

DECCAN Chronicle

— COUNTDOWN TO PALAYAMPATTI SHIELD —

Jolly Rovers, Alwarpet bullish ahead of season

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
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Eighteen-time winners of the Rajah of Palayampatti Shield including five titles in a row from 2000 and three in the last five years, Chemplast Sanmar have been a dominant force in Tamil Nadu cricket. Last season was one of Chemplast's finest as they went on to conquer the BCCI Corporate Trophy following their sparkling show in the TNCA first division league.

Fresh after an exposure trip to England — a reward for the twin titles — Chemplast-promoted Jolly Rovers are bullish on defending their first division title, while sister team Alwarpet CC are eager to move up from mid-table.

The England trip was part of their player development programme, according to Rovers' coach G. Jayakumar. "We played eight matches against local clubs in tough conditions and it was a great experience for all of us," he added.

Exciting young pacer Sandeep Sharma — one of the stars of India's U-19



Ajay Kudua

World Cup triumph in 2012 — will bolster Rovers' bowling attack if the TNCA gives green signal to his inclusion. The 20-year-old from Punjab was recruited last year, but he didn't get clearance to represent Rovers at the VAP Trophy final and the Corporate Trophy.

"We have furnished all the documents and are likely to get the permission soon. However, with the dates of the U-25 senior India camp clashing with the first set of matches here, he might have to wait for his debut. We are also awaiting clear-



Sandeep Sharma

ance for M.U.B. Sriram who joined us from Andhra Pradesh," said Ajay Kudua, Rovers' assistant coach-cum-player. A first-division veteran, Ajay will don multiple hats this season. Apart from being an assistant coach and a player, he also has a role in managing both the Chemplast teams.

While Ajay's move from Alwarpet to Rovers was an internal transfer, snapping up young top-order batsman Bharath Shankar from UFCC was their headline signing for the new season. Jayakumar expects his



Tinu Youhanan

young guns such as wicket-keeper batsman R. Nilesh Subramanian, Einstein Napoleon and Bharath to come good in the top order. "Skipper Hemanth Kumar was consistent throughout the last season and finished as the highest run-getter of the league. He is the backbone of our batting," the coach said.

Leg-spinner Piyush Chawla, who played a key role in the Corporate Trophy final with a six-wicket haul against India Cements, is available for the entire first phase of the

JOLLY ROVERS CRICKET CLUB

CAPTAIN: C. Hemanth Kumar

COACH: G. Jayakumar

LAST SEASON: Champions

SQUAD: M. Vijay, R. Nilesh Subramanian (wkt), Anand Subramanian, R. Sathish, Ashwin Venkatraman, Piyush Chawla, M. Prabhu, Prasanth Parameswaran, J. Kaushik, Napoleon Einstein, Syed Mohammed, K.H. Gopinath, R. Suthesh, R. Jesuraj, D. Giripal, Chandrasekar, J. Subash Gowjith, Prasanth K. Varma.

Transfers: Sandeep Sharma (from Punjab), M.U.B. Sriram (from Andhra), N. Ajay Kudua (from Alwarpet CC), Bharath Shankar (from UFCC), P. Sakthi (from Alwarpet CC), Sai Kishore (from Swaraj CC).

league.

Former India pacer and Alwarpet CC coach Tinu Youhanan said his team's goal was to finish in top four. "Ours is a young side and the focus is on enjoying the game. We have recruited a promising school crick-

ALWARPET CRICKET CLUB

CAPTAIN: Shijith Chandran

COACH: Tinu Yohanand

LAST SEASON: Seventh

SQUAD: K. Sriram, S. Karthik, Garry Anthony Dumenil, S.K. Balaji, V. Vijay Anand, A. Aarif, Adithya Arun, M. Lakshminarayanan, Jerome, D.T. Chandrasekar, R. Vishaal, Ashwin Ram.

Transfers: S.S. Pon Xavier (from India Pistons), Daryl Ferrario (from Reserve Bank), Chiranjeevi (from Andhra), M. Bilva Prasath (from TI Cycles), Guru Kedarnath (from Aruna CC), B. Rahul (from Aruna CC), Nirmal Kumar (from Grand Slam).

eter, Daryl Ferrario. Pon Xavier (from India Pistons) will be our new opening batsman. Our bowling lineup has been strengthened with the addition of veteran off-spinner

Guru Kedarnath and leg-spinner Nirmal Kumar," he added.