alongside two bogeys and on double bogey late in her round on the fourth, which was the 13th hole.

She began on the tenth with three birdies in the first four holes and finished with three birdies in the last three holes.

Three players, Kylie Henry of Scotland, French golfer Nastasia Nadaud, and Lydia Hall of Wales, finished their first rounds with 69. Helen Briem of Germany was also 3-under but had nine more holes to play.