

Mondo Duplantis breaks his own world record for the 15th time at an event named after him

NEW DELHI, MAR 13:

Sweden's Armand "Mondo" Duplantis cleared 6.31m at an event named after him to set yet another pole vault world record on Thursday. It marked the 15th time that the two-time Olympic champion broke the record, bettering his own previous mark by one centimetre.

Duplantis, who is also the reigning world champion apart from holding the Olympic gold for two Games in a row, had no failed attempts on his way to the mark at the Mondo Classic indoor meeting in Uppsala. The 26-year-old started with a height of 5.56m before clearing 5.90m and 6.08m and then going on to surpass his previous best.

The feat only extends Duplantis's dominance over the event, having first broken the world record in 2020. Apart from breaking the world record 15 times, clearing the previous mark by the minimum one centimetre on every



occasion, Duplantis has also made more 6m-plus jumps than anyone in the history of the sport. This was the first time, however, that he broke a world record in front of his home crowd. "This is my house. This means so much to me," Mondo said.

He turned to the audience and his home club Upsala IF and said: "Every time I'm on track I represent you. I represent me, my family, and you. I feel so proud to be able to do this in front of you". Duplantis has already won every major gold he has ever competed for and became the first man in 68 years to retain the Olympic pole vault title at Paris 2024. He has not lost a major final since the World Athletics Championship in Doha in 2019.

Sondre Guttormsen of Norway was placed second after clearing 6.00m, marking his second successful six-metre vault this season.

Punjab Kings assistant coach Brad Haddin: '15,000 people on the streets just wanting to get a glimpse of Arshdeep Singh or Shreyas Iyer'

MUMBAI, MAR 13:

Punjab Kings reached their second Indian Premier League final last season since the inception of the tournament. The franchise that made some changes going into the previous season, such as bringing in Ricky Ponting as the Head Coach and Shreyas Iyer as the captain, saw some remarkable improvement in the way they performed.

Brad Haddin, who is part of the coaching staff at the franchise, lauded Ponting's contributions, and also spoke about the 15000 fans that were on the streets to witness skipper Iyer and left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh. "We had a really successful year last year, Ricky Ponting came into the Kings franchise, and put



his mark on it straightaway. We have uncovered some superstars of Indian cricket; they stood up, and now we have the opportunity to build on that," Brad Haddin said. "Well, it's carnage, and you wouldn't have it any other way. It is an exciting chaos, that is a way to look at it.

Every game means so much to so many people. You are playing in front of a packed crowd, but you are also driving through another 15,000 people on the streets just wanting to get a glimpse of Arshdeep Singh or Shreyas Iyer. They are just superstars of the game over there," Haddin said.

Shooters Samrat Rana and Suruchi Inder Singh added to the core group of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme

MUMBAI, MAR 13:

After months of waiting, reigning 10m air pistol world champion Samrat Rana, 57 kg boxing world champion Jaismine Lamboria and three-time World Cup medallist shooter Suruchi Inder Singh have been inducted into the core group of Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) after the 169th meeting of the Mission Olympic Cell (MOC).

Understands that their consistent performances have prompted MOC to take notice and add them to the core list, despite updating the list at the start of the year.

One of the best Indian boxers on the circuit right now, Jaismine had a strong season last year with a World title and multiple other international medals. Her absence from the core group at the start of the year had raised eyebrows, similar to the absence of India's first-ever Pistol World Champion, Samrat Rana, and one of the most consistent shooters, Suruchi.

Niraj, who was previously part of TOPS, was removed at



the start of last year. After winning silver in the 50m 3P event last month at the Asian Shooting Championships, Niraj said, "Because of the lack of government support, I'm still struggling a little bit. If we are part of the TOPS Scheme, we face fewer issues in training. We usually get ammunition when we need it. We can also get it tested before we get it. If I'm not part of TOPS, it's a lot more challenging to get the right ammunition. There is sup-

port from the government, and one moves forward with double the energy." He hoped that he would be included after his performance at the Asian Championships. "I did email TOPS before I went to the World Championships. They said that they will review the performances and then we will see. But so far, nothing has come yet. I hope that they'll consider me once again now that I have a medal from the Asian Championships," he had

mentioned. TOPS Core athletes get a monthly allowance of Rs 50,000. They are also \$25 per day during the period of training and competition overseas.

There were some exclusions also from the existing TOPS list with former World Championships medallist shooter HS Pranoy, shooter Divyansh Singh Panwar and Tokyo Olympian Deepak Punia dropped from the core group after a string of poor performances. One of India's best international performers in athletics, long-distance runner Gulveer Singh has been moved from the developmental to the core group. He has been constantly improving his timings in 5,000 metres and 10,000 metres since last year and is going to be one of the biggest medal prospects at the Asian Games in both events.

Shutters Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto moved from the developmental to the core group, while world champion para shooter Pramod Bhagat was also inducted to the core group.

How a viral Flying Squirrel move made Russian wrestler Bozigit Islamgereev an internet sensation

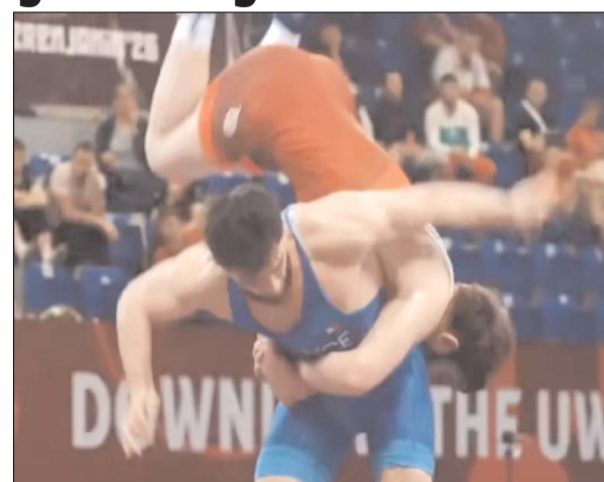
NEW DELHI, MAR 13:

One moment, wrestler Rakhim Magamadov saw his opponent flying over him, and the next instant, Bozigit Islamgereev had disappeared from his sight, though a heavy load (~86 kg) was dragging him down by the waist lock.

Magamadov's eyes registered the shock of the heavy-weight ghost somersaulting over his shoulder. His flailing hands, left clapping at thin air, told. Unless someone had eyes on the back of their head, they were completely blindsided and not in any control in the next few seconds, as Magamadov was taken down by the acrobatic rival for 4 full points.

The move was called Flying Squirrel by the Americans, but the Russian made it an Instagram sensation on Tuesday. The moment from the U23 European Wrestling Championships has since gone viral, transcending wrestling fandoms even.

Just like American junior wrestler Ellis Coleman back in 2011, Russian Islamgereev



was trailing 5-8 with just 7 seconds left, against Magamadov of France in the semifinals of the competition in Zrenjanin, Serbia. Years of losses and frustration in American high school wrestling had pushed Coleman, raised in rough Chicago back alleys, to devise a highly risky move that he deployed at the World Juniors in Bucharest, Romania. He took it all the way to the Olympics.

In its 2026 iteration, the Russian from Dagestan's Kostek village had brought out the flying inverted back-hold, the quick hip-snap to flip the axis from head-down to landing feet first, while lifting an unbalanced Magamadov into an involuntary arch that buckled for a 4-pointer takedown. 6-8 became 10-8.

The move, that's Greco-Roman-coded in style, cracked up his usually stern and sombre coach. Besides a spot in the finals,

Islamgereev had the satisfaction of watching his usually stern and sombre coach break into laughter on the sidelines.

"I think it was the first time in my life I saw him that joyful. I looked at him and he was so happy, literally jumping," the Russian told.

"Everyone was shocked. My videos are everywhere now, I can't even keep up with Instagram anymore, I'm all over the feed," Islamgereev said.

The skill to execute, what is clearly a four-part move, needs prior experience, but the Russian stressed it wasn't formally a drill. "Sometimes in training, I played around and tried something like that. But for it to work like this in competition - this was the first time. This move... I don't even know what to call it. Honestly, there's no name for it, it just came up naturally. I would like to name this move after my coach - the 'Asker Yusupov move.'"

The lead-up to the absolute Houdini-meets-Hercules move was typically downbeat.

Why MS Dhoni plays sports like badminton and padel

NEW DELHI, MAR 13:

Speaking extensively about dealing with pressure, while interacting with achievers of the academic Olympiads, former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni said it was important to find activities away from your core goals, and switch off, in order to deal with pursuing of demanding goals. Dhoni was interacting with Olympiad achievers Aadish Jain from Haryana and Krishnarghya Pramanik from West Bengal about curiosity, preparation for Olympiads and how young learners can manage pressure while pursuing demanding goals.

"It is very important to switch on and switch off," Dhoni stressed. "For me, riding bikes or playing sports like badminton and padel helps me recharge. I also feel students should explore different sports early, because unless you try something, you will never know what you are naturally good at."



Dhoni would explain the importance of maintaining balance while preparing for competitive examinations. Drawing parallels between sports and academics, he emphasised that students should remain focused on their preparation while also finding ways to recharge

their minds. India's finest white ball captain known for his cool and composed finishes in tricky innings, was known for his clutch play. He won every ICC trophy in white ball - T20 World in 2007, ODI WC in 2011 and Champions Trophy in 2013.

Explaining the case for Salman Ali Agha being out even before controversial run out by Mehidy Hasan Miraz

MUMBAI, MAR 13:

In what would go down as an addition to the already crowded list of all-time comical Pakistan run-out dismissals, Pakistan's Salman Ali Agha was left fuming on Friday after he was deemed to be out of the crease when his Bangladesh counterpart Mehidy Hasan Miraz got into a tangle with him at the non-striker's end.

While the non-striker's end umpire immediately signalled to the TV umpire to have a look at it as Bangladesh appealed, Kumar Dharmasena waste little time in judging that the Pakistan batter was outside his crease and ruled him run out. While Mehidy's decision to go for the run out could potentially reignite the tedious 'spirit of cricket' debate again, there is an argument to be made that Salman was out even if the bowler's underarm throw hadn't hit the stumps. First, here's what happened.



Mehidy delivered toe ball to Mohammad Rizwan who hit it down the ground off his backfoot, towards the right of the bowler. Mehidy got around the non-striker to try and stop the ball with his boot. Salman, despite being well out of his crease and in Miraz's way, bent down to pick the ball to try and hand it back to the bowler evidently. But Mehidy swooped in himself and in an underarm

throw, knocked the bails off with Salman clearly stranded outside the crease.

Now, according to rule 37.4, pertaining to 'Obstructing the Field' mode of dismissal, "Either batter is out Obstructing the field if, at any time while the ball is in play and, without the consent of a fielder, he uses the bat or any part of his person to return the ball to any fielder."

Jon Obi Mikel rips into Arsenal's playing style from set pieces, brands it 'illegal'



MUMBAI, MAR 13:

Former Chelsea player Jon Obi Mikel was the latest to criticize league leaders Arsenal for their playing style, branding it illegal. The Gunners are currently sitting atop the Premier League table with a 7-point gap with second-placed Manchester City.

"When I watch Arsenal play right now, they depend solely, solely on corner kicks. You have spent almost a billion,

Mikel Arteta and you're telling me the only way you can win games is through corner kicks? It's ridiculous. The only reason why the Arsenal fans are not complaining is because they're top of the league. The creativity that they have, the potentials that they have, it's all gone out of the window. We don't see them anymore," Mikel said. "What they do during set-pieces, for me, it's illegal. First of all, they're impeding the

goalkeeper and now they start holding players.

When you hold a play, when you impede a player from jumping, I watched the game against Chelsea when they played against us. Declan Rice was grabbing, I don't know who's, the left back, what's his name? He was holding him so he couldn't jump. And for me, yeah, and for me, how can the referee not see that? Even if the ball goes in, how can the VAR not see that? And for me, the PGMOL, well, they need to come out and they need to straight away, they need to stop this because if they don't stop this, the whole bunch of teams are gonna start doing it," he added.

"And for me, that's illegal. So that is what I mean, that Arsenal are trying to cheat their way to winning the Premier League. They're trying to cheat their way to winning the Premier League.

'No one can exclude Iran's national team from the World Cup': Iran football team slaps back at Donald Trump's recent 'life and safety' comments

NEW DELHI, MAR 13:

After US president Donald Trump said on Thursday he did not think it would be "appropriate" for the Iranian football team to participate in the 2026 FIFA World Cup co-hosted by the United States for their own life and safety, the Iran football team posted their response on their Instagram account.

"The World Cup is a historic and international event and its governing body is FIFA - not any individual, country. Certainly, no one can exclude Iran's national team from the World Cup; the only country that could be excluded is one that merely carries the title of host" yet lacks the ability to provide security for the teams participating in this global event," the football team said on its Instagram story.

Trump had posted on his social media site, "The Iran National Soccer Team is welcome to the World Cup. But I really don't believe it is appropriate



that they be there, for their own life and safety." The US is hosting the tournament with Canada and Mexico from June 11 to July 19.

Trump's message appears to depart somewhat from what he relayed Tuesday at the White House to FIFA President Gianni Infantino, who later publicly said that Trump assured him the Iranian players and coaches would be welcome. A White House official,

who insisted on anonymity to discuss private conversations, had confirmed Trump's message to Infantino about Iran's participation, according to Associated.

The White House did not immediately clarify what Trump meant by "their own life and safety," such as whether he anticipated threats against them while in the country after U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran that began Feb. 28.

Anil Kumble predicts RCB to stick to same starting XI with Devdutt Padikkal instead of getting in Venkatesh Iyer

MUMBAI, MAR 13:

Venkatesh Iyer, after receiving a humongous bid in the 2025 auction, went to Kolkata Knight Riders, but was not able to justify the price he was paid. However, come the auction for the 2026 season, his price had fallen significantly to 7 crores from 23.5 crores and was acquired by defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Former player for the franchise, Anil Kumble, predicted that Iyer might not start in the playing XI for RCB in the upcoming season.

"Not the starting XI. I don't think he would be because you would still want the same starting XI. Devdutt Padikkal should play in the XI. He missed out on the last couple of important games for RCB because of injury. He is in outstanding form. So he will certainly take that role of that impact player, Devdutt batting and Suyash Sharma probably bowling," the former RCB. "That was how they had structured last season's lineup. So in that lineup, unlikely, unless they look to go that extra batter sort of thing at the start of the season. Otherwise, I don't see him in that starting lineup, but he is a wonderful guy to have in the squad because any moment you want to bring in an experienced batter, he is there for you. He is a left-hander. So he is a like-to-like for a Devdutt," he added.

Kumble also pointed out that winning the back-to-back titles is not going to be easy for RCB and skipper Rajat Patidar. "It's not going to be easy winning back-to-back titles. It's not going to be that simple, but I think he has done well in the first season. When he was nominated the captain, all of us were a bit taken aback. Yes, he had the experience of captaining Madhya Pradesh, did well in domestic cricket, and was identified as the skipper for RCB," he replied.

Matthew Hayden tips T20 cricket to reach 300 as World Cup shatters batting records

NEW DELHI, MAR 13:

Former Australia opener Matthew Hayden, freshly appointed as batting coach of the Gujarat Titans for the upcoming IPL season, says a team score of 300 in T20 cricket is inevitable - and could come as soon as the next few weeks.

Hayden made the prediction on the Australian podcast All Over Bar the Cricket alongside James Brayshaw and Greg Blewett, in the wake of a 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup that rewrote the batting record books. India alone posted three scores above 250 across the tournament, including 255 in Sunday's final against New Zealand - the highest total ever in a T20 World Cup decider.

India head coach Gautam Gambhir, speaking on Star Sports after lifting the trophy, had talked about the new target in T20s. "This is the start, not the end," Gambhir said. "We still have a lot more to achieve. We still haven't touched 300. Hopefully one day we will, and we want to be even more ruthless."

"I think with the IPL starting in a couple of weeks, the writing's on the wall," Hayden said. "It's definitely going to happen in the next couple of IPLs that we'll see a score of over 300."

Describing his new role with Gujarat, Hayden called the appointment "a nice little shift of gears" after spending every IPL season since the competition's inception in the commentary box. Sanju Samson - whose 89 in the final was the highest individual score ever in a T20 World Cup decider - was singled out as the kind of player who could lead the charge. "If Samson scores at 180 from the get-go," Hayden said, "you're on somewhere around the money."