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BISHAN SINGH BEDI

Forever the
exalted
priest of
slow bowling

ANALYSIS

How Rahul
became
India's
middle-order
mainstay

+
POSTER
QUINTON DE KOCK

LEADING LIGHT OF INDIA'S MIGHT

The undercurrent of India's campaign has been the bowling
attack's ability to go about its business with unstated efficiency





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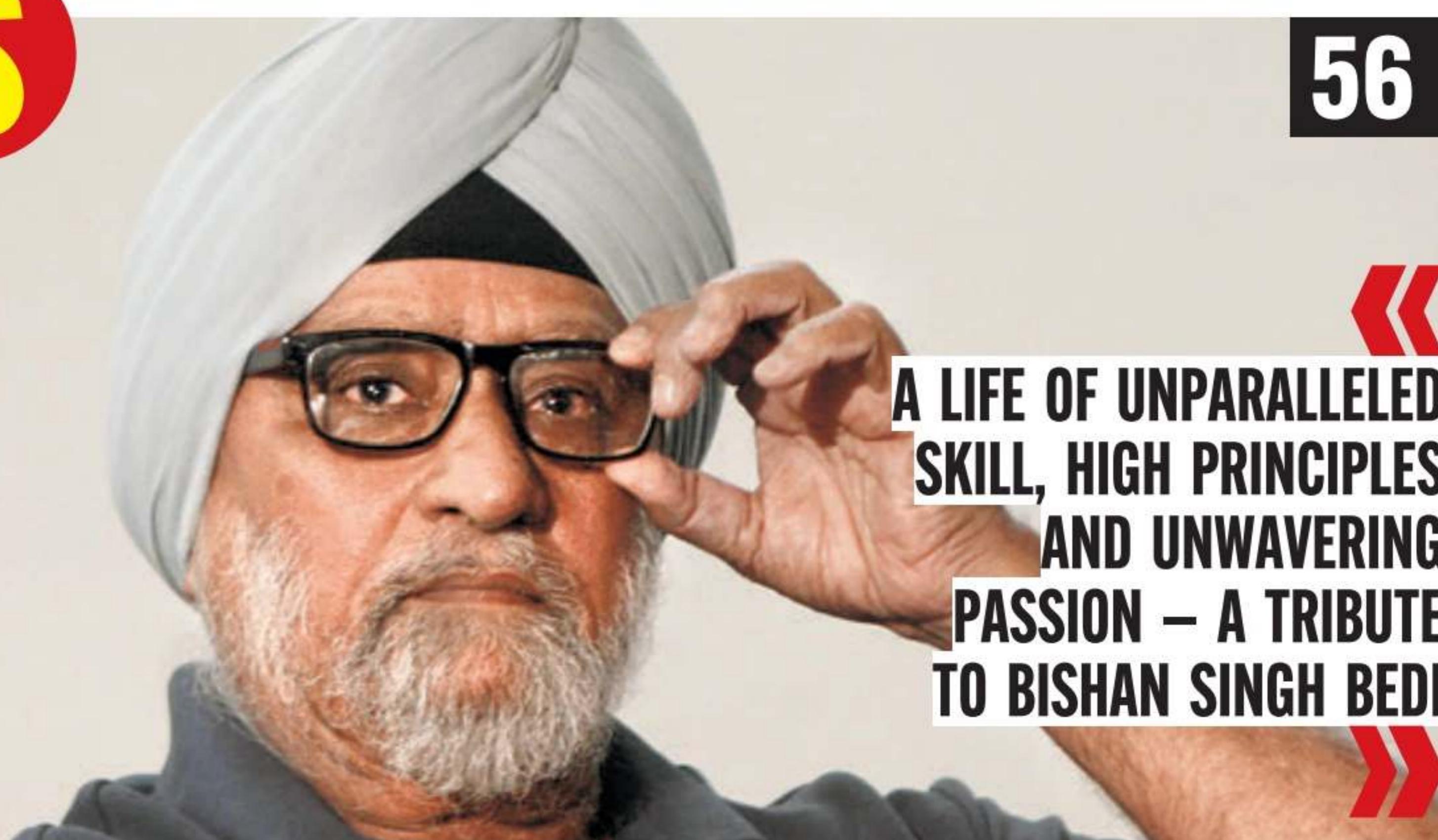
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A LIFE OF UNPARALLELED SKILL, HIGH PRINCIPLES AND UNWAVERING PASSION – A TRIBUTE TO BISHAN SINGH BEDI



» World Cup

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The undercurrent of India's campaign in the World Cup so far has been the bowling attack's ability to go about its business with unstated efficiency.

Cover: Jasprit Bumrah (AFP)

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OFF-SIDE

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THERE CAN NEVER BE ONE LIKE HIM

Bishan Singh Bedi was a relic of a bygone era, a glimpse of a paradise that has now been lost with him.

Bishan Singh Bedi's deliveries came like the sinuous curve of a serpent's slither, luring entranced prey to their inevitable demise. He will forever remain the exalted priest of slow bowling, the most sublime left-arm spinner to ever grace the gentleman's game.

"I would like to see a batsman trying to hit every ball for six," he had once disarmingly said. "I am happy when he is attacking because it means I can set him up. He is attacking me, and I am attacking him. That is the essence of cricket. That is what the spectators want to see."

But batsmen rarely attacked, not fooled by his gentle, well-meaning looks.

Bedi was the leader, the venerable patriarch (despite being its youngest member) of India's mesmerising quartet—B.S. Chandrasekhar, E.A.S. Prasanna, S. Venkataraghavan, and the patka-clad Sardar — each a maestro, their strengths diverse and mystique unparalleled.

Far removed from today's era of T20 cricket, workload management, and fast-flat bowling trajectories, he was a tireless practitioner of a now long-forgotten art and still holds the record for most first-class wickets by an Indian: 1560 wickets in 370 matches. He was equally successful on the English county circuit, with 434 wickets for Northamptonshire between 1972 and '77.

"No bowler in first-class cricket sends down as many overs a year as the Indian BS Bedi. In the 1973 English season, he bowled 864 overs for Northamptonshire—more than any other player in the country. Then he went home to India and bowled another 700-odd overs there! He never gets tired, and he never suffers from a sore spinning finger," Steve Douglas wrote in *The Hindu* in 1974.

But Bishan Sir was not just about cricket. Even as he aged and his steps wavered a little, much like the

tentative footwork of the batters he outwitted, Bedi's zeal for life remained steadfast. During a *Sportstar* event in 2017, the long corridor of the Nehru Stadium in Delhi was filled with his laughter, and every starry-eyed attendee, including the modern-day stars of Indian sport, swarmed around the man, who regaled with one story after another. To be in his company was both comforting and reassuring.

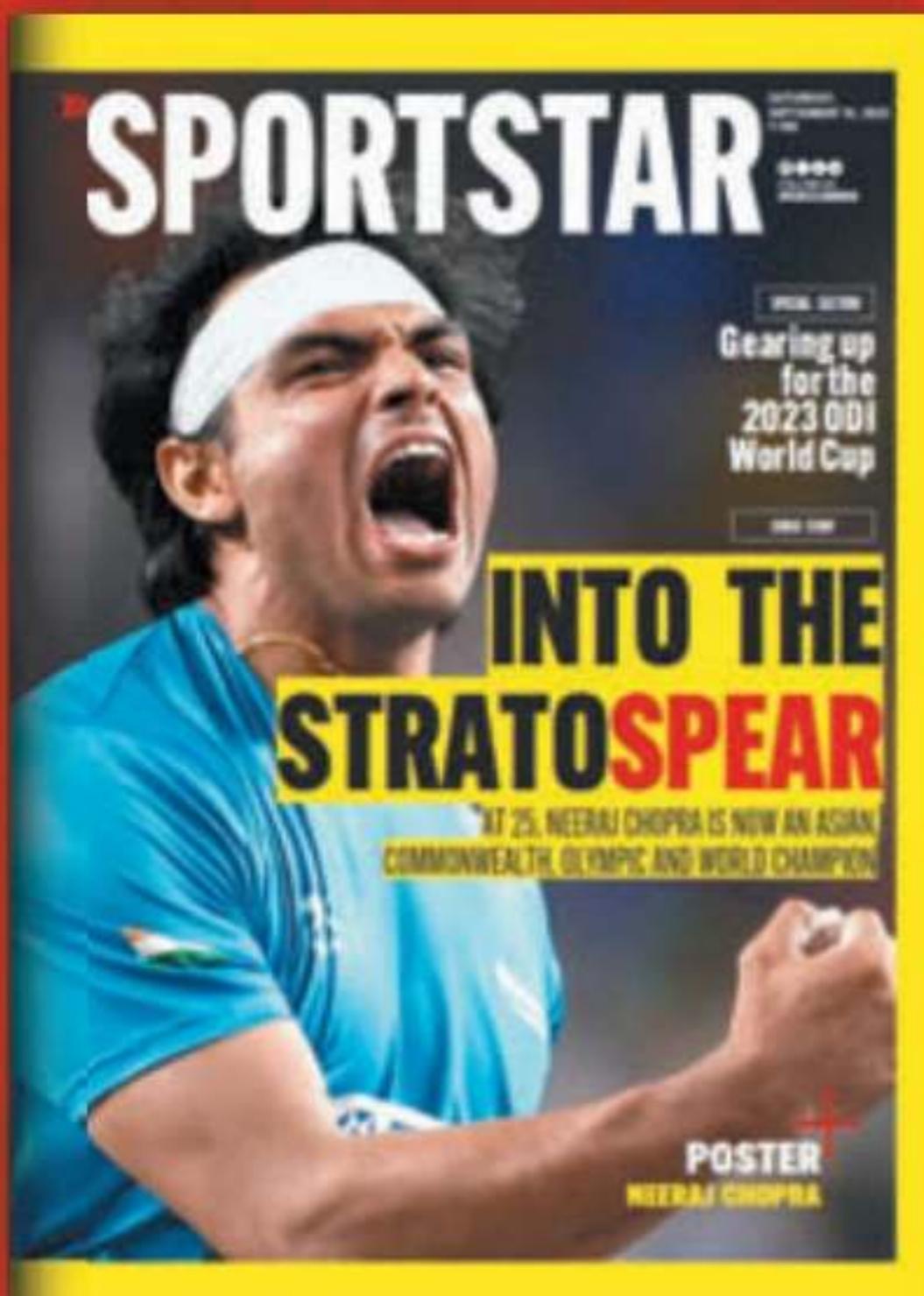
As a teacher, Bedi was stern and paternal, a facet attested by proteges Maninder Singh, Sunil Joshi, or Kartik Murali. Even Virat Kohli credited him for instilling his lifelong focus on fitness during Bedi's time as a mentor of the Delhi team.

The sanctity of cricket's rules was equally holy, and as a captain, he stood up against the "intimidating" West Indies (declaring when the Windies quicks badgered Indian tailenders with a barrage of short-pitched deliveries during the fourth Test of the 1975-76 series) and the slippery "Vaseline" tainted English during the Madras Test of 1977.

His unrelenting obsession for righteousness also led him to question Muttiah Muralitharan's bowling action: "He looks like a good javelin thrower."

Never reluctant to take on the establishment, Bedi demanded the Delhi District Cricket Association (DDCA) to take his name down from a stand at the Feroze Shah Kotla Ground after it was renamed as the Arun Jaitley Stadium. He was also one of the few Indian sportspersons who sympathised with the farmers during their agitation in 2020-21.

Bishan Singh Bedi was a man who never shied away from speaking his mind. He was a generous soul, quick to praise and quicker to criticise. In an age where sports, money, politics, and entertainment have all merged into one, he was a relic of a bygone era, a glimpse of a paradise that has now been lost with him.



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Former NBA All-Star Andre Iguodala retires after 19 seasons



Four-time NBA champion Andre Iguodala announced his retirement after 19 seasons with four teams.

Iguodala, 39, won all of his titles with the Golden State Warriors and was the 2015 NBA Finals Most Valuable Player.

The 2011-12 All-Star and 2012 Olympic gold medallist said he turned down interest from the Warriors and other teams before deciding to step away to spend more time with his family.

"It's just the right time," Iguodala, 39, said. "Time started to get limited for me, and I didn't want to put anything in the back seat. I didn't want to have to try to delegate time anymore. Especially with on the court, off the court with family. A lot. You want to play at a high level. But then family is a lot. My son is 16 and then two girls. So [I'm] looking forward to seeing them grow up in those important years."

IOC REJECTS PUTIN'S ALLEGATIONS

The International Olympic Committee firmly rejected Russian President Vladimir Putin's allegation that it was using "ethnic discrimination" against Russian and Belarusian athletes ahead of the 2024 Paris Games.

Putin slammed the IOC for potentially using the Games "as an instrument of political pressure towards those people who have nothing to do with politics."

The IOC dismissed the accusations.

"Participation in the Olympic Games is by no means a human right and the recent amendment of the Olympic Charter is not related to it... We firmly reject the accusations being made that these measures are an 'ethnic discrimination,'" the IOC said in a statement.



AFP



« We can reveal exclusively here that Rafa (Rafael Nadal) will be back. He's been off for most of the year, and in talking to him over the last few days he confirmed he will be back, which we're really excited about. »

– Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley »



« My feeling towards it is this is an extreme sport. You don't have marathon runners who are passing out after the marathon saying you've got to make it shorter. This is an extreme sport and we are paid very highly for what we do. »

– Lewis Hamilton when asked about driver safety after Qatar Grand Prix »

2nd

Kaylee McKeown set her second world record in two days as the Australian lowered her own mark to win the 100 metres backstroke at the World Aquatics Swimming World Cup in Budapest. McKeown shaved 0.12 seconds off her previous best time to finish in 57.33, less than 24 hours after setting a world record in the 50 metres backstroke. In addition to setting two world records, the 22-year-old won the 50, 100 and 200 titles at the

world championships in Fukuoka in July.

McKeown, the reigning Olympic champion in the 100 and 200 backstroke, holds the world record in all three distances in the discipline, having set the 200 mark in March at the New South Wales state championships.



1500m

Olympic 1500m champion Jakob Ingebrigtsen and his two brothers Henrik and Philip accused their father and former coach Gjert of abusing them, a charge he denied. "We grew up with a very aggressive and authoritarian father, who used physical violence and threats as part of his upbringing," they wrote in an article published in the Norwegian daily VG. "We still feel a sense of discomfort and fear that we have felt since childhood," the Norwegian brothers added.

WOMEN'S FIH HOCKEY OLYMPIC QUALIFIERS



The FIH moved the Women's FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers to Ranchi, India from Changzhou, China. This development came after the Chinese women's hockey team earned direct qualification to the Paris 2024 Olympics by winning the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou in 2022. The Qualifiers will be held at Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh AstroTurf Hockey Stadium in Ranchi, Jharkhand, from 13th to 19th January, 2024. PTI

>> FIGHT CLUB

Future bright An ever-evolving athlete with a sound team behind him, Anshul Jubli (right), who has improved dramatically since his first Road to UFC fight last year, would have taken the lessons out from this result and already set course for a reset and return. GETTY IMAGES



FALSE START, TRUE PROMISE



Anshul Jubli showed why he is India's best bet at the UFC, despite his failed debut against Mike Breeden.

Lalith Kalidas

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A trek to the top of the Himalayas would not have been as treacherous, mind-bending and eye-opening for Anshul Jubli as was his first official appearance in the UFC Octagon.

On October 21 at the Etihad Arena in Abu Dhabi, the lanky six-footer from Uttarkashi had a whole nation behind him, waiting in anticipation and near surety of the first Indian win in the UFC. That was not meant to be.

Anshul shimmered in moments and gave a lot to root for when in his element. However, a shrewd and dogged Mike Breeden eventually came up trumps in the most hyped-up undercard of the spectacular UFC 294 main event, headlined by an electrifying lightweight title battle between Islam Makhachev and Alexander Volkanovski.

Having earned his first Road to UFC win in the semifinal a year back at the same venue, Anshul would have known what to expect with respect to the crowd and atmosphere. It was better this time, with more Indians recognising him and appearing at the arena to back him up.

Anshul sauntered in with all the boisterous charms he carried throughout his undefeated 7-0 pro-MMA career. And with his lightweight opponent gaining notoriety after missing his weight by 3.5 pounds for the clash, leading to a heavy pay cut, Anshul even headed into the bout as the favourite.

Anshul gained the early ascendency over the veteran American, who had endured a rough start to his UFC career with three successive defeats. Taking cues from his acquired traits, Anshul opted to go head-on with Breeden on the back of his kickboxing skills. It seemed to be working fine in the opening phase.

A flurry of left hooks, feints and body jabs and a flourishing collection of high knees and back-of-the-neck jabs helped Anshul make the first round his own. Breeden could not stop the juggernaut in the second either, with the Uttarakhand lad gaining on his initial lead with another spurt of body hooks — the occasional punch from a machine-gun-like charge hurting the 34-year-old Breeden.

A break before the final round had Breeden's desperation triumphing Anshul's hunger and determination. With three straight losses, Breeden had more of the exit door of the promotion in sight than a climb up the lightweight ladder. It wasn't surprising, then, to see him give it all in the third round. He tapped into his tertiary skillset of taunts, verbal challenges and mind games. A stupefied Anshul walked straight into the lair.

As the fight started to slip from his grasp, a tired and groaning Anshul attempted to put his inherited wrestling and grappling skills to effect. Breeden, surging in stature, treated those takedown

attempts with impunity. He proceeded to hoot, roar and chant "USA, USA" straight onto Anshul's face. Psyched out, it all took one hard right whip to drop Anshul to his feet, depriving him of his flawless record and an Indian dream.

"I just had to get into his head. I know my road in the UFC hasn't been good. But I am one of the best in the world. I just need to get my feet settled in here and show the world what I can do. I am not a fast starter but as the fight goes deep, they start to drown and I am a dog. You will have to put me away," Breeden said after knocking Anshul out in the third.

An ever-evolving athlete with a sound team behind him, Anshul, who has improved dramatically since his first Road to UFC fight last year, would have taken the lessons out from this result and already set course for a reset and return. With all the pre-fight spotlight and

attention, it is undeniable now that the 28-year-old is India's biggest MMA icon and its best bet to earn that triumph in the haloed Octagon.

The trailblazer has also cut paths for the rest, with star Matrix Fight Night (MFN) fighter Pooja Tomar recently becoming the first Indian woman to sign a contract with the world's top MMA promotion.

Eventful days await, and Anshul will remain in the forefront, hopefully trusting his own game a little more than ever before.

UPCOMING FIGHTS TO WATCH OUT FOR **UFC 295**

Jon Jones vs Stipe Miocic
November 12, 2023 – New York



Strong finish: Anshul shimmered in moments and gave a lot to root for when in his element. However, a shrewd and dogged Mike Breeden (in pic) eventually came up trumps. GETTY IMAGES



THE UNDERCURRENT OF INDIA'S CAMPAIGN
IN THE WORLD CUP SO FAR HAS BEEN THE
BOWLING ATTACK'S ABILITY TO GO ABOUT ITS
BUSINESS WITH UNSTATED EFFICIENCY

Leading the pack: Jasprit Bumrah has lent a cutting-edge to the Indian pace attack upon his return from a lengthy injury layoff. VIJAY SONEJI

India goes BOOM!

India's all-weather world-class attack in this World Cup may obviate the need for lower-order insurance.

Lalith Kalidas & Dhruva Prasad

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Batsmen win you games, bowlers win you tournaments' is a hackneyed adage perhaps summoned to offer some consolation to the thankless art of bowling in an era where the game is increasingly tilting in favour of the willow-wielders.

And yet, the truism accurately encapsulates India's five-match unbeaten streak at the World Cup. While the batters have made mincemeat of middling totals, the undercurrent of India's campaign has been the bowling attack's ability to go about its business with unstated efficiency.

The fact that the Indian top-order has hunted down targets with disarming ease and plenty to spare further highlights the significance of the ensemble cast of bowlers restricting oppositions to under-par totals on the same pitches.

The task is accomplished with an unassuming skill and an incrementally increasing tempo that strangulates teams without letting them know. Having nabbed just five wickets in five matches in the first PowerPlay, it is safe to say the set-up in the first PowerPlay is subtle.

A dot-ball percentage of over 67 in the first 10 overs, however, has ensured that the lack of wickets upfront doesn't allow the opposition to assert itself. The inimitable Jasprit Bumrah keeps the batters at their wits' end with his slight movement in the air and off the pitch.

The exuberance of Mohammed Siraj often has him overpitching, but that also fetches him the odd wicket. India's economy of 4.74 during this phase is also significant considering that the average run rate of teams that have won batting first is 5.63 in the first 10 overs, although sedate starts have been a recurrent theme

after 22 matches in the tournament.

The middle overs are thought to be the bane of One-Day International cricket. With the sun beating down, the batters are sapped, and their depleted energies percolate through to the tempo of the game. Just as the opposition is coiling up to pounce, the Indian attack decides to strike.

It does so largely through dot-ball pressure, with Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja rifling through the overs. India is only among two teams in the tournament, the other being South Africa, which has a dot-ball percentage of more than 50 during this phase. Its economy of under five runs an over is the best by a distance in this period of play that often proves decisive in the face of dwindling PowerPlay and death-over returns.

While Kuldeep's career rejuvenation and wicket-taking ability have been pivotal to India's success, the pace attack's control early on has allowed the spinners to ease into their roles.

"It's very important to start off very well with the first PowerPlay. Jasprit and Siraj have done really well. Not just giving us wickets, but probably just containing the runs as well (for) when me and Jaddu *bhai* come to bowl. We've always got one or two wickets; only today we felt that they got a very good start," Kuldeep had said after the match against Bangladesh, the only instance where India failed to pick a wicket in the PowerPlay.

While R. Ashwin's off-spin found a late look into India's World Cup squad, it has been intriguing to witness the team host two left-arm spinners of varying classes to control the middle phase.

They have had contrasting objectives. While a rejuvenated Kuldeep has once again reclaimed his role as a wicket-taking machine, Jadeja has repositioned himself as the run-choker.

With the Kookaburra ball discolouring rapidly in the Indian conditions this World Cup, the spinners have also been vital before the seamers set in to utilise reverse



Firing from the get-go: Mohammed Shami, playing his first World Cup match this year, picked a five-wicket haul, against New Zealand in Dharamsala. K. R. DEEPAK

swing at the death. Having found a new spring in his stride since his comeback to the ODI squad in February 2022, Kuldeep has only conceded more than six runs per over in just one innings while bowling his full quota of 10 overs, and the wrist-spinner has remained on top of the wicket-taking charts between overs 11-40 in 2023. Averaging just 18.66 in the phase, Kuldeep has picked 36 wickets from 18 innings at an economy of just 4.55. Since his return from a long injury layoff in early 2023, Jadeja, too, has improved his game on the wicket-taking front. While he continues to skim through his overs at a brisk pace, the 34-year-old has managed to prise out wickets with a

strike rate of 39.3—among his best seasons across a 14-year career. Jadeja is the leading wicket-taker among left-arm finger spinners this year, with 20 scalps from 17 games.

What must also be lauded for the success of this rare spin duo is the backing from the support staff led by Rahul Dravid. The team management made a bold call to drop Yuzvendra Chahal from its World Cup equation, despite the leggie being among the leading wicket-takers for India in the format

Buoyant force: Mohammed Siraj represents an unusually evolved bowling leader for his age. PTI

since 2020.

The minimal chopping and changing has also allowed Kuldeep and Jadeja to settle into their roles and quickly rebound from the rare off days in between.

Kuldeep is someone who requires a constant source of confidence through his spells. After being taken to the cleaners for

The fact that the Indian top-order has hunted down targets with disarming ease and plenty to spare highlights the significance of the ensemble cast of bowlers restricting oppositions to under-par totals on the same pitches.





Spin to win: Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja have complemented each other well in the middle overs. PTI

seven wicketless overs that went for 61 runs against the Kiwis, Kuldeep tasted success only after Mohammed Shami broke a 159-run association for the third wicket. Siraj had played a similar role against Pakistan by castling Babar Azam with a cross-seam delivery to disrupt an ominous stand.

The spinners then joined the party, precipitating a collapse.

Just when Hardik Pandya's injury during his first over against Bangladesh threatened to throw a spanner in the works, Shami, playing his first match of the World Cup, showcased why he would be the envy of any other attack in the world. His upright seam presentation with the new ball and deception in the latter half of the innings sent India's bogey team,

THE MINIMAL CHOPPING AND CHANGING HAS ALSO ALLOWED KULDEEP AND JADEJA TO SETTLE INTO THEIR ROLES AND QUICKLY REBOUND FROM THE RARE OFF DAYS IN BETWEEN

New Zealand, into a tailspin.

If teams are hoping to build towards a flourishing finish, they are likely to be stopped in their tracks by Bumrah's nuclear-tipped yorkers and pace variations that have contributed to the team's economy of 5.4 in the last 10 overs — the best in the tournament.

Ahead of the World Cup, India's bowling flew under the radar even as the team was sweating over the form and fitness of its key batters. Over the last 12 months, India has boasted the best bowling average

amongst all 22 teams to have played one-day cricket. The only missing piece was Bumrah, who seamlessly fit into the jigsaw and lent a cutting-edge.

It is perhaps ironic that the search for heft lower down the order in a settled batting unit has seen Shardul Thakur pip Shami to the XI. But Bumrah, Shami, and Siraj, who played their first ODI together against the Kiwis, showed that an all-weather world-class bowling trio may obviate the need for lower-order insurance.

WORLD CUP – MATCH 9
INDIA vs AFGHANISTAN

Thinking man's bowler: Jasprit Bumrah's 4 for 39 restricted Afghanistan to 272 for eight. Bumrah has been a potent force in the first PowerPlay as well as at the death.

R.V. MOORTHY



A MATCH TO BROKER PEACE

Virat Kohli and **Naveen-ul-Haq** buried their rivalry with a friendly exchange during India's run chase against Afghanistan, ending a heated feud that began in the 2023 IPL.

Dhruva Prasad

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FOR MORE STORIES

Even as cheers followed local boy Virat Kohli everywhere on the field in Delhi, it was Rohit Sharma who steered India home with a scintillating 63-ball hundred against Afghanistan. During his 84-ball fusillade, the skipper went past two significant records on opposite sides of the spectrum, which was testimony to his versatility. First, a belligerent pull over the square-leg boundary took him past 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle's record of most international

AFGHANISTAN

272/8

(Hashmatullah Shahidi 80, Azmatullah Omarzai 62; Jasprit Bumrah 4/39)

lost to

INDIA

273/2 (35 overs): (Rohit Sharma 131, Virat Kohli 55*)



Barnstorming knock:

Rohit Sharma blasted a century off just 63 balls before falling for 131 off 84 as India wrapped up an eight-wicket win over Afghanistan. R.V. MOORTHY

sixes, before a nudge on the off-side for a single vaulted him over timeless legend Sachin Tendulkar's tally of World Cup centuries. By then, Rohit and Ishan Kishan's 145-run opening partnership had reduced the chase to a Net Run Rate-boosting exercise.

Even when Rohit left the field, bowled by Rashid Khan, he left a delirious crowd in his wake, as Kohli chose that moment to draw the curtains on an ugly spat with Naveen-ul-Haq that sparked during the IPL and threatened to spill over into cricket's biggest showpiece event.

"We are done with that thing," was how Naveen decided to sum up the



Water under the bridge: Virat Kohli and Naveen-ul-Haq had a heated argument during post-match handshakes at an IPL match in Lucknow, but they've since resolved their differences. PTI

burying of the hatchet.

Jasprit Bumrah's genius — he took four for 39 — on a belter was always going to prompt questions surrounding the subsequent game against Pakistan, but with the pinpoint accuracy of his yorkers, the pacer only revealed the excitement of meeting his mother on his homecoming to Ahmedabad.

AUSTRALIA SUFFERS UNDER DE KOCK ONSLAUGHT

Pat Cummins' men suffered their heaviest World Cup defeat as they were **trounced** by South Africa in Lucknow.

Dhruva Prasad

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Quinton de Kock is a master of deception. A 30-year-old who still exudes the aura of a cherubic assassin 11 years after his international debut, de Kock is at the peak of his powers, even as he confesses that he is retiring from the ODI format because he finds it 'quite tiring'. His second consecutive hundred in the World Cup, against Australia in Lucknow, was a giveaway of this deceit. His



A grey area: Australia's Marcus Stoinis' bottom hand was off the bat as UltraEdge revealed the ball clipped his glove, meaning it was no longer part of the bat. SANDEEP SAXENA

106-ball 109 set up Australia's biggest defeat in World Cup history, which was precipitated by lacklustre batting, accurate bowling, and some questionable umpiring.

Steve Smith and Marcus Stoinis were left stunned when the on-field umpire's decision was overturned to 'out' by the television umpire. Marnus Labuschagne, at the crease on both occasions, was shell-shocked, and interestingly, Kagiso Rabada, the beneficiary in both instances, was equally surprised.

The speedster reckoned Smith's leg-before decision would have been 'umpire's call'. Meanwhile, Stoinis's bottom hand was off the bat as UltraEdge revealed the ball clipped his glove, meaning it was no longer part of the bat. But the third umpire overturned the decision, reasoning that the hand was connected to the top hand and therefore in contact with the bat.

Labuschagne, however, put the matter to rest by admitting it was unlikely those decisions would have reversed the humbling hiding Australia received.



Rare feat: Quinton de Kock joined fellow South African AB de Villiers as the only batter to start a Men's World Cup with consecutive hundreds.

SANDEEP SAXENA

SOUTH AFRICA

311/7

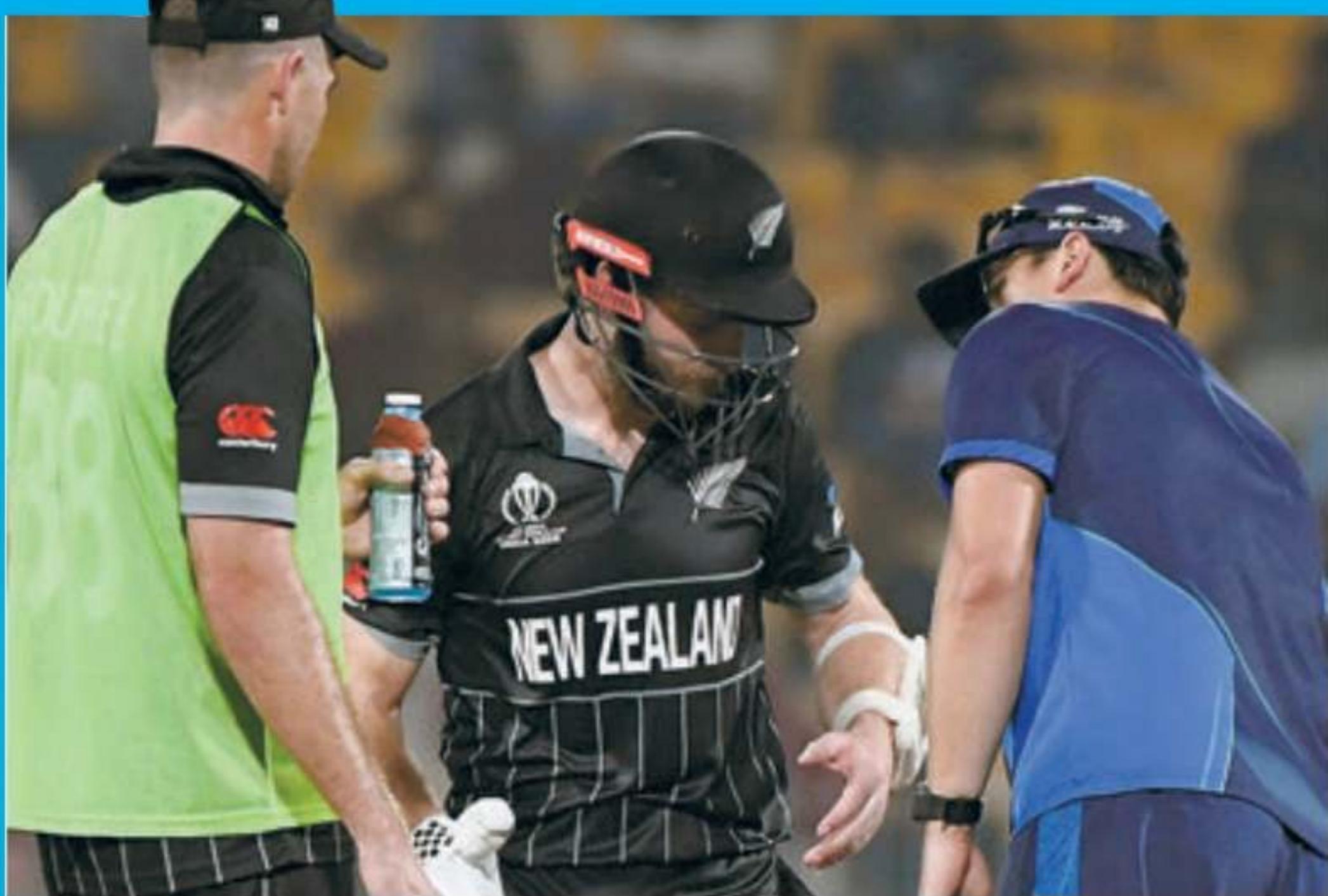
(Quinton de Kock 109, Aiden Markram 56)

beat

AUSTRALIA

177

(Kagiso Rabada 3/33)



» WORLD CUP – MATCH 11
NEW ZEALAND vs BANGLADESH

MANY QUESTIONS, SEARCH FOR ANSWERS CONTINUES

Kane Williamson **retired hurt** after hitting 78 on his return as New Zealand beat Bangladesh by eight wickets in Chennai.

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In today's age, where the gap between cricketers and the media is rapidly widening, Bangladesh stands out as an exception. It was evident at the MA Chidambaram stadium on October 13 after Bangladesh suffered its second loss of the World Cup, this time to New Zealand. During the

post-match press conference, vice-captain Najmul Hossain Shanto faced more scrutiny from his country's journalists than during his short innings before getting out to Glenn Phillips, a part-time off-spinner. Shanto gifted a simple catch to Devon Conway, a beloved player among the Chepauk crowd.

During a session with a group of travelling journalists from Bangladesh, Shanto was bombarded

Body blow: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson suffered a fractured thumb in the World Cup win over Bangladesh and is unlikely to return to action before the end of the group stage. R. RAGU

with questions that resembled a corporate crisis meeting. However, he answered each with patience and respect, giving insight into a few team decisions.

Meanwhile, New Zealand secured its third consecutive victory. However, there was a cause for concern as returning captain Kane Williamson faced a few weeks out due to a hand fracture. Despite this, the Black Caps look determined to overcome the final hurdle.



Clinical display: Trent Boult claimed his 200th ODI wicket before the New Zealand batters put on yet another clinical display. AP

BANGLADESH

245/9

(Mushfiqur Rahim 66, Shakib Al Hasan 41; Lockie Ferguson 3/49)

lost to

NEW ZEALAND

248/2

(42.5 overs): (Devon Conway 89*, Kane Williamson 78)



GLADIATORIAL BUILD-UP, LOPSIDED WIN

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A cricket match between India and Pakistan transcends mere on-field rivalry. Whenever these arch-rivals meet in an ICC event, it becomes the tournament's most

eagerly anticipated match, drawing large numbers of passionate fans from both nations.

But it was a different picture at the Narendra Modi Stadium this time around, as the streets of Ahmedabad

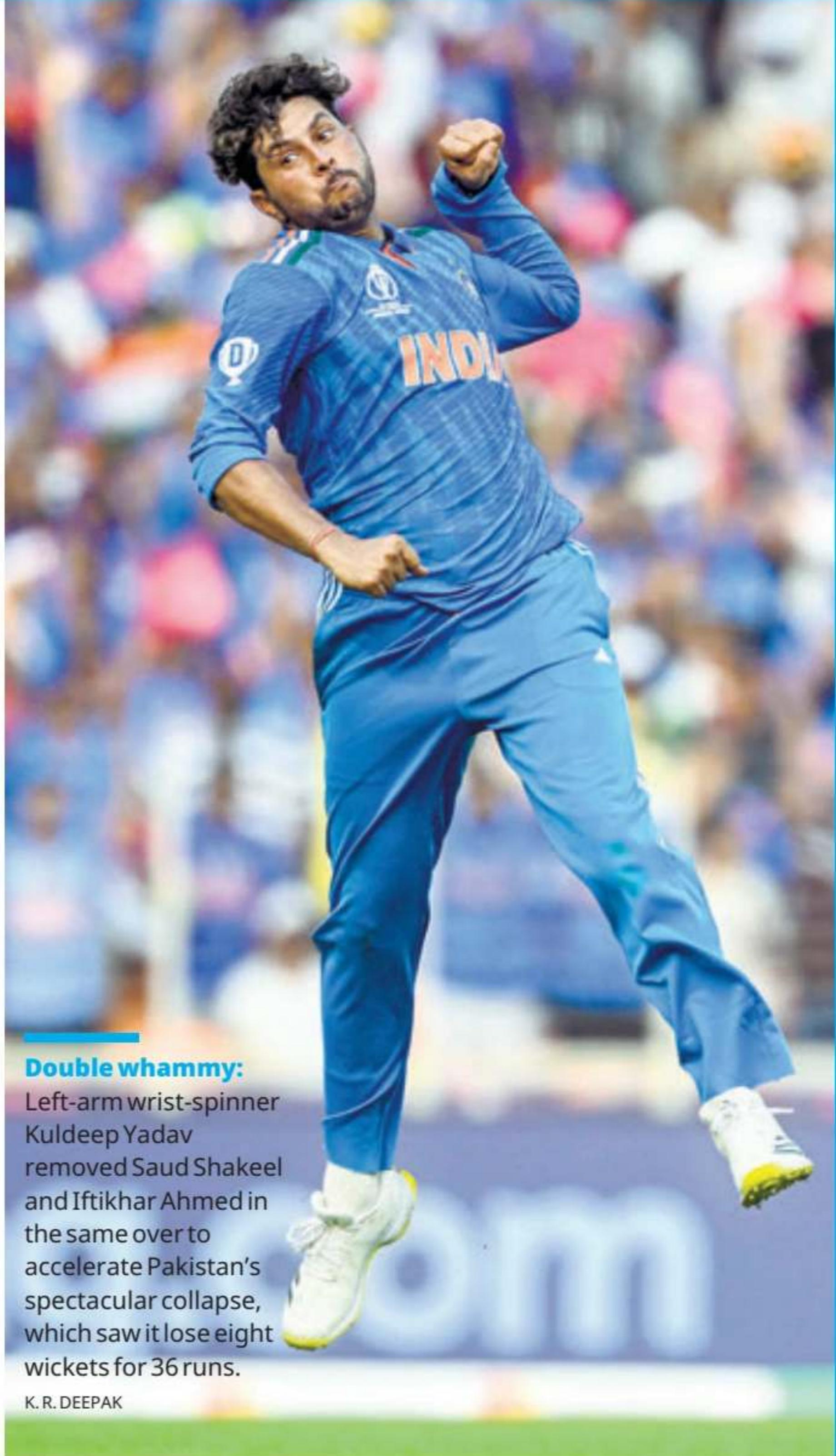
India thrashed Pakistan by seven wickets as the most **eagerly awaited** match of the World Cup turned out to be a damp squib in Ahmedabad.

were a sea of blue with spectators donning India colours at the 1,32,000-seater venue. With only a few Pakistani fans and media present at the match, the home team had strong crowd support and secured a

Bewitched by Boom: Jasprit

Bumrah's off-cutter to bowl Mohammad Rizwan for 49 left the batter and those watching bamboozled.

VIJAY SONEJI



Double whammy:

Left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav removed Saud Shakeel and Iftikhar Ahmed in the same over to accelerate Pakistan's spectacular collapse, which saw it lose eight wickets for 36 runs.

K. R. DEEPAK

clear seven-wicket victory. The Indian bowlers used a hard length and a 'little phase' of reverse swing to maintain their ODI World Cup winning streak against Pakistan, which now stands at 8-0.

Despite Pakistan's head coach, Mickey Arthur, suggesting it resembled a bilateral series organised by the BCCI, a couple of weeks ago, Aasif Ahmed and Mohammad Uzair, based in Houston, USA, made the journey to support Babar Azam's team. "Our ancestral home is in UP, so we travelled to

Delhi a couple of weeks ago to meet the family. It was always a wish to watch the India vs. Pakistan game in India, and it's a dream come true," Uzair said.

However, as the day progressed, there was not much for Uzair and Ahmed to cheer about. With Rohit Sharma dominating the show after bowlers restricted the touring team to 191, the DJ at the venue played some foot-tapping numbers to make the evening special for the Indian fans.

PAKISTAN

191 (42.5 overs): (Babar Azam 50, Mohammad Rizwan 49; Jasprit Bumrah 2/19)

lost to

INDIA

192/3 (30.3 overs): (Rohit Sharma 86, Shreyas Iyer 53*)



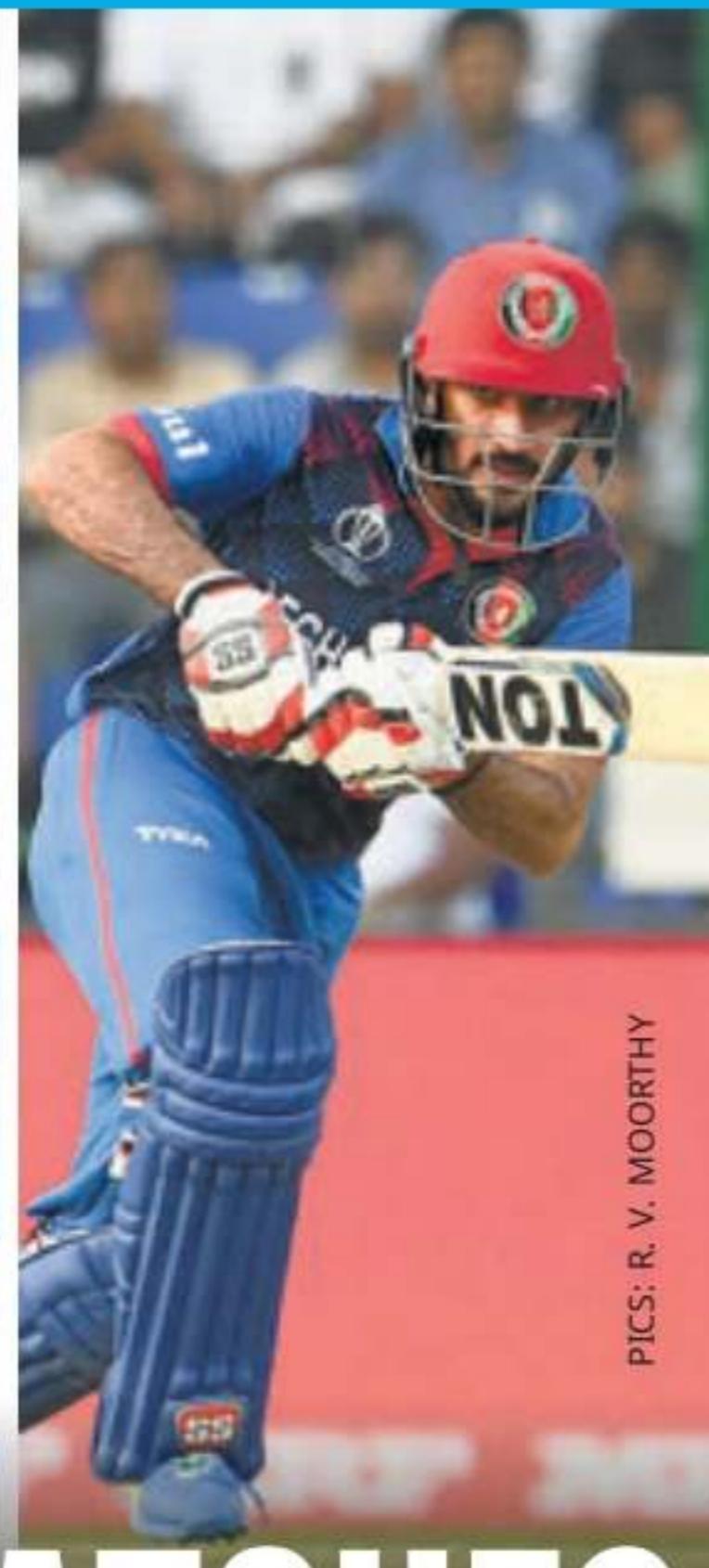
Opening salvo: Indian captain Rohit Sharma batted brilliantly for an 86, putting any hopes of a Pakistan fightback to rest. K. R. DEEPAK



Festive occasion: The Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, with its 132,000-seat capacity, was the perfect backdrop for India's convincing win. Each time India scored a boundary or took a wicket, the stadium reverberated with deafening cheers.

REUTERS

» WORLD CUP – MATCH 13
ENGLAND vs AFGHANISTAN



PICS: R. V. MOORTHY

AFGHANISTAN

284

(49.5 overs)

(Rahmanullah Gurbaz 80 (57), Ikram Alikhil 58 (66); Adil Rashid 3/42)

beat

ENGLAND

215

(40.3 overs)

(Harry Brook 66 (61); Mujeeb Ur Rahman 3/51, Rashid Khan 3/37)

HERE TO WIN MATCHES, NOT JUST HEARTS!

Afghanistan's **second win at a 50-over World Cup** marks another high point in a remarkable ascent.

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Afghans have garnered a significant following in Delhi, with several restaurants offering delectable Afghan cuisine that has captured the hearts of Delhiites. Establishments like Kabul Delhi, Afghan Durbar, and Afghan Lounge are particularly popular among the younger generation studying in the capital.

However, well before becoming known for their culinary delights, Afghans endeared themselves to fans with their exceptional skills in football while representing local clubs. During their student years, they earned decent pocket money through their appearances and also made friends.

Winters would bring the dry fruit merchants, but none of them

resembled the Kabuliwala that the iconic Balraj Sahni portrayed in the eponymous film based on the short story by Rabindranath Tagore. They had such faith in their buyers that some would sell their stuff on the promise that the customer would pay them on their next visit. My family was one such beneficiary in the 1960s. And then things changed. Kabuliwala disappeared. Afghanistan witnessed turmoil, and the nation struggled with internal strife. Afghanistan coach, Jonathan Trott, said after the win over England, "The guys acknowledge the things and the hardship that some people are going through because of the natural disaster and for various other reasons."

The 69-run win over defending champion England at the Arun Jaitley Stadium must have brought a smile

to every face back home, and the Afghan players celebrated it by showing their gratitude for the "love" they got from India.

After all, in 2015, the Shaheed Vijay Singh Pathik Sports Complex in Greater Noida was home to Afghanistan's cricketers, with facilities dedicated to training and playing international matches against Ireland.

There are hardly any Afghan footballers or dry fruit merchants in India now. But they sure have a significant cricket fan base in Delhi and India, especially after their memorable victory over England. Rahmanullah Gurbaz's quickfire 80 and Ikram Alikhil's (**right in pic**) defiant 58, coupled with critical strikes by Mujeeb Ur Rehman (**above**, 3), Rashid Khan (3), and Mohammad Nabi (2), meant that Afghanistan had just thrown the World Cup wide open.



Adam's evening: Leg-spinner Adam Zampa claimed four wickets to stymie Sri Lanka's progress after a strong start. SANDEEP SAXENA

» WORLD CUP – MATCH 14
AUSTRALIA vs SRI LANKA

AUSSIES RAIN ON LANKAN PARADE

Australia's only World Cup defeat to Sri Lanka came in the 1996 final, and there were times in this game when a **repeat looked possible.**

SRI LANKA

209

(43.3 overs):
(Kusal Perera 78, Pathum Nissanka 61; Adam Zampa 4/47)

lost to

AUSTRALIA

215/5

(35.2 overs): (Josh Inglis 58, Mitchell Marsh 52; Dilshan Madushanka 3/38)

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Just as Sri Lanka's innings was petering out, the winds picked up in Lucknow, scattering dust and plastic bags, along with Lankan hopes, across the Ekana Stadium. The electricity flickered ominously in the press box, and branding came crashing down from the roof into the stands below with a metallic clang.

The fall of Sri Lanka was precipitous, like the hoardings at the venue, as the team lost nine wickets for 52 runs after Australia's vaunted bowling went on the offensive even as the sparse crowd was forced to recede to the safety of the seats higher up.

Much like the dramatic entry of celluloid superheroes is often denoted

by tempestuous weather, the posse of Australian all-rounders finally arrived at the World Cup with the elements beating around them. Mitchell Marsh virtually killed the 210-run chase in the first PowerPlay, and Glenn Maxwell and Marcus Stoinis imparted the finishing touches by extending their long levers.

Earlier, under-fire Adam Zampa doused the Lankans' scorching start with a four-wicket haul.

The five-wicket win wasn't exactly a statement, especially because David Warner and Steve Smith were nabbed early in the same over of the chase. But it was enough to send a notice to their competitors of an Aussie storm brewing, and Nature obliged.

» WORLD CUP – MATCH 15
NETHERLANDS vs SOUTH AFRICA



NETHERLANDS
245/8

(43 overs):
(Scott Edwards 78*)

beat

South Africa

207 (42.5 overs):
(Logan van Beek 3/60)

Critical breakthroughs:
Logan van Beek delivered as usual, picking up four crucial wickets, including that of Heinrich Klaasen.

R.V. MOORTHY

SOUTH AFRICA FAILS TO COUNTER ‘TOTAL CRICKET’

The Proteas suffered a **humiliating loss** at the hands of the Dutch, who were relentless throughout the match.



Top class:

Captain Scott Edwards led from the front, helping Netherlands recover from an early collapse.

R.V. MOORTHY

N. Sudarshan

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History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce — Karl Marx said. If South Africa’s defeat to the Netherlands in Adelaide in the 2022 T20 World Cup was a tragedy, the Proteas’ reverse in the ODI World Cup match in Dharamshala to the same opponent was a farce.

More than the loss, it was the manner of it that caused alarm. This South African side is supposed to be best equipped to shed itself of the ‘Chokers’ tag. But it seemed stuck in the past, first allowing the Netherlands to rebuild from 50/4 and reach 245, and then collapsing to 44/4 before eventually folding for 207.

The Dutch have a great sporting history but not much of it involves cricket. In the lead-up, their captain Scott Edwards said that cricket was just a 65,000-strong community back home and that none of their World Cup matches were to be televised.

For such a humble side to show this spunk was remarkable. After the match, it seemed like the Netherlands had worked South Africa out. Edwards spoke about ‘Total Cricket’, an ode to the legendary tactical philosophy in football developed by Rinus Michels and Johan Cryuff.

Then Paul van Meekeren, the speedster who was once working as an Uber Eats delivery boy, said that South Africa didn’t possess much batting strength from positions 7 to 11.

It was as much a victory of strategy as of belief.

» WORLD CUP – MATCH 16
NEW ZEALAND vs AFGHANISTAN



KIWIS KEEP FLYING HIGH

New Zealand continued its winning run in the World Cup with a **149-run victory** over Afghanistan in Chennai.

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New Zealand likely didn't anticipate a stern examination from Afghanistan before its much-anticipated face-off with India. However, the Black Caps were in for a surprise as Afghanistan stunned England, and then, while batting in the humid conditions of Chennai, they sent the Kiwis from 109 for no loss to a shaky 110 for four. The relentless trio of Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, and Azmatullah Omarzai was responsible for New Zealand's sudden slide.

It discovered a glimmer of hope through experienced batter and stand-in captain Tom Latham, who partnered with the

resilient Glenn Phillips to counter the relentless Afghan bowling attack.

Their combined efforts steered New Zealand clear of danger and propelled it to a total that Afghanistan found insurmountable. New Zealand's winning streak continued as it secured its fourth consecutive victory and grabbed eight points.

The Afghan team now faces the challenge of consistently surpassing expectations; as its coach, Jonathan Trott, aptly puts it, "The only thing stopping this team is doing the basics well with consistency."

"It is high time we back up a good performance with an equally solid performance," said Trott after the crushing loss.

NEW ZEALAND
288/6

(Glenn Phillips 71;
Naveen-ul-Haq 2/48)

beat

AFGHANISTAN

139 (34.4 overs):

(Rahmat Shah 36; Lockie Ferguson 3/19)

Dropping anchor: A 144-run stand between Glenn Phillips, who made 71, and captain Tom Latham, who scored 68, helped revive New Zealand's innings. M. VEDHAN



Spin threat neutralised: Afghanistan leggie Rashid Khan picked up just one wicket against New Zealand, conceding 43 from his 10. M. VEDHAN

» WORLD CUP – MATCH 17
INDIA vs BANGLADESH

King size ton: Virat Kohli is only one century short of equaling Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 ODI hundreds. **Right:** Shubman Gill chipped in with a useful 53. **PICS:** K. R. DEEPAK



KOHLI HUNDRED KEEPS INDIA'S UNBEATEN STREAK INTACT

Virat Kohli scored his **48th ODI hundred** as India powered to a seven-wicket win over Bangladesh.

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In cricket, when a match tilts heavily in favour of one individual, it can either leave a lasting impression of remarkable brilliance or, at times, a lingering sense of disappointment.

The fact that a Virat Kohli spectacle

unfolded once more in Pune wasn't unexpected. Gahunge, quite different from an urban setting, doesn't seem like a typical Kohli battleground. Nevertheless, the 34-year-old crafted another remarkable century against Bangladesh. This marked his 48th

BANGLADESH

256/8

(Litton Das 63, Tanzid Hasan 51; Ravindra Jadeja 2/38)

lost to

INDIA

261/3

(41.3 overs): (Virat Kohli 103*, Shubman Gill 53)



All-round effort: Ravindra Jadeja took 2 for 38 and a brilliant diving catch to remove Mushfiqur Rahim (38). K.R. DEEPAK

century in ODIs and his third in just eight innings at this venue. He displayed his characteristic style throughout, with compelling drives and bursts of intense running between the wickets that spurred the crowd on.

As the target became less challenging and the audience started to lose hope of a Kohli century, the maverick cricketer remained resolute. He chose to defend against loose deliveries, carefully rotated strike at the end of an over, and even momentarily lost his composure over a wide delivery down the leg-side. He eventually reached his century with a six, securing both his personal milestone and a fourth consecutive victory for India in the league stage.

Kohli's slowing down and his desperation for a century underscored the significance of personal achievements, where the three-figure mark represents a sense of fulfillment. While opinions may differ on his approach during this 'chase within a chase,' Kohli is likely to find inspiration to excel on more significant occasions in the latter stages of the tournament.



Flatter to deceive: Bangladesh's Tanzid Hasan Tamim and Litton Das got their team off to a bright start before the Indian spinners strangled the opposition in the middle overs. K.R. DEEPAK



AUSTRALIA
367/9

(David Warner 163, Mitchell Marsh 121; Shaheen Afridi 5/54, Haris Rauf 3/83)

beat

PAKISTAN

305

(45.3 overs):
(Imam-ul-Haq 70, Abdullah Shafique 64; Adam Zampa 4/53)

Job well done: Adam Zampa took four wickets, and, along with Marcus Stoinis, denied Pakistan an improbable victory. K. MURALIKUMAR

BACK TO THEIR AGGRESSIVE BEST

Aussies **plundered** Pakistan's bowlers as Babar Azam's men failed to capitalise on a strong start.

N. Sudarshan

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Australia and Pakistan both left Bengaluru on October 20 with two wins and two losses each. But such was the contrast in emotions that it seemed like Australia had already punched its ticket for the semifinals while all that was left for Pakistan to do was to pack its bags and head home.

The disappointing 62-run loss for Babar Azam's men came on the back of the drubbing against India. Though Pakistan looked better than it did against the tournament hosts, there were question-marks galore. For one, they can do with some imaginative captaincy from Babar Azam. When Mitchell Marsh and David Warner were destroying every other bowler, Babar inexplicably held Shaheen Afridi back for a second spell until the 34th over. And he failed to ensure



Fiery knock: David Warner scored a stellar century, and capped it with his iconic Pushpa celebration. K. MURALIKUMAR

that his best bowler in terms of economy rate, Iftikhar Ahmed, completed his quota of overs. Iftikhar bowled eight.

Perhaps Babar is also worried about his own batting. The 18 he scored against Australia was his sixth score of less than 30 in seven innings. His Australian counterpart Pat Cummins rang in the changes well even as the likes of Marcus Stoinis and Adam Zampa answered his call. When the Saud Shakeel-Mohammad Rizwan partnership looked threatening, the 30-year-old brought himself on and provided the breakthrough. Not to mention the remarkable catch at short mid-wicket to send back Babar.

The game will be remembered for the 672 runs that were plundered. But the captaincy subtext was hard to miss.

» WORLD CUP – MATCH 19
NETHERLANDS vs SRI LANKA

Off the mark: After losing its opening three games, Sri Lanka overcame a spirited Netherlands challenge to open its account in this World Cup. SANDEEP SAXENA



SRI LANKANS SAVE THEMSELVES ORANJE FACES

Sri Lanka thwarted a spirited Netherlands riposte to record its **first victory** of the 2023 World Cup in Lucknow.

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Sri Lanka arrived in Lucknow in desperate need of a win. It had lost all three games and was, in fact, the only team that had yet to open its account. The Netherlands reached the Uttar Pradesh capital in high spirits, though, after registering one of the World Cup's greatest upsets against South Africa in Dharamshala. The way the Dutch innings panned out, an encore could not have been ruled out. After another batting collapse, the lower order staged a remarkable recovery act, this time through a seventh-wicket stand of 130 between Sybrand Engelbrecht (70) and Logan van Beek (59).

They had come together with the score reading 91 for six. Sri Lanka's



Fightback to no avail: Sybrand Engelbrecht and Logan van Beek were involved in a record seventh-wicket stand of 130 but it wasn't enough in the end. SANDEEP SAXENA

new-ball bowlers, Dilshan Madushanka and Kasun Rajitha, who would finish with four wickets apiece, were destructive with their seam and swing. The South African-born Engelbrecht and the New Zealand-born van Beek — both played in the Under-19 World Cups for those countries — even broke the World Cup record for the seventh wicket set in 2019 by M.S. Dhoni and Ravindra Jadeja. On a surface that offered something for the bowlers, 262 was a competitive total, but Sadeera Samarawickrama (91 not out) anchored a perfect chase.

NETHERLANDS

262

(49.4 overs): (SA

Engelbrecht 70, Logan Van Beek 59;
Dilshan Madushanka 4/49, Kasun
Rajitha 4/50)

lost to

SRI LANKA

263/5

(48.2 overs):

(Sadeera Samarawickrama 91*,
Pathum Nissanka 54; Aryan Dutt
3/44)

» WORLD CUP – MATCH 20 SOUTH AFRICA vs ENGLAND

Beat the heat: Heinrich Klaasen is exhausted during his stunning knock against England, where he battled hot and humid conditions to take South Africa to a massive total.

EMMANUAL YOGINI



Perfect wingman: Marco Jansen provided the necessary motivation to Klaasen to help him get his century despite the struggles. EMMANUAL YOGINI

KLAASEN LIGHTS UP WANKHEDA ON A SWELTERING DAY

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For a large part of the day, Heinrich Klaasen felt he was in the 'sauna', breathing in hot air. But he was actually at the Wankhede Stadium — dominating the England bowlers in South Africa's marquee World Cup clash.

Overcoming the hot and humid conditions in Mumbai, Klaasen went on to score his fourth ODI century — eventually paving the way for South Africa's 229-run victory. It was Klaasen and Marco Jansen's blitzkrieg in the last 10 overs that put their team to 399 for seven, the highest ever ODI total against England and the second-highest at the venue. Had it not been for Mark Wood waging the long handle after the Proteas' pace attack had taken the fizz out of the chase, England

wouldn't have lasted beyond 22 overs, before folding up for 173 for nine. But it was not easy to bat in those challenging conditions. When Jansen walked out to bat, he asked Heinrich Klaasen, "why are you complaining?"

By then, Klaasen had batted for more than an hour and was finding it difficult to continue in those conditions. As he soaked it in, Jansen, too, realised why Klaasen was complaining. "He was 81 or something and I knew the hard work he did to get there. I told him, you are not going to walk off this ground until you get your hundred. You can do whatever you want after getting there," Jansen said. While Klaasen listened to Jansen and eventually earned the Man of the Match award, he thought it was the latter who deserved it more. "Jansen kept me going, this award should go to him..."

Ably supported by Marco Jansen, Klaasen smashed a **67-ball century**, giving England no chance to come back in the game.

SOUTH AFRICA

399/7

(Heinrich Klaasen 109,
Reeza Hendricks 85,
Marco Jansen 75*, Rassie van der Dussen 60; Reece Topley 3/88)

beat

ENGLAND

170 (22 overs):
(Gerald Coetze 3/35)

» WORLD CUP – MATCH 21
INDIA vs NEW ZEALAND

NEW ZEALAND

273 (Daryl Mitchell 130,
Rachin Ravindra 75, Mohammad
Shami 5/54)

lost to

INDIA

274/6 (48 overs):
(Virat Kohli 95, Rohit Sharma 46)



Chase master: Virat Kohli played a brilliant innings of 95, and Mohammed Shami took 5-54 as the World Cup host secured a four-wicket victory over New Zealand in Dharamsala. K.R. DEEPAK

INDIA ENDS THE NEW ZEALAND HOODOO IN TOP-OF-THE-TABLE CLASH

Host went top of the table as the **only team unbeaten** after five matches.

Lalith Kalidas

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In a misty Dharamsala, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli shattered a 20-year-old jinx against the Black Caps with a fearless display. India's four-wicket victory had many positives as it took the lead in the World Cup standings, all

achieved without the cornerstone of its team's balance, Hardik Pandya. While Kohli came close to his record-equalling 49th century, a hasty shot to deep mid-wicket left him just short. Redemption was still possible, and it came through Ravindra Jadeja's performance, rectifying his near miss in a previous World Cup encounter with the same

opposition but in a different location, the 2019 World Cup semifinal in Manchester.

A pause in play as fog descended over stadium, along with a challenging outfield and a counter-attacking partnership between Rachin Ravindra and Daryl Mitchell, added excitement to various parts of this closely



Natural intervention: Fog briefly stopped play during India's run chase but that did not affect the momentum of Rohit Sharma's men. K.R. DEEPAK



All smiles: Daryl Mitchell, who made 130 and Rachin Ravindra, who struck 75, helped New Zealand recover with a third-wicket stand of 159. K.R. DEEPAK

contested match.

Nonetheless, a remarkable pace trio stole the limelight on a placid pitch. Mohammed Siraj and Jasprit Bumrah kept the New Zealand top-order alert with their well-executed seam deliveries. Joining them for the first time in an ODI during this World Cup, Mohammad Shami made an instant impact. Kiwi opener Will Young had no response to a delivery that nipped back sharply, and Shami completed his second five-wicket haul in World Cup history.

While Siraj controlled the middle overs, Bumrah and Shami showcased precision at the death, combining to claim seven wickets in 30 overs while conceding 144 runs.

As the snow-capped Dhauladhar range stood in the background, the Indian seam trio brought much-needed heat on a steadily chilling evening.



Savouring the moment: Afghanistan players go on a victory lap after registering their first victory against Pakistan in one-day internationals. B.JOTHI RAMALINGAM

A HISTORIC WIN TO RELISH

It is Afghanistan's first ODI victory **against Pakistan** in eight encounters.

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The occasion demanded one of its best performances, but Pakistan ended up giving one of its worst. In an emotionally charged contest against neighbouring Afghanistan, Babar Azam's men played in a manner that suggested that they are a far cry from the eccentric days of yore. In the heat and humidity of Chennai, they wilted against an Afghan team that simply refused to yield.

It is Afghanistan's first ODI victory against Pakistan in eight encounters. The 283 chase also surpassed Afghanistan's previous record chase of 276-8 when it was set a target of 274 by the United Arab Emirates in 2014. It is only Afghanistan's third World Cup win, after victories over Scotland in 2015 and England earlier in this tournament.

The main reason for batting first was the suggestion that this Chepauk pitch was going to be harder to bat second. It was a reasonable call, as evidenced by Babar's attritional 92-ball 74 and Iftikhar Ahmed's quickfire 40 from just 27 balls. But left-arm wrist-spinner Noor Ahmed's 3 for 49 kept the lid on Pakistan's scoring in the middle overs, helping restrict its innings under 300.

Afghanistan went on to show admirable maturity in the reply, helped in no small measure by Pakistan's inexplicably sloppy ground fielding. Afghan skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi had sounded the warning bells for the opponents when, at the pre-tournament Captains meet, he said: "Our batting will be our strength this time".

A poetic ending came to pass in Chennai with the winning runs coming off Shahidi's bat.



Choking 'em: Left-arm wrist-spinner Noor Ahmed's 3 for 49 kept the lid on Pakistan's scoring in the middle overs, helping restrict its innings under 300.
B.JOTHI RAMALINGAM

**PAKISTAN
282/7**

(Babar Azam 74, Abdullah Shafique 58; Noor Ahmed 3/39)

lost to

AFGHANISTAN

286/2 (49 overs):

(Ibrahim Zadran 87, Rahmat Shah 77*, Rahmanullah Gurbaz 65, Hashmatullah Shahidi 48*)

CROSSWORD

SRIRAM SRINIVASAN



ACROSS

- 1** Edachery Bhaskaran is India's head coach in this sport. (7)
- 3** Rune's new coach. (6)
- 7** MLS team ... Salt Lake. (4)
- 10** In men's cricket at the Asian Games, it got the silver medal. (11)
- 12** Cricket, flag football, squash, baseball-softball, and this sport have made it to the LA 2028 Olympics. (8)
- 15** American golfer Brooks ... (6)
- 18** ... Sharma, who beat Yuvraj's record of the fastest 50 by an Indian. (8)
- 19** Nicolo ..., plays for Italy and Juventus. (7)

DOWN

- 1** The county that Chahal represents. (4)
- 2** The PKL team from Delhi. (6)
- 4** ... Kiptum, the new marathon world record holder. (6)
- 5** ... Wembanyama. (6)
- 6** The 'B' in the BJK Cup stands for ... (6)
- 8** Chandika Hathurusingha is its head coach. (10)
- 9** ...-Sutirtha, the pair that clinched a historic bronze in the women's doubles table tennis at the recent Asian Games. (6)
- 11** Was Bangladesh's stand-in captain against India in the World Cup. (6)



SOLUTION TO LAST FORTNIGHT'S CROSSWORD

13 Manchester United midfielder and Brazil captain. (8)

14 Australian right-arm fast-medium bowler ... Boland. (5)

16 American tennis player Jessica ... (6)

17 Karthikeyan ..., one of the three Indians to beat Magnus Carlsen in classical chess. (6)



ON THE WRITE LINE

Sunil Gavaskar



FOR MORE
STORIES

DON'T BE A CRY-BABY

Some sporting nations, when things don't go their way, won't accept that their opponents were better than them. Instead, they will **blame everything** other than their lack of ability on the occasion for their loss.

Over the years, one thing that has been seen in Indian sports is that whenever there is an unexpected loss, the blame game is about selection, lack of facilities, and sometimes luck, too. Yes, Indian teams have played in different climes and conditions and have accepted that those will be different, sometimes radically, from those they get at home. So, while internally there will be remarks or even complaints about it, this will not be made as an excuse for their performance, which is below expectations. It won't be in the public domain.

There are some others who call themselves sporting nations, but when things don't go their way, they won't accept that their opponents were better than them. Instead, they will blame everything other than their lack of ability on the occasion for their loss. So, it could be the ground conditions, it could be the weather, it could be the umpiring or refereeing, and in recent times, the absence of their supporters at the ground. International competitions do separate the men from the boys, the pretenders from the performers, but in cricket, they also expose the crybabies. No prizes for guessing who wins this gold medal hands down.

As the tournament reached the halfway mark, the hosts, India, are comfortably at the

top of the points table, having won all five matches they have played. Theirs has been a true all-around performance, with both the batting specialists and bowlers doing their jobs almost to perfection. The fielding has also been of a very high standard, and that has added an even sharper edge to the bowling. The relaxed style of captaincy of Rohit Sharma and his sense of humour seem to keep the players in a happy space, even if he occasionally reprimands them. He himself is showing the way with the bat by taking the attacking route straightaway and putting pressure on the opposition bowlers. In doing so, he is sacrificing his chances of scoring a century, but he is getting the team off to such a flying start that those coming later are getting a nice platform to score big. If he can curb his risk-taking even a bit as he gets past the half-century, he will score more hundreds and yet not lose out on his strike rate, which is incredible anyway. Very rarely does the bowler get him out, as he himself gets out, trying to dominate the bowler.

The other stalwart in the Indian batting line-up, Virat Kohli, too, is playing at another supreme level altogether. His hunger for hundreds is insatiable, and that makes the Indians chase any score the opposition has put up. Kohli's wicket has to be earned by the bowler, and that's why it's the most prized



Going steady: As the tournament reached the halfway mark, India is comfortably at the top of the points table having won all the five matches it has played. It has been an all-round performance with both the batting specialists and bowlers doing their jobs to perfection. AP

wicket in the world in all formats of the game. At the time of writing, he is on 48 centuries in the ODI format, and it won't be a surprise if he celebrates his 35th birthday with his 50th century.

With Jasprit Bumrah in fine fettle, the Indian attack is looking really sharp, and with Shami making a comeback with a five-wicket haul, the new ball attack is indeed looking dangerous.

The spin duo of Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja is combining well, taking wickets in the middle overs, and not allowing a partnership to flourish.

There is still a long way to go, of course, but the way the Indian team has travelled the road so far does give encouragement that the long wait for ICC silverware could end on November 19.



Virat Kohli is on 48 centuries in the ODI format, and it won't be a surprise if he celebrates his 35th birthday with his 50th century.

A run-fest

4 } The number of occasions when three individual three-figure scores were posted in the same innings of an ODI match. South Africa batters achieved this against Sri Lanka in Delhi on 7 October 2023, when three of their batters (Quinton de Kock, Rassie van der Dussen and Aiden Markram) made centuries. This is the first such occurrence in a World Cup match. South Africa has now achieved this on three occasions in ODIs, while England has done it once. Also, the World Cup match in Hyderabad on 10 October 2023 saw four hundreds, two each by the two sides — Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Although this has occurred twice in ODIs, this is the first time in the World Cup.

Three centuries in the same innings of an ODI match

Team	Total	Against	Venue	Date	(Result)
South Africa	439/2 (50 ov)	West Indies	Johannesburg	18 Jan 2015	(won by 148 runs)
<i>Hashim Amla 153*, Rilee Rossouw 128, AB de Villiers 149</i>					
South Africa	438/4 (50 ov)	India	Mumbai WS	25 Oct 2015	(won by 214 runs)
<i>Quinton de Kock 109, Faf du Plessis 133 retd hurt, AB de Villiers 119</i>					
England	498/4 (50 ov)	Netherlands	Amstelveen	17 Jun 2022	(won by 232 runs)
<i>Phil Salt 122, Dawid Malan 125, Jos Buttler 162*</i>					
South Africa	428/5 (50 ov)	Sri Lanka	Delhi	7 Oct 2023	(won by 102 runs)
<i>Quinton de Kock 100, Rassie van der Dussen 108, Aiden Markram 106</i>					

Note: In Johannesburg, the top three batters made hundreds

Four centuries in the same ODI match

Team	Total (ov)	Against	Total (ov)	Venue	Date	Result
Pakistan	315/2 (50)	Australia	316/4 (48.5)	Lahore	10 Nov 1998	Aus won by 6 wkts
<i>Ijaz Ahmed 111, Mohd Yousuf 100</i>						
<i>R. Ponting 124*, A. Gilchrist 103</i>						
Australia	350/6 (50)	India	351/4 (49.3)	Nagpur	20 Oct 2013	Ind won by 6 wkts
<i>G Bailey 156, S Watson 102</i>						
<i>V Kohli 115*, S Dhawan 100</i>						
Sri Lanka	344/9 (50)	Pakistan	345/4 (48.2)	Hyderabad (I)	10 Oct 2023	Pak won by 6 wkts
<i>K. Mendis 122, S. Samarwickrama 108</i>						
<i>Mohd Rizwan 131*, Abdullah Shafique 113</i>						



South Africa's Rassie van der Dussen (left) and Quinton de Kock. AFP

19 } The number of innings for David Warner and Rohit Sharma to reach their respective career landmarks of 1000 World Cup runs — Warner against India in Chennai and Rohit against Afghanistan in Delhi, respectively. This is now a new record in World Cup history for batters to aggregate 1000 runs. The previous record was 20 innings jointly held by Sachin Tendulkar and A. B. de Villiers. Currently, 24 batters have the distinction of aggregating 1000 runs during their World Cup career (in this edition, Bangladeshi Mushfiqur Rahim became the third to achieve this on 19 October).

Quickest to reach 1000 runs in ODI World Cup cricket

Inns	Mts	Batter (team)	Achieved on	Runs	Ave.	100
19	19	David Warner (Aus)	8 Oct 2023	1033	60.76	4
19	19	Rohit Sharma (Ind)	11 Oct 2023	1109	65.24	7
20	20	A. B. de Villiers (SA)	7 Mar 2015	1043	57.94	4
20	20	Sachin Tendulkar (Ind)	8 Jun 1999	1043	61.35	3
21	21	Sourav Ganguly (Ind)	23 Mar 2007	1006	55.89	4
21	23	Viv Richards (WI)	30 Oct 1987	1013	63.31	3



Australia's David Warner. AFP

564 } The number of sixes that Rohit Sharma has hit in his international career. This is now the highest by any batter in the history of international cricket played across all three formats — Tests, ODIs and T20Is. During his 131 against Afghanistan in Delhi on 11 October 2023, he hit five sixes, surpassing the previous record of 553 sixes by West Indian Chris Gayle. As of date, Rohit has extended his tally of sixes to 564.

Most sixes hit in international cricket

Intl sixes	Batter (Team)	Mts	Inns	Runs	Ave.	Test	ODI	T20I
564	Rohit Sharma (Ind)	455	475	17907	43.35	77	305	182
553	Chris Gayle (WI/ICC)	483	551	19593	37.97	98	331	124
476	Shahid Afridi (Pak/ICC/Asia)	524	508	11196	23.92	52	351	73
398	Brendon McCullum (NZ)	432	474	14676	34.37	107	200	91
383	Martin Guptill (NZ)	367	402	13463	35.90	23	187	173



India's Rohit Sharma. GETTY IMAGES

5 } The number of fielders who have the distinction of claiming four catches, the most in a World Cup match. England's Joe Root, against Afghanistan in Delhi on 15 October 2023, became the latest to emulate four others in the tournament.

Most catches (four) by a fielder in ODI World Cup

Fielder	For	Opp	Venue	Date	M Inns	Result
Mohd Kaif	Ind	SL	Johannesburg	10 Mar 2003	2	Won
Soumya Sarkar	Ban	Sco	Nelson	5 Mar 2015	1	Won
Umar Akmal	Pak	Ire	Adelaide	15 Mar 2015	1	Won
Chris Woakes	Eng	Pak	Nottingham	3 Jun 2019	1	Lost
Joe Root	Eng	Afg	Delhi	15 Oct 2023	1	Lost

4 } The number of batters with the distinction of aggregating 26000 runs in their international cricket career. Virat Kohli, against Bangladesh in Pune on 19 October 2023, became the latest to join this elite list. He also achieved this landmark in fewest number of innings among those in the list. Among current players, Joe Root is the closest to reaching this landmark. However, with 18725 runs, he is still 7275 runs short.

The 26-thousand run club

Intl runs	Batter (Team)	Mts	Inns	Ave.	100	Runs	Runs	Runs
						Test	ODI	T20I
34357	Sachin Tendulkar (Ind)	664	782	48.52	100	15921	18426	10
28016	Kumar Sangakkara (SL/ICC/Asia)	594	666	46.77	63	12400	14234	1382
27483	Ricky Ponting (Aus/ICC)	560	668	45.95	71	13378	13704	401
26026	Virat Kohli (Ind)	511	567	53.99	78	8676	13342	4008

Quickest to reach 26000 international runs – fewest innings and matches

Inns	Mts	Batter (Team)	Runs	Ave.	100	Opp	Venue	Date	Format	Result
567	511	V. Kohli (Ind)	26026	53.99	78	Ban	Pune	19 Oct 2023	ODI	won
600	527	S. Tendulkar (Ind)	26036	48.12	78	Eng	Lord's	20 Jul 2007	Test	drawn
624	528	R. Ponting (Aus/ICC)	26052	46.77	69	Ind	Ahmedabad	24 Mar 2011	ODI	lost
625	560	K. Sangakkara (SL)	26095	46.34	56	Pak	Galle	9 Aug 2014	Test	won



India's Virat Kohli. PTI

8 } The number of successive World Cup victories by India against Pakistan. The victory by India against Pakistan in Ahmedabad on 14 October 2023 equals the solo record held by Pakistan against Sri Lanka. These are the most significant head-to-head victories by a side without tasting a defeat from the opponent.

Biggest head-to-head victories in World Cup, without tasting defeat

Result	Winner	Loser	From	To
8-0	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	14 Jun 1975	10 Oct 2023
8-0	India	Pakistan	4 Mar 1992	14 Oct 2023
6-0	West Indies	Zimbabwe	13 Jun 1983	24 Feb 2015
6-0	New Zealand	Bangladesh	17 May 1999	13 Oct 2023
5-0 +	New Zealand	Zimbabwe	10 Oct 1987	4 Mar 2011
5-0	Sri Lanka	Zimbabwe	23 Feb 1992	10 Mar 2011
5-0 +	Pakistan	Zimbabwe	27 Feb 1992	1 Mar 2015

+ includes one no-result game

All records are correct and updated until 20 October 2023

RAHUL FINDS FIFTH GEAR TO BE FRONT AND CENTRE OF INDIA'S CHALLENGE

K. L. Rahul has established reliability as an **accumulator-finisher** and not allowed India to feel the absence of Rishabh Pant in the 50-over format.



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The highlights package of an India-Australia ODI in Rajkot in January 2020 must be close to KL Rahul's heart. He may want to relive that day during his lows and draw inspiration from his versatility in an Indian top-order packed with heavyweights.

He can also credit his consistent progress to the unwavering support from team management across various roles and formats over the years. Despite his remarkable skills, Rahul's international career has been somewhat inconsistent compared to his senior teammates, Rohit Sharma

All statistics till the end of the Pakistan vs Afghanistan World Cup match on October 23, 2023

K. L. Rahul in numbers – ODIs

	M	Inns	Runs	Ave.	S/R	HS	100	50	4s	6s
Overall	66	62	2468	50.36	87.30	112	6	16	193	55
At No. 4 or 5 since 2020	33	30	1406	66.95	94.74	112	3	10	106	40

K. L. RAHUL'S CAREER HAS TAKEN A SIGNIFICANT UPSWING SINCE THE ASIA CUP LAST MONTH IN SRI LANKA

The middle-order bulwark: K. L. Rahul, with his vast array of strokes and renewed intent, serves as the ideal bridge between India's vaunted top order and the tail. GETTYIMAGES

and Virat Kohli. However, his career has taken a significant upswing since the Asia Cup last month in Sri Lanka. After a three-month injury break following the last IPL, the Karnataka batter initially found himself on the bench. However, an injury to Shreyas Iyer opened up an opportunity in the

middle order. Rahul made the most of this chance by scoring an unbeaten 111 against Pakistan in the Super Fours. He continued his fine form with three impressive fifties, highlighted by a 97 not out in India's World Cup opener in Chennai against Australia.

Leading run scorers in death overs (41-50) among World Cup 2023 batters

David Miller (SA)	» 551 RUNS	Inns 19
	» 153.05 S/R	
Mahmudullah (BAN)	» 365 RUNS	Inns 17
	» 122.48 S/R	
Heinrich Klaasen (SA)	» 351 RUNS	Inns 11
	» 177.27 S/R	
K. L. Rahul (IND)	» 349 RUNS	Inns 14
	» 151.08 S/R	
Mushfiqur Rahim (BAN)	» 322 RUNS	Inns 14
	» 135.29 S/R	
Tom Latham (NZ)	» 315 RUNS	Inns 13
	» 143.18 S/R	

India's top-order has looked solid throughout this World Cup despite a blip in the opening match against Australia, where the top three trudged back without marking their presence. Since then, captain Rohit and Kohli have been in sublime form, topping the charts after five league games.

Meanwhile, Rahul has established

Leading run scorers at

(4-5) among World Cup 2023 batters



Charith Asalanka (SL)
» **1421** RUNS
» **89.25** S/R

4s&6s
142



K. L. Rahul (IND)
» **1406** RUNS
» **94.74** S/R

4s&6s
146



Tom Latham (NZ)
» **1350** RUNS
» **91.03** S/R

4s&6s
134



Mohammad Rizwan (PAK)
» **1290** RUNS
» **89.64** S/R

4s&6s
123



Marnus Labuschagne (AUS)
» **1284** RUNS
» **84.92** S/R

4s&6s
102



Heinrich Klaasen (SA)
» **1207** RUNS
» **123.92** S/R

4s&6s
150



Aiden Markram (SA)
» **1027** RUNS
» **113.60** S/R

4s&6s
127



Shreyas Iyer (IND)
» **971** RUNS
» **95.00** S/R

4s&6s
119



Jos Buttler (ENG)
» **934** RUNS
» **114.04** S/R

4s&6s
108



Mushfiqur Rahim (BAN)
» **873** RUNS
» **76.04** S/R

4s&6s
63



himself as an accumulator-finisher. While he has not been a regular wicketkeeper for most of his international career, Rahul has also impressed with his glovework. In hindsight, the 31-year-old has not allowed India to feel the absence of Rishabh Pant in the 50-over format.

This is a Rahul like you have never seen before. He will not eat up deliveries and make you pull your hair but rather punish the bowlers at will with an enviable array of strokes. **A glimpse of Rahul's potential as a strong middle-order batter emerged in that one-day game in Rajkot.** Substituting for the concussed Pant, it was Rahul's first day as an international wicketkeeper, and he was batting at number five. He scored 80 from 52 balls, effected a stumping and took two catches. He

was rightfully named Player of the Match, a title he secured again in his recent performance against Australia in the World Cup.

"Once I got a couple of balls out of the middle of the bat, it just became about bat and ball. All the other things in your mind fade away," Rahul said after his then-captain Kohli described the knock as the "best he's played at international level."

So what has made him tick in the middle order?

Rahul now finds himself in a rare zone of batters who fall under the 'lesser the balls, better the bat' template. He can weather a storm if needed and rotate and strike briskly while playing in the middle order. Rahul serves as the ideal bridge between India's vaunted top order



Finders' keepers: While he has not been a regular wicketkeeper for most of his international career, K.L. Rahul has done a fair job behind the sticks thus far. GETTYIMAGES

and the tail. Since his first match at No. 5 on January 16, 2020, only one batter (Charith Asalanka) has cumulatively scored more runs than Rahul at positions 4 and 5 among all players featuring in the 2023 World Cup. His remarkable average (66.95) at these positions, with a minimum of 700 runs, is the highest. While he may not fit the typical description of a power hitter, Rahul is one of the fastest run scorers in the middle order, only surpassed by designated power hitters Heinrich Klaasen, Aiden Markram, and Jos Buttler

based on the same criteria.

Among middle-order batters (positions 4-7) in the middle overs (11-40) since 2020, Rahul ranks second in terms of average, with 69.37, just behind Babar Azam. Rahul has scored 1110 runs from 1310 deliveries during this phase, and his strike rate of 84.73 is also quite commendable.

In the death overs (41-50), Rahul's scoring rate is an impressive 151.08 runs per 100 balls. He has accumulated 349 runs in 14 innings during this phase, with 25 fours and 16 sixes. Among World Cup batters, he's only surpassed by Markam, Mahmudullah and Klassen.

Out of 32 innings at positions 4 and 5 since 2020, Rahul has accumulated 56.96 per cent (1406) of his career runs (2468). This already

India's leading run scorers at

No. (4-5) since 2012

HS, Highest

Runs



» 1904
RUNS

HS
110*



» 1842
RUNS

HS
134



» 1465
RUNS

HS
112



» 1289
RUNS

HS
113*



» 938
RUNS

HS
100



» 843
RUNS

HS
89



» 802
RUNS

HS
125*



» 679
RUNS

HS
139*



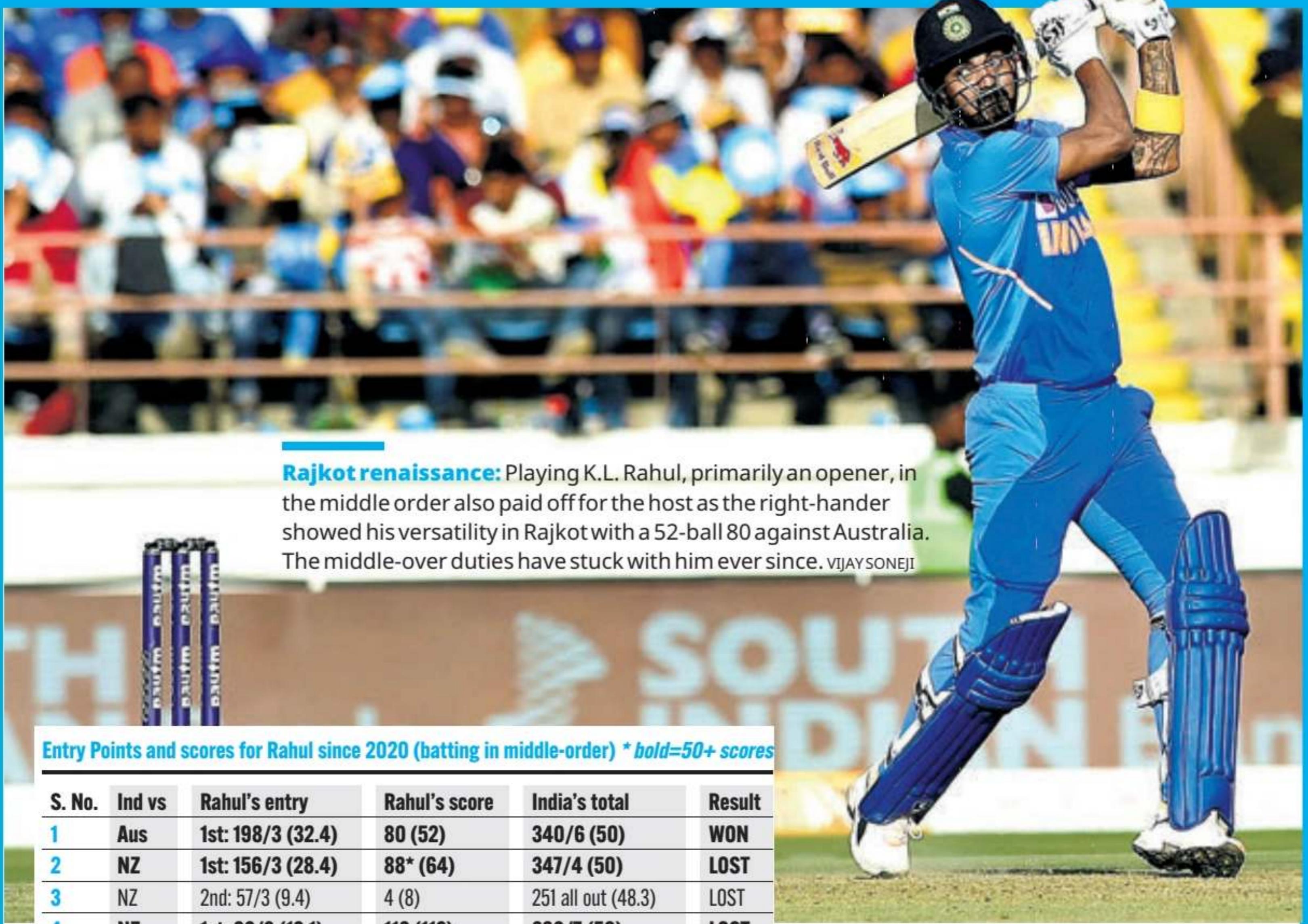
» 650
RUNS

HS
150



» 545
RUNS

HS
64*



Rajkot renaissance: Playing K.L. Rahul, primarily an opener, in the middle order also paid off for the host as the right-hander showed his versatility in Rajkot with a 52-ball 80 against Australia. The middle-over duties have stuck with him ever since. VIJAYSONEJI

Entry Points and scores for Rahul since 2020 (batting in middle-order) * **bold=50+ scores**

S. No.	Ind vs	Rahul's entry	Rahul's score	India's total	Result
1	Aus	1st: 198/3 (32.4)	80 (52)	340/6 (50)	WON
2	NZ	1st: 156/3 (28.4)	88* (64)	347/4 (50)	LOST
3	NZ	2nd: 57/3 (9.4)	4 (8)	251 all out (48.3)	LOST
4	NZ	1st: 62/3 (12.1)	112 (113)	296/7 (50)	LOST
5	AUS	2nd: 80/3 (9.5)	12 (15)	308/8 (50)	LOST
6	AUS	2nd: 153/3 (23.1)	76 (66)	338/9 (50)	LOST
7	AUS	1st: 114/3 (22.4)	5 (11)	302/5 (50)	WON
8	ENG	1st: 187/3 (34.5)	62* (43)	317/5 (50)	WON
9	ENG	1st: 37/2 (8.4)	108 (114)	336/6 (50)	LOST
10	ENG	1st: 157/4 (24.2)	7 (18)	329 all out (48.2)	WON
11	WI	1st: 39/2 (11.1)	49 (48)	237/9 (50)	WON
12	BAN	1st: 49/3 (10.4)	73 (70)	186 all out (41.2)	LOST
13	BAN	2nd: 39/3 (9.6)	14 (28)	266/9 (50)	LOST
14	BAN	1st: 320/3 (38.1)	8 (10)	409/8 (50)	WON
15	SL	1st: 213/3 (29.1)	39 (29)	373/7 (50)	WON
16	SL	2nd: 62/3 (9.3)	64*(103)	219/6 (43.2)	WON
17	SL	1st: 334/3 (45.3)	7(6)	390/5 (50)	WON
18	AUS	2nd: 16/3 (4.6)	75* (91)	191/5 (39.5)	WON
19	AUS	1st: 32/3 (4.5)	9 (12)	117 all out (25.6)	LOST
20	AUS	2nd: 77/2 (12.2)	32 (50)	248 all out (49.1)	LOST
21	PAK	1st: 123/2 (17.5)	111* (106)	356/2 (50)	WON
22	SL	1st: 91/3 (15.1)	39 (44)	213 all out (49.1)	WON
23	BAN	2nd: 17/2 (2.4)	19 (39)	259 all out (49.5)	LOST
24	AUS	2nd: 148/2 (23.4)	58* (63)	281/5 (48.4)	WON
25	AUS	1st: 216/2 (30.5)	52 (38)	399/5 (50)	WON
26	AUS	2nd: 171/3 (26.5)	26 (30)	286 all out (49.4)	LOST
27	AUS	2nd: 2/3 (1.6)	97* (115)	201/4 (41.2)	WON
28	PAK	2nd: 156/3 (21.4)	19* (29)	192/3 (30.3)	WON
29	BAN	2nd: 178/3 (29.1)	34* (34)	261/3 (41.3)	WON
30	NZ	2nd: 128/3 (21.3)	27 (35)	274/6 (48.0)	WON

established him as one of India's top middle-order batters since 2012. Rahul stands out with three centuries, the most for India, and the best average among the four batters who have scored over 1000 runs at these positions during this period. The other three are MS Dhoni, Suresh Raina, and Shreyas Iyer.

Rahul's performances in the middle order have displayed a mix of outcomes from 2020 to 2023. During this period, an experimental Indian team faced numerous batting collapses. Notably, five of Rahul's seven fifty-plus scores, which included two centuries, resulted in defeats despite his efforts.

However, this year, Rahul's contributions have become even more impactful, as all six of his fifty-plus innings have led to Indian victories. Remarkably, three of these came when the team lost three wickets in the first PowerPlay.

With Iyer and Hardik Pandya as his allies in the middle order, Rahul adds as much weight to India's chances as anybody. He will hope to shut out the noise, continue the work, and lead India to World Cup glory after 12 years.



INDIA CORRECTED ITS DODGY RECORD
AGAINST NEW ZEALAND IN ICC EVENTS
WITH A FOUR-WICKET TRIUMPH

» WORLD CUP DIARY

THE INDIAN JUGGERNAUT GOES ON

The Men in Blue have **outsmarted** all of their opponents so far, comfortably beating their neighbours and the heavyweights from Down Under.

Delhi has a strong Afghan connect thanks to old pathways of trade like the Grand Trunk Road that once linked Peshawar to Kolkata. Subsequently, when the Western and Eastern Blocs played their Great Game with Kabul as the pivot, the resultant strife in Afghanistan forced many of its citizens to seek a base in Delhi. So, it was no surprise that the World Cup game at Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium drew a number of Afghan fans.

India, though, kept its hospitality within the old alleys of its capital. On the field, the Men in Blue prevailed easily over their counterparts from beyond the Durand Line. Rohit slammed a

131 and guided his men to an eight-wicket victory on October 11. It was an apt prelude to the clash with another neighbour — Pakistan.

Sparring neighbours

The cricket bandwagon headed towards Ahmedabad and it was time for the big clash. India against Pakistan is a rare cricketing battle restricted to ICC events and the Asia Cup. The frost on either side of the Wagah border often meant that sport becomes a convenient tool for scoring political brownie points. However, the latest World Cup joust scraped a new low. Sports writers from Pakistan had to sweat over their visas and fans from across the border faced a cold shoulder.



Eventually, a few scribes and Pakistanis, who were overseas citizens from Europe and the United States, arrived at Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium, a gargantuan venue that has a scale well beyond traditional large venues like the Melbourne Cricket Ground or closer home, Kolkata's Eden Gardens. The crowd, soaked with a spirit of overwhelming nationalism, sang along the Indian national anthem with gusto as a lakh vocal chords sprung to life. It turned out to be Saturday night fever once again as India defeated Pakistan by seven wickets on October 14 with Bumrah and Rohit being the prime architects.

The match scored high on atmosphere and poorly as a contest but the fans were not complaining. Gaurav Manchanda, owner of FC Bengaluru United, for once swapped his allegiance from football to cricket and told *Sportstar*, "The clash was nothing short of a cricketing spectacle. The roaring thunder of

victory echoed through the stands as India displayed a masterclass of cricket. Our Men in Blue stayed unfazed. It wasn't just a win; it was a statement of intent, a promise of many glorious victories to come. The euphoria of victory has rekindled a timeless cricketing rivalry with a sweet taste of triumph."

Done and dusted

There was no stopping the Indian juggernaut as another neighbour, this time Bangladesh, was vanquished by seven wickets at Pune's MCA Stadium on October 19. Virat Kohli was at it again, striking a glorious ton, revealing that on the big stage he brooks no resistance. The venue, a stone's throw away from the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, is nestled within the foothills of the Western Ghats. It is picturesque and offers a glorious sunset if you are willing to peel your eyes away from the willow game but there are issues that grate.

The stadium isn't fully constructed,

the press box had no access to a restroom. Therefore, harried scribes chasing deadlines had to make do with a washroom one level down. The access roads to the venue are pastoral as tiny country roads snake around and it was no surprise that the fans had enormous trouble just to get in. The BCCI has to revisit its allocation of big-ticket matches and Pune needs to improve as a host.

Himalayan chill

Dharamsala, nestled in the Himalayas, taps our inner William Wordsworth. There may not be any daffodils but the sheer beauty of the hilly terrain, and windows and balconies that open to the mountains topped with snow and moisturised by the clouds, is a sight for eyes fatigued by urban strain. The HPCA Stadium, with a climate that forces you to dip into winterwear, is perhaps more suited to the Kiwis.

On October 22, it was time to correct India's dodgy record against New Zealand in ICC events and the



THE ROARING THUNDER OF VICTORY ECHOED THROUGH THE STANDS AS INDIA DISPLAYED A MASTERCLASS OF CRICKET

Men in Blue precisely did that with a four-wicket triumph mounted on Mohammed Shami's five for 54 and Kohli's 95. The town, plastered with Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur's posters, was buzzing late into the night with fans gulping a frothy cold brew despite the obvious chill in the air.

And as India's first leg of five World Cup matches concluded, it was time to retreat. Ross Taylor, an old India nemesis and a Royal Challengers Bangalore hero, was on the return flight to Delhi. "They tested India, didn't they, perhaps another 30 odd runs and who knows?" he quipped.

A fan walked up: "You Ross Taylor?" The New Zealand great smiled sheepishly and then it was time for selfies. "I charge 100 per 'photo,'" Taylor said and happily posed. He didn't earn any money, but surely reaped a lot of goodwill on the flight.

K. C. Vijaya Kumar

One for the nation: During the India-Pakistan clash, the crowd, soaked with a spirit of overwhelming nationalism, sang along the Indian national anthem with gusto as a lakh vocal chords sprung to life. R.V. MOORTHY

Moving World Cup matches back to traditional centres

If the World Cup in India was tasked with spreading the word of one-day cricket, its evangelism seems to have fallen on deaf ears so far. Monu Kumar Verma, a cab driver in Lucknow, sums up the ailing health of the format succinctly. While ensuring he doesn't downplay the passion the city has for the game, Verma, in his twenties, wonders if anybody has the time to watch an eight-hour game in one sitting.

"Aaram se ghar mein baithke, AC lagake match dekhunga. Beech mein kaam karunga aur phir mann kiya toh phir se dekhunga (I will comfortably watch the game sitting in my air-conditioned house. I'll do

my work in between and resume watching again if I feel like it)," he explains.

The crowd turnout at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, which peaked at around 15,000 for the Australia versus South Africa game, echoes a similar sentiment. Uttar Pradesh, a state saddled with the largest population in the country and nursing ambitions of becoming a one-trillion-dollar economy by the time the next ODI World Cup is thrust upon us, would understandably have little time to devote to a format in limbo.

In an aspirational economy in flux, hard-pressed for time, and with greater digital accessibility, a kilometre-long walk under the devilish noon sun and parching heat isn't worth it. The scene outside the stadium in Lucknow was a cruelly ironic take on the '*Muskuraiye, aap Lucknow mein hair*' promise that greets one at the airport.

With handkerchiefs on their heads, sweat trickling down from places they didn't know existed, and a permanent scrunch etched on their faces, fans dotted the highway leading to the stadium gates. The roads parallel to them were barred for vehicular traffic, and the handful of faithful were forced to make the arduous pilgrimage to the dome-like structure on foot. If that is what is meant by the hackneyed saying that 'cricket is religion' in India, it surely is. Once inside the stadium, the empty pale blue and pink seats—an overwhelming majority—indicate that the adage, in its intended sense, is only applicable to Indian cricket.

A houseful attendance for India's match against Afghanistan in Delhi says as much. An almost-capacity crowd watches the Men in Blue demolish Afghanistan even as some fans wait outside eagerly to chance upon a ticket holder willing to part with his possession. On match eve, a crowd builds up outside the road leading to the gates. They whisper in hushed tones, and with their demand for tickets, make anybody with an accreditation card around their neck feel like a bootlegger.

Just when the eagerness dies out with a collective groan as the reality of a sellout crowd hits them, the Indian team bus emerges from the stadium premises. A section of the assembled crowd goes up in cheer before somebody reminds them that local boy Virat Kohli skipped the practice session. The decibels drop before rising slightly again as they make do with a wave of the hand by Shreyas Iyer.

Delhi has a good memory, perhaps too good for the sake of

modernity. An auto driver appears clueless when asked about the fare to Arun Jaitley Stadium. It's just 'Kotla' for him, and he smirks when he says that most of the fans will learn about the new moniker only upon reaching the venue. For another, watching live cricket stopped after Steve and Mark Waugh played at the 'Kotla' in 1998. He fondly remembers them as '*do Australian bhal*' (two Australian brothers). In traffic, an electric rickshaw driver is keenly informing his customers of the scores of an ongoing match between England and Bangladesh.

Delhi clearly knows its cricket. While the debate for restricting Test cricket to traditional centres rages on, can a similar case be made for ICC events in the country in light of the poor turnouts for non-India games? Well, there's almost a month of WC action left to answer that and a sensitive question of 'spreading the game' to contend with.

Dhruva Prasad

A worthy achievement

When Teja Nidamanuru (**left**), one of the heroes in the Netherlands' successful campaign at the World Cup qualifier in Zimbabwe earlier this year, was asked about the reaction back home to the team's shock win against South Africa, he said, "I'd say in total there won't be any more than 5,000-odd people that play cricket in the Netherlands," the batter said.

"The awareness of the game is also growing in the Netherlands, which is a really huge positive for us, because quite often when you say play cricket, not many people know what that is." At the end of the press conference in

Lucknow, ahead of the Netherlands' match against Sri Lanka, the media manager, John van Vliet, went back to that question and added, "The win against South Africa made headline news on television." That should help a team that is struggling to get resources and seeking sponsorship.

P. K. Ajith Kumar



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Might of melting pot

Multi-nation tournaments like the ODI World Cup offer a glimpse into the coalescence of cultures, with fans from across the globe providing a milieu for an outpour of passion. Interspersed between visitors from the traditional cricket-mad nations was a couple from Portugal (**above**) who were here to watch the Bangladesh vs. New Zealand game in Chennai without the slightest idea about the event or the sport. Fan experiences like these exemplify the appeal of major sporting events and are sure to have a significant impact on the global expansion of cricket.

Anish Pathiyil

A different world

People go to Dharamsala, the abode of the Dalai Lama, for the peace and tranquility it offers. But the Diary arrived in the hill station for the match between South Africa and Netherlands in a petulant rage. Its flight from Delhi was cancelled because of bad weather conditions and was rescheduled for the morning of the contest. The Diary's feelings were exacerbated when it landed in Dharamsala, for the town was throwing a fit too. There were dark clouds, blustery cold winds and steady rain. The Diary wondered why it had to fly 2,600 kilometres from Bengaluru to witness a match being



GETTY IMAGES



Spirited support: South African fans — Shane Weisz, Jonathan Tooke and Matthew Roos — are visiting India for the first time to cheer on their team. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

washed out. That's the sort of curious twist of fate the Diary has been having of late. Wherever the Diary goes, wretched luck follows. Kerala Blasters walked out of an ISL match, the IPL final went on for two days and so on. But by 4 p.m. on that Tuesday, the gloom and doom in the foothills of the Himalayas gave way to clear skies and bright sunshine. A weatherman had actually predicted the forecast right, but in India astrologers have a better strike-rate. So nobody bothered. What followed was a magical evening of cricket that ended with the Dutch recording an upset win over the Proteas. The Diary still couldn't find peace and tranquility on a frenetic and tiring night, but it returned a happy person.

N. Sudarshan

With love, from SA

As Heinrich Klassen took the England bowlers to the cleaners at the Wankhede Stadium on Saturday late afternoon, a group of young fans were chanting, "Go Proteas!" from one corner of the Sunil Gavaskar Pavilion.

With South African batters in red-hot form, the youngsters — all of them in their early 20s — hoped that the Men in Green would breach the 400-run mark, and throughout the innings, they made it a point to click as many pictures as possible.

"This is our first visit to India and we want to make every moment memorable," Shane Weisz said with a smile. Growing up in Cape Town, Shane has heard several stories of Indian cricket from his grandfather Ali Bacher — the legendary cricket administrator from South Africa. Bacher was the architect of South Africa's return to the ICC fold in 1991 and since childhood. "Since childhood, I have heard so much about India and the country's fondness for cricket from my grandfather, so this time around, we wanted to visit India and enjoy the World Cup from the stadium," Weisz said, as two of his friends — Jonathan Tooke, Matthew Roos — nodded their head in agreement.

After managing to book tickets for the South Africa vs England game online, the trio reached Mumbai on Saturday morning, checked into a hostel in Andheri West and then rushed to the Wankhede Stadium for the game. "It's an incredible experience to watch the game from the stands. We are really happy that South Africa batted so well," Weisz, who holds a Masters in Machine Learning and Machine Intelligence from University of Cambridge, said.

He was just four years old when South Africa hosted the ODI World Cup in 2003, and even though he has been to several bilateral games at the

Newlands, this was his first visit to an ODI World Cup venue. "All three of us have waited for this moment and we hope we get to see some more cricket here," he said.

The trio plans to visit The Taj Mahal in Agra before heading to Kolkata to watch the India vs South Africa game. "We are starting off our careers, so we are on a shoestring budget and hence, we are staying in a hostel," said Weisz, adding with a smile: "We are loving it!"

Sachin, Sachin

It has been a decade since Sachin Tendulkar drew curtains on his illustrious international career, but the fans remembered the Indian cricket legend as South Africa faced England.

Every time the South African batters went hammer and tongs against the English bowlers, a nearly-packed stadium chanted, 'Sachin, Sachin...'

On November 1, the Mumbai Cricket Association will inaugurate a life-size statue of the former India captain and members of the current Indian team are expected to grace the event. In February, the MCA president Amol Kale had announced that the association was planning to erect a life-size statue of Tendulkar as a tribute to the legend, who turned 50 in April.

Shayan Acharya



» TRIBUTE
BISHAN SINGH BEDI

A LIFE OF UNPARALLELED SKILL, HIGH PRINCIPLES AND UNWAVERING PASSION

It would be apt to describe Bedi as a **philosopher** with a mind always busy with ideas to make the world a happier place to live.

Vijay Lokapally
vijay.l@thehindu.co.in

Bishan Singh Bedi was much more than a cricketer. He was a trusted historian, great storyteller, caring elder, friend, doting father, and life partner. And yes, he was also the greatest left-arm spinner that cricket has seen.

How do you encapsulate such a beautiful and decorated life in words? Bedi was an emotion you had to experience. His passion for the game was infectious. He could make a Peruvian fall in love with cricket. "You have to live cricket. Not just play it," was one of his earliest gems.

Knowing Bedi was a privilege. Bedi, the person. Bedi, the cricket analyst. Bedi, the teacher. He could talk about cricket, religion, history, politics, literature, or anything under the sky. His greed to acquire knowledge even as he crossed the 70-mark was amazing. "I am in my mandatory overs, but I must not be stumped," he would say. His philosophy was simple yet forceful.

In our conversations, at some point he would bring in Don Bradman, the cricketer he

admired most, and his guru, Gyan Parkash, known to few. In recent times, there have been very few conversations about cricket. He would call in the morning and give an enlightening discourse on life. He would quote Kabir, a poet who left a lasting influence on Bedi.

It would be apt to describe him as a philosopher with a mind always busy with ideas to make the world a happier place to live. He would reach out to sportspersons from other fields to commend their work, asking for the contact details of champions like Sania Mirza, PV Sindhu, and Mithali Raj. He would drop them a congratulatory message and feel delighted when they responded. He had this childlike admiration for young Indians who excelled in various walks of life.

The best thing about Bedi was that he would never hold back from speaking his mind. He refused to accept Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan as a clean bowler. Not many would know that he even refused to include Suresh Luthra in the playing XI when the left-arm seamer was a known terror. "I am not convinced of his action," Bedi would reason. He always believed in playing fair.

Bedi's love for tradition transcended boundaries. Bradman was his favourite for his "purity" in batting. Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi appealed to him for his "Indianness" in the dressing room. He had some off-field differences with Sunil Gavaskar. He made no effort to hide it. But he had told *Sportstar*, "He is the original little master. I cannot see another person who is better than Gavaskar. Honestly. I saw so much of him from very close quarters. I don't have the capacity to write about him as Jack Fingleton wrote about Sir Don Bradman in *Brightly Fades the Don*. Gavaskar was the most complete batter we ever had. I have seen his correctness, his determination, and his will to defy all attacks in all conditions."

If Lala Amarnath was a great raconteur, Bedi was the master. He could regale you with anecdotes from both on and off the field. What



Legend on legend: Despite his differences with Sunil Gavaskar, Bedi had great admiration for the Little Master. "He was the most complete batter we ever had. I have seen his correctness, his determination, and his will to defy all attacks in all conditions" — he had told *Sportstar*. VIVEK BENDRE **Below:** Bedi in action in 1974.

THE HINDU PHOTO LIBRARY

made him so lovable was his capacity to laugh at himself. For those who said he had become bitter, nothing could have been farther from the truth. He was realistic. If anything, he hated hypocrites. "You have to leave a legacy behind. So, why go with curses from people? For me, your work has to be shared." He was always happy to give away the secrets of his trade.

Being part of the famed Indian spin quartet was such a huge honour that he nurtured in his heart. "I was a mere cog. They were the main artists," he would say of E. A. S Prasanna, B. S. Chandrasekhar, and S Venkataraghavan. Bedi's humility was an example. You hit him for a six, and he would applaud your stroke.

"I have lost a dear friend. A great human being. His cricket is known to all, but he was such a kind part of our quartet. He would think for you. And rejoice in your success more than you do. There was no one like him. I am deeply saddened," Chandrasekhar told *Sportstar*.

Venkataraghavan got emotional



Just for laughs: Bedi shares a light moment with other dignitaries at the Sportstar Aces Awards 2020. R. RAGU

when he spoke about his teammate. "I have lost my mentor. He was a fabulous partner to bowl with. We had such a fine understanding. You can say we complemented each other. He celebrated my success. He commanded respect with his art. Believe me, Bish was a magician. He could tie batters to the crease at will. Literally played havoc with them. He was a guide to all of us, taking the burden on his shoulders. I feel like an orphan. Lost a great friend. He was one of the greatest the game has seen."

For Kapil Dev, the death of Bedi is a "personal" loss. "What was so special about Mahatma Gandhi and Subhash Bose? They had a strong character. Bishan Bedi was in that league. My first captain, guide, and elder brother, he had the liberty to scold me, correct me. I did that with Sachin (Tendulkar) and Anil (Kumble). You don't come across people like him. A grand human being first. The world knows of his cricketing feats. I know Bishan *paaji* as a great guiding force in my life."

Bedi was as popular in Pakistan. "For me, he was an *ustad* who I learned from watching," said Pakistan left-arm spinner Iqbal Qasim. "I grew up wanting to be like him. Watched him in the nets when he came to Pakistan in 1978. I was amazed to learn firsthand from him. He never thought I was from Pakistan. He was God's man. A gift to cricket." Bedi was a godfather to hundreds of cricketers. He was the man solely responsible for taking Delhi and North Zone cricket to glory. Winning the Ranji Trophy in 1978-79, inspiring stars like Mohinder Amarnath, Kapil, Madan Lal, and Surender Khanna, and honing talent like Maninder Singh, Kartik Murali, and many more. He



also made it a point to speak to young journalists.

Of the many memories, this one is my favourite. In a media match, I hit him for a boundary. He applauded, and the next ball fired in an arm-ball that I never saw. As I passed him, he put his arm around me and whispered, "Never play cross-batted."

Bedi was also a great cook. The last recipe he probably learned was the 'South Indian style' curd rice, taken on demand via WhatsApp from my wife. She was the first

person he called after getting the dish right. If there was one thing he loved as much as cricket, it was his massive collection of books. He would famously say, "I don't mind chasing a cricket ball to the ends of the world, but I do not want to chase after a book borrowed from me."

The world will now claim to know Bedi. Why not? In my case, he knew me. And that is the thought I will cherish. I will not miss him, for he is with me—in my heart, in my pen, in my thoughts. Go well, sir.



« **"I have lost a dear friend. A great human being. His cricket is known to all, but he was such a kind part of our quartet. He would think for you. And rejoice in your success more than you do. There was no one like him. I am deeply saddened – B. S. Chandrasekhar (in blue) to Sportstar »**

» MATCH OF THE
FORTNIGHT

Stalemate at the Bridge

Arsenal scored two late goals to deny Chelsea a third consecutive win this season.

Over the years, the battle between London heavyweights Chelsea and Arsenal has enthralled on multiple occasions. From the 5-3 goal-fest in Arsenal's favour in 2011, to Chelsea dismantling a hapless Arsenal side 4-1 in the 2019 Europa League final — the clashes have been etched in the fans' minds over time.

When Arsenal travelled to Stamford to face Chelsea in their most recent Premier League clash, the balance was tipped heavily on the Gunners' side considering the contrasting starts both the teams have had to the season.

While the general expectation was that of an Arsenal win, what followed was a fascinating 2-2 draw. Whenever VAR is called into action, it becomes a major talking point throughout the match — that too in a high-profile clash such as this. That is what happened when Chelsea had a penalty shout after Mykhailo Mudryk's header from close range struck Arsenal's William Saliba's arm. Referee Christopher Kavanagh initially did

not give a penalty, but after VAR intervention, overturned his decision. Cole Palmer stepped up to take the penalty and gave Chelsea a 1-0 lead after converting with a calm finish to the left, sending David Raya the wrong way.

With a shell-shocked Arsenal and a buzzing Stamford Bridge, Chelsea doubled its lead in the second-half. Mudryk caught Raya off balance at his near-post, and his attempted cross for Raheem Sterling at the far-post ended up flying inside the net. Arsenal's lacklustre performance led most to believe that the match was done and dusted, but there is something special about this Gunners side that keeps firing until the final whistle.

In the 77th minute, Arsenal had a stroke of good fortune when Robert Sanchez misplaced a simple pass out from the back. The ball fell to Declan Rice, and the former Chelsea academy player's first-time strike found the bottom left-corner to hand a lifeline to the Gunners.

Now, Chelsea was under the cosh. Arsenal's incessant pressure paid off when second-half substitute Leandro Trossard took just six minutes to make his impact. Bukayo Saka found himself with time and space to swing in a dangerous ball from the right flank at the back-post, and Trossard timed his run to perfection to poke the ball past Sanchez in the 84th minute.

The Blues defence had folded under pressure yet again and gifted a precious point to Arsenal, which kept it level on points — 21 — with title-challenger Manchester City. Chelsea, on the other hand, languishes in 10th with 12 points and just three wins from nine matches.

Last gasp: Arsenal's incessant pressure paid off when second-half substitute Leandro Trossard (below) took just six minutes to make his impact by scoring the equalizer. REUTERS

CHELSEA

2

(Cole Palmer 15',
Mykhailo
Mudryk 48')

ARSENAL

2

(Declan Rice 77',
Leandro
Trossard 84')





1



2



3



4

Bellingham shines as England beats Italy to qualify for Euro 2024

Harry Kane and Marcus Rashford scored the goals as England beat Italy 3-1 at Wembley in the rematch of the 2020 Euro final to qualify for the 2024 edition in Germany. The night belonged to Jude Bellingham, who shone in a slightly more attacking capacity, winning the penalty for Kane's first and providing the assist for Rashford.

Another injury for Neymar as Brazil falters against Uruguay

Brazil star Neymar suffered a serious ACL and meniscus tear during the FIFA World Cup qualifier as the team lost 0-2 to Uruguay in Montevideo. The 31-year-old is set to be sidelined for several months and looks set to miss matches in the Saudi Pro League for Al-Hilal. In the Indian context, Neymar will also miss his team's AFC Champions League fixtures against Mumbai City FC.

England and Manchester United legend Sir Bobby Charlton passes away at 86

Bobby was a fiery footballer known for his attacking style of play, and had won the FIFA World Cup, European Cup and Ballon d'Or. One of the surviving members of the Busby Babes — the Manchester United team that lost a majority of its members in the 1958 Munich air disaster — he is considered to be one of the greatest ever footballers.



AFP

5

Racism takes centre-stage again as Sergio Ramos faces old team

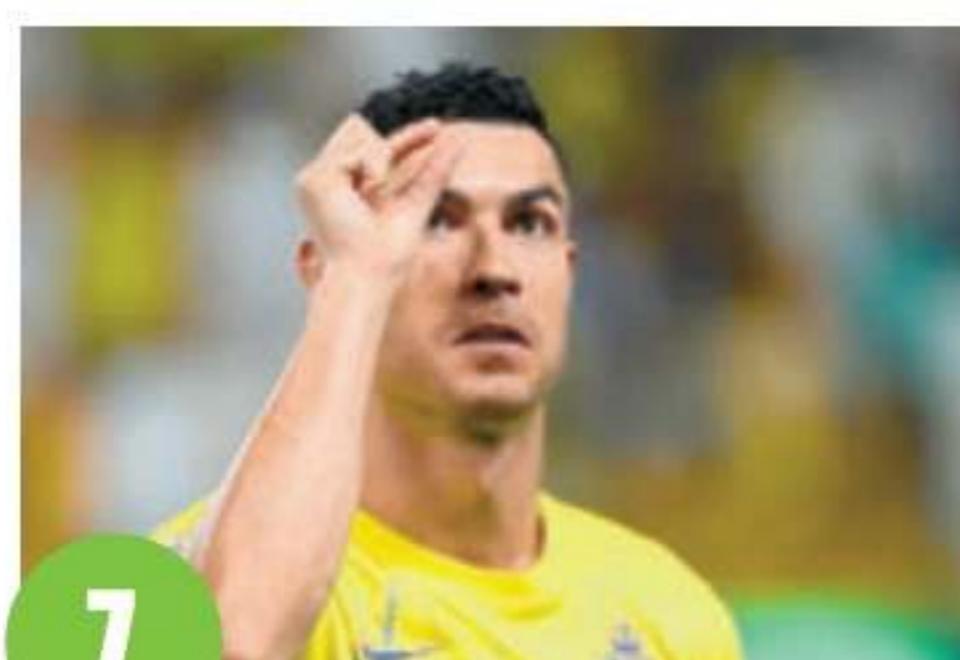
Sergio Ramos facing his old side Real Madrid was overshadowed by racist chants towards Los Blancos star Vinicius Jr at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan in Seville. The unfortunate incident directed at Vinicius forced the Sevilla authorities to eject the fan from the premises and file a police complaint. The match ended 1-1 with Daniel Carvajal's late header rescuing a point after David Alaba's own goal had put the hosts ahead.



6

Messi double helps Argentina beat Peru in WC Qualifier

Lionel Messi scored twice as Argentina beat Peru 2-0 to maintain top spot in the South American World Cup qualifiers. The 36-year-old scored from a Nico Gonzalez assist in the 32nd minute and added a second 10 minutes later with a strong finish from Enzo Fernandez's pass.



7

38-year-old Ronaldo becomes leading goal scorer of 2023

A late free-kick by Cristiano Ronaldo helped Al Nassr defeat Damac FC in the Saudi Pro League. With this goal Ronaldo became the leading scorer (41) of 2023 ahead of Erling Haaland (40) and Barnabas Varga (39).



8

Spain, Portugal and France book Euro 2024 spots

Spain beat Norway 1-0 thanks to a goal from young starlet Gavi to seal its place in next year's European Championships. Portugal weathered a late Slovakia comeback to seal progression with a 3-2 win with Cristiano Ronaldo scoring a brace. Kylian Mbappe scored two as France beat an injury-ridden Netherlands 2-1 in Amsterdam to seal its place in the continental event in Germany next year.

Aneesh Dey & Anish Pathiyil

PRABIR WAS JUST PROTECTING OUR PLAYER, SAYS DAUWEN

The Kerala Blasters coach says the ban on the defender **surprised** him.

With their key defenders either injured or under suspension, life has been tough for Kerala Blasters. While Croatian Marko Leskovic is yet to regain full fitness after his injury, the other foreigner, Milos Drincic, was handed a three-match suspension after the red card in the away match against Mumbai City, which saw a flurry of cards being flashed.

To add to the Blasters' woes, news came in just before its match against NorthEast United that the All India Football Federation (AIFF) had suspended another key defender, Prabir Das, for three matches — for his actions in the Mumbai match. He will now return only on November 25 against Hyderabad FC.

"I have to accept it, we lost our reaction during that game...that was wrong, we know that. We have to deal with that better," said Frank Dauwen, the Blasters' assistant coach about the match against Mumbai FC, which did a lot of damage to the team as it played NorthEast United.

"I think he (Prabir) didn't do anything. He was just protecting our player who was lying down on the field. He has also got three weeks (suspension). I can't believe it but we have to accept it, we



FOR MORE STORIES

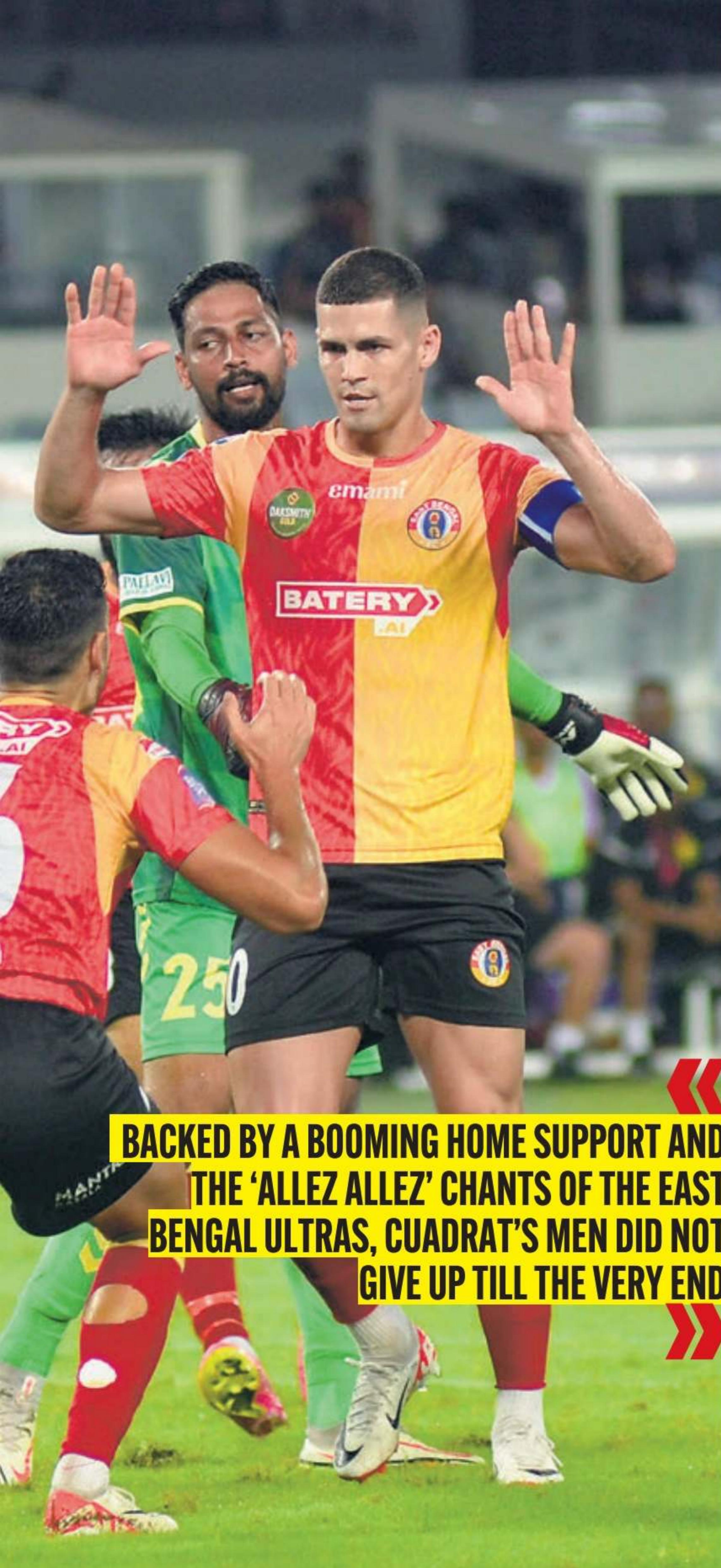
Troubling times:
Kerala Blasters FC (yellow) has to contend with not only injury issues but also suspensions for its players, Milos Drincic and Prabir Das. PTI



Two good: Skipper Cleiton Silva (right) scored a brace as East Bengal opened their account against Hyderabad FC.

DEBASISH BHADURI





BACKED BY A BOOMING HOME SUPPORT AND THE 'ALLEZ ALLEZ' CHANTS OF THE EAST BENGAL ULTRAS, CUADRAT'S MEN DID NOT GIVE UP TILL THE VERY END

have to learn from this situation. So now we miss five players in the back."

However, Dauwen was happy with the ones who took their place. "I think Noacha (Singh), Hormipam, who were playing for the first time, played a decent game. Sandeep (Singh) also...I'm happy with that."

That was Dauwen's last match as the man in charge of the team. The head coach Ivan Vukomanovic will be back after his 10-match suspension, a penalty he had to pay for the Blasters' controversial walkout in the playoff match against Bengaluru FC last season. Blasters will look to start afresh with his return.

East Bengal beats Hyderabad FC for the first time in the ISL

Before the current season, East Bengal (EBFC) clashed six times with Hyderabad FC (HFC) in Indian Super League (ISL) history, but could not procure a single win — losing four and drawing two. But under new manager Carles Cuadrat, the Red and Gold had renewed hope when the sides met on September 30.

When Hitesh Sharma scored in the 8th minute for a 1-0 lead to HFC, it seemed like the script would remain the same. But backed by a booming home support and the 'Allez Allez' chants of the East Bengal ultras, Cuadrat's men equalised just 90 seconds later as skipper Cleiton Silva dinked the ball over Laxmikant Kattimani to make it 1-1.

As the match remained level with the onset of second-half additional time, it seemed like Hyderabad would retain its unbeaten record against East Bengal, but the Salt Lake Stadium was yet to witness some late magic from Cleiton.

In the third minute of additional time, the Kolkata side got a free kick in a dangerous area. Cleiton stood over the free-kick and with an immaculate finish, found the net as his shot hit the underside of the crossbar and rattled the net for a 2-1 lead.

The jinx was broken, and it was a happy trip home for the East Bengal faithful at the Salt Lake stadium.

Stan Rayan & Aneesh Dey



FOR MORE STORIES

Paul Fein

A man should spend his whole life at play.” — Plato
“Laugh as much as possible, always laugh. It’s the sweetest thing one can do for oneself & one’s fellow human beings.” — Maya Angelou

“Humor has justly been regarded as the finest perfection of poetic genius.” — Thomas Carlyle

Art Buchwald, the humour columnist for *The Washington Post* and an avid social player, reminded me that tennis always had plenty of quipsters, jesters, and comedians — whether they competed, coached, talked, or wrote about our sport.

On the perils of mixed doubles, Buchwald advised, “You either go to bed with someone or you play tennis with them. But don’t do both.”

Politicians rarely escaped his biting wit. “He’s a very good [tennis] player,” Buchwald wrote about then vice president George Herbert Walker Bush. “I think he’s a much better player than he is a vice president.”

A few years later, Bush, a standout baseball first-baseman at Yale and one of the most athletic U.S. presidents in history, became the butt of a different kind of humour. During a charity doubles match with Anna Kournikova and former No. 1 Lindsay Davenport, Kournikova hit the former president in the derriere with an errant serve. “That was the most I’ve ever laughed on the court,” Davenport said in *Australian Tennis Magazine*.

President Gerald Ford, often portrayed as a klutz on *Saturday Night Live* TV skits, ironically, starred as a University of Michigan football lineman and played several other

Wit and watch: Steffi Graf, a champion not known for humour, displayed a quick wit during a Wimbledon match. When a spectator shouted, “Will you marry me?” Steffi shot back with: “How much money do you have?” GETTY IMAGES

WHAT'S SO FUNNY ABOUT TENNIS

Like most sports, tennis has been riddled with **humorous moments** throughout its history.



sports, including tennis. Ford also provided some comic relief in a doubles match when he hit his partner on the head with the ball.

Novak Djokovic said the nickname he likes most is 'The Djoker'. His impersonations of the pre-serve mannerisms of Maria Sharapova and rivals Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer, and Andy Roddick were so hilarious at the 2007 US Open that he said, "In the last two days the people were congratulating me more for the impressions than for my tennis."

At The Boodles 2013 exhibition before Wimbledon, Djokovic spoofed Sharapova, who happened to be the girlfriend of his opponent, Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov. Spectators roared with laughter, as did Grigor, when Novak turned his back to the court and fiddled with his racket strings, pushed his hair back, stuck his derriere out, bounced the ball, pushed his hair back several more times, and let out a high-pitched scream after serving.

John McEnroe's bad-boy antics provided ample material for The Djoker at the 2009 US Open. An imperious Novak demanded, "Give me the balls" and ranted "You cannot be serious!" Novak then imitated McEnroe's unique service motion and protested to an imaginary linesperson, "It was wide!" That prompted Johnny Mac, a good sport, to show the cheering fans the real thing. So, he served, faulted, and threw his racket on the court in mock anger. The two smiling 'comedians' hugged at the net amidst the laughter from delighted spectators.

Ernests Gulbis got his forename from his billionaire Latvian father, an admirer of Ernest Hemingway, the great American author. Ernests also had a way with words. His métier was press conferences where he never failed to entertain.

On reports that he travelled to tournaments in a private jet, Gulbis jested, "Yes. And I have a helicopter, a submarine, and a spaceship."

When Ernests misheard a question regarding John McEnroe's critical comments about umpires, he expounded, "Get rid of vampires? My God. Umpires? I thought of



Past vs future: Novak Djokovic (right) famously imitated John McEnroe (left) at the 2009 U.S. Open. An imperious Novak demanded, "Give me the balls" and ranted "You cannot be serious!" He then imitated McEnroe's unique service motion and protested to an imaginary linesperson, "It was wide!" AP

something else. I thought vampires in the way the people who are surrounding and sucking the energy out of players. That's what I meant. Umpires, no. Without umpires, it wouldn't work. So please delete it. No, umpires. Cannot work without umpires. I thought it was vampires. You know what I mean?"

Asked about a night he spent in a Stockholm jail for soliciting prostitutes, Gulbis gave a reply that could have been scripted — "It was great. It was great fun; a very funny time. But I'm never going to go to Sweden again. If you go out and meet some girls, and immediately you're put in jail, that's not normal. It was very funny, though. I think

everybody should go to jail at least once." Sometimes players are unintentionally funny. For example, Serena Williams, then 29, in a rare display of self-deprecation, told us her mental age was still 15. In sharp contrast, Marion Bartoli announced that her I.Q. was 175. "I did a test when I was younger, but I'm not really someone that is really telling everyone, 'Oh, I'm so smart.' I'm kind of hiding it." Marion, you cannot be serious!

Whenever we want a spontaneous medium for humor, we can always turn to Twitter, or X, as it's been rebranded. Well-known Australian coach and TV analyst Darren Cahill used it to tweet his definition of a bad

At The Boodles 2013 exhibition before Wimbledon, Djokovic spoofed Sharapova, who happened to be the girlfriend of his opponent, Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov

day — ‘When you sign an autograph for a kid and he looks you square in the eyes and says, ‘Thanks, Brad!’

When Victoria Azarenka flirted on Twitter, asking how she could learn to serve as powerfully as Nick Kyrgios, the 19-year-old Australian sensation responded, “Private lessons, of course!!”

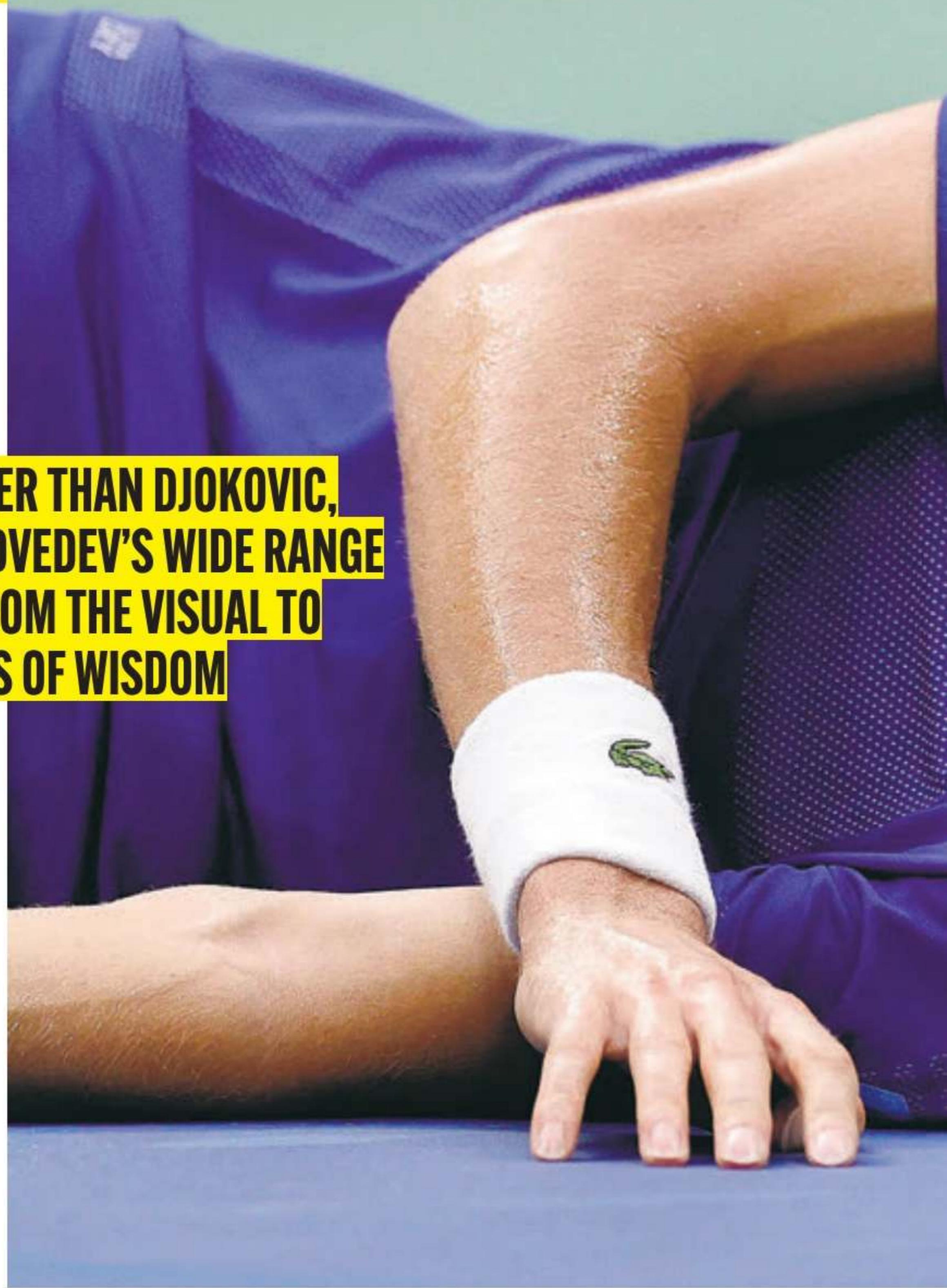
In 2014, Stacey Allaster, WTA chairman and CEO, praised Li Na as

NO PLAYER TODAY, OTHER THAN DJOKOVIC, CAN MATCH DANIIL MEDVEDEV'S WIDE RANGE OF HUMOUR. IT GOES FROM THE VISUAL TO WISECRACKS TO PEARLS OF WISDOM

“the player of this decade who has made the most impact and growth on women’s tennis. Your legacy and your contributions to the WTA will last for decades not only in China, but around the Asia Pacific.” Indeed, late-blooming Li, the 2011 French Open and 2014 Australian Open champion, was a marvellous, trailblazing champion for a nation of 1.4 billion people with little tennis tradition. But it was her irrepressible personality that made Li immensely popular among fellow players and fans worldwide. Caroline Wozniacki called her “one of the funniest and nicest players on tour.”

When Li Na, after a 2013 Australian Open victory, was asked by on-court interviewer Rennae Stubbs, then 41, what it was like playing such good tennis at age 30, Li wisecracked, “The truth is, I am younger than you.”

Li’s trophy presentations and press conferences often turned into comedy shows. After defeating Dominique Cibulkova in the 2014 Aussie final, Li showed her gratitude with characteristic wit. “Max [Eisenbud]. Agent. Make me rich. Thanks. [My husband Jiang Shan]. Hitting partner, fixes drinks, carries rackets, he’s a nice guy. And lucky,



too, to have me.”

At the 1991 Australian Open, Patrick McEnroe displayed the wit that would later make him a top-notch TV tennis commentator. After becoming the first player with a 100-plus ranking (No. 114) to reach a Grand Slam semifinal since 1978, the younger brother of superstar John deadpanned to the media, “It’s just like you all expected: Edberg, Lendl, McEnroe, and Becker.”

Losing can be hard to accept, even for normally gracious losers. The 2018 book, *It’s Not My Fault*, features hilarious excuses by American pros,

Pam Teeguarden and Bob Lutz.

Trying to explain why she thought the linespeople were against her, Teeguarden said, “I have to be honest. I think I lost because I wasn’t wearing a bra.”

Following his loss to future Hall of Famer Guillermo Vilas, Lutz offered not one excuse, but an entire litany. “I got tired, my ears started popping, the rubber came off my tennis shoes, I got a cramp, and I lost one of my contact lenses.”

Vitas Gerulaitis, the 1977 Australian Open champion and former world No. 3, cleverly turned a



Fishy business: After upsetting Djokovic in the 2021 U.S. Open final, the free-spirited Russian Daniil Medvedev celebrated with a zany 'dead fish' FIFA-style landing on the court. AFP

long losing streak into one of the funniest lines in tennis history. When reporters asked him how he had upset Jimmy Connors at the 1980 Colgate Grand Prix Masters after losing to Connors 16 straight times, Gerulaitis famously quipped, "Nobody beats Vitas Gerulaitas 17 times in a row!"

Award-winning TV tennis broadcaster Mary Carillo, noted for her witty wordplay, earned more chuckles at the 2013 Roland Garros when many among the crowd cheered as muscular Rafael Nadal took off his shirt after beating Novak

Djokovic in a thrilling 6-4, 3-6, 6-1, 6-7(3), 9-7 semifinal. "He's getting a hand for his chest," Carillo said in her inimitable style.

Freudian slips provide yet another type of tennis humor. A November 2008 transcript of WTA Tour CEO Larry Scott reads — "There's never been more parody at the top of the game than there is today." Scott, of course, meant to say parity to highlight the strength and depth in women's tennis then.

Spectators come up with some catchy stuff, too. "Don't let him off the hook, Fish!" — yelled a comedian in

the crowd at Mardy Fish during the crucial stage of his 7-5, 7-6 victory over Juan Martin del Potro at the 2011 Sony Ericsson Open.

No player today, other than Djokovic, can match Daniil Medvedev's wide range of humour. It goes from the visual to wisecracks to pearls of wisdom.

After upsetting Djokovic in the 2021 US Open final, the free-spirited Russian celebrated with a zany 'dead fish' FIFA-style landing on the court.

When Medvedev arrived for an obligatory post-match *Tennis Channel* interview this summer, Steve



Weissman said, "Congratulations on your win today, and thanks for coming." With a mischievous smile, Medvedev replied, "Do I have any choice?"

While the maxims of Medvedev — whose hobbies include reading, playing chess and PlayStation — don't quite match those of La Rochefoucauld, they're often thought-provoking. Some day you may find this bon mot in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*: "When you die, you do not know that you are dead. It is difficult only for others. It is the same when you are stupid."

When Laura Robson was asked at a 2013 Wimbledon press conference if she would want to watch Serena Williams and Andy Murray "get it on" (in a 'Battle of the Sexes' match) in Las Vegas, the 19-year-old Englishwoman couldn't stop laughing. Robson pounced on the double entendre. "That's interesting wording. I think everyone would watch that."

Occasionally, a routine post-match question results in a hilarious slip of the tongue. Daria Gavrilova, a 21-year-old Aussie, had just reached the second week of a major for the first time, upsetting 28th-seeded

Spicy banter: After an older Martina Hingis (left) embarrassed Anna Kournikova (right) 6-0, 6-0 in the 1994 junior U.S. Open, Anna reportedly blurted to Martina, "You won, but I'm prettier and more marketable than you." Four years later, Hingis told *Sports Illustrated*, "She's very pretty, but I'm sure she would like to change places with me if she could and have four Grand Slam titles." GETTY IMAGES

Frenchwoman Kristina Mladenovic 6-4, 4-6, 11-9 in a Friday night marathon thriller at the Australian Open. Overjoyed and over-excited during the on-court interview with Rennae Stubbs, a beaming Gavrilova said, "I've got nothing in my head. I'm just really excited and I want to hug the whole stadium."

When asked about her ability to battle back and win a critical game, the Russian-born Gavrilova innocently said, "I'm good from behind."

Mortified by her double entendre, Dasha buried her face in her hands. The crowd erupted with laughter, dudes high-fived, and she quickly became a fan favourite.

Andy Murray, when asked to describe himself in three words, quipped, "Boring, unfunny, and miserable." In truth, Sir Andy possessed a dry wit that he showed off after beating Milos Raonic in the 2016 Wimbledon final. Noticing spectator Prime Minister David Cameron, who had announced he would resign in October in the aftermath of the stunning Brexit vote, the mischievous Scot said, "I think playing in a Wimbledon final is tough. But I certainly wouldn't like to be a prime minister. It's an impossible job." The prime minister smiled and laughed, and the cheering Centre Court crowd loved it.

Steffi Graf, a champion not known for humour, displayed a quick wit during a Wimbledon match. When a spectator shouted, "Will you marry me?" Steffi shot back with: "How much money do you have?"

Messages on T-shirts can be funny, too. The buxom Serena Williams wore a T-shirt showing a trophy and reading 'Are you looking at my titles?' at a laugh-fest press conference after she won the 2009 Wimbledon singles title. After routing Barbora Krejčíková, 6-1, 6-4 in the



MESSAGES ON T-SHIRTS CAN BE FUNNY, TOO. AFTER HER 2009 WIMBLEDON WIN, SERENA WILLIAMS (BELOW) WORE A T-SHIRT THAT READ – ‘ARE YOU LOOKING AT MY TITLES?’

2021 US Open quarterfinals, Aryna Sabalenka arrived at her press conference wearing a shirt with 'I May Be Wrong But I Doubt It' emblazoned on it. The immodest message on a T-shirt worn by Russian veteran Dmitri Tursunov was 'Great Kisser'. Would any women like to corroborate that?

Doubles matches often showcase the lighter side of the pro tours. Gene Mayer, a former top 5 singles and doubles player, recalled a funny incident when he and Peter Fleming faced Ilie Nastase and Jimmy Connors at an Ohio tournament. "Just as Peter made service contact, Ilie shouted 'Nice get' due to an obviously errant toss that Peter still hit. We all started to laugh so hard that we ultimately stopped play and prevailed upon the umpire to replay the point."

Mayer, later a highly regarded coach and teaching pro, recounted the story of a student who habitually

Fun with a pun: After beating Tennys Sandgren (left) at the 2020 Australian Open, Roger Federer (right) quipped, "I played a lot of tennis in my life. But never Tennys." GETTY IMAGES

grunted on his groundstrokes. "A lady playing doubles on the next court complained bitterly to us and the club management about this disturbance to her game. We weren't thrilled, but decided to work on serves in order to avoid this conflict. The third serve my student hit was a mishit that cleared the net divider and knocked her glasses off without any injury. My student apologised to her profusely but had the giggles for the rest of our session."

Roger Federer elicited such reverence that during the 2010 Wimbledon Championships, an Arab TV commentator couldn't contain his enthusiasm. "If Allah allows, and I'm sure He does, I'm changing my religion to Federerism."

The polyglot Swiss



superstar enjoyed press conferences, which he often did in three languages. After beating Tennys Sandgren at the 2020 Australian Open, Roger quipped, "I played a lot of tennis in my life. But never Tennys." No one fired zingers better than 'spice girls' Martina Hingis and Anna Kournikova. After the older Hingis embarrassed Kournikova 6-0, 6-0 in the 1994 junior US Open, Anna reportedly blurted to Martina, "You

won, but I'm prettier and more marketable than you."

Four years later when Kournikova had become a sex symbol, Hingis told *Sports Illustrated*, "She's very pretty, but I'm sure she would like to change places with me if she could and have four Grand Slam titles."

Ilie Nastase, a 1970s tennis bad boy, was once asked by journalist Richard Evans why he swore at umpires in English instead of Romanian, his native language. "Nasty" — came a candid reply. "Because I want the sons of a b*&sh to know what I'm saying."

In 1996, Nastase, a political novice, announced he was running for mayor of Bucharest, an impoverished city plagued by corruption. "I love the [United] States and France," he said. "I took their money and their women, but I'll always be a Romanian. I took the best things out of there, and I want to bring them back here."

A longtime friend from his school days, then a political science professor, sought to dissuade him, saying, "Ilie, now 100 percent of the people love you. If you run for election, only 50 percent of the people will love you." Nastase replied, "I hope it's the women."



HOWZAT, LA!

With the **recent vote** by the International Olympic Committee, cricket has been approved for the 2028 Los Angles Olympics as part of a five-sport package.

Jonathan Selvaraj

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Around 128 years after England and France played each other in a five-day match as a part of the 1900 Paris Games, cricket is back at the Olympics. The game — part of a five-sport package that includes baseball-softball, squash, flag football, and lacrosse — was

included in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics after a vote was conducted by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) during its 141st session in Mumbai from October 15–17. The matter was put to a vote and passed, with just two IOC members voting against the inclusion.

These were included as optional sports, which the IOC has been permitting host cities to include as part of its competition programme,

alongside the 30 'core' sports. The inclusion of cricket in the Olympic programme was close to a formality following a previous recommendation by the Los Angeles 2028 organising committee.

According to the organisers, the cricket competition at the Los Angeles Olympics will be conducted as a six-team tournament in the men's and women's categories, with matches being played in the T20 format.

Mission accomplished: Cricket joins baseball-softball, squash, flag football and lacrosse as the latest sports to be included in the Olympics. K.R. DEEPAK



Cricket, which is making its return after a lengthy break, owes much to the growth of the sport and, in particular, the T20 format.

IOC president Thomas Bach expressed similar sentiment in response to a question on why cricket wasn't introduced for the previous 125 years.

"Cricket has evolved very much in recent years. I can't speak about the 50 years before. What I can see is this great development of the sport, not just in India but also beyond, and we have been made aware of this by our IOC member, Nita Ambani. We had a discussion with

the organising committee of Los Angeles, and everything came together," Bach said.

"Ever since I became part of the IOC, I've been pushing the IOC to include cricket in their Olympic programme," said Nita Ambani, an IOC member since 2016. The ICC also had an Olympics Working Group that had been pushing to secure cricket's participation in the quadrennial event.

While cricket's inclusion in the Olympics was put to a vote only this month, the push to make it part of the Olympic programme has been

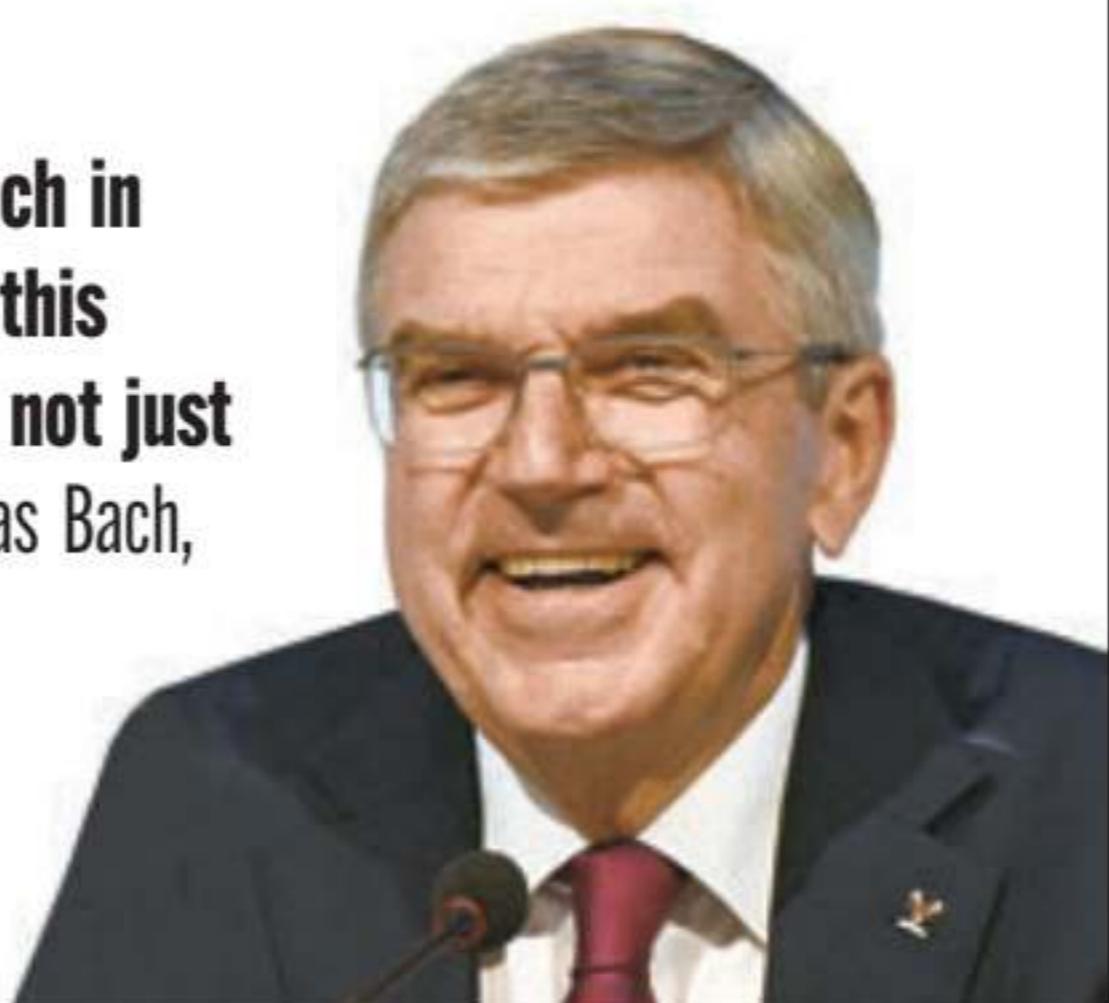
going on for many years. According to the Los Angeles Organising Committee (LAOC), although cricket was just one of many sports they had considered including as part of their optional sports, the drive to include it grew stronger following the success of Major League Cricket, which was launched to strong showing earlier this year.

LAOC chairperson Casey Wasserman explained how he too had been smitten by the T20 format.

"My first IPL match was in 2010 here (Mumbai)," Wasserman said. "And so, to have that expertise and understanding about how to operate a tournament at that level, attract the greatest players in the world, and make it the most exciting environment — I mean, I will never forget my first IPL match; it was electric. We want to recreate that environment (in Los Angeles)."

"From the beginning of getting the Olympics, cricket was on the list of sports we were excited to think

« Cricket has evolved very much in recent years. What I can see is this great development of the sport, not just in India but also beyond – Thomas Bach, IOC President »





The bigger picture: "Inclusion of cricket in the Olympics will create deeper engagement for the Olympic Movement," said Nita Ambani, seen here with Thomas Bach. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

about. As we went through the processes, it became quite obvious we'd be making a mistake if we didn't include it," he said.

"As we got down from 14 (number of sports to include) to 9, we went much deeper into the sports with all stakeholders. We were talking to the IOC, but we were also speaking with the ICC, the IPL, [and] with Major League Cricket, to understand."

"For us, it's not just about the sport but how we engage with all the organisations that are governing the sport of cricket every day. We are going to do it in the summer of 2028."

Karl Stoss (chair of the Olympic programme commission that approved the addition of sports) made a point to explain just how massive cricket was while introducing the sport ahead of the vote.

"Cricket has 2.5 billion fans and

some of the most popular athletes. It represents an invaluable opportunity to engage with new countries, including India," Stoss said.

There is big money involved, too. In a report by *The Guardian*, it was estimated that Olympic rights revenues were expected to grow 10-fold if cricket was included—from 157 crores in the Paris Games to 1570 crores in the Los Angeles Games. But the IOC, for its part, insists that such riches aren't the primary aim.

"This (increase in revenue) is not the first consideration. This can be a consequence, of course. The most important argument is that we have seen the growing international character of cricket. The Olympics wants to incorporate the most popular sports worldwide. And cricket has growing importance in the USA. Hence, this proposal was very much welcome. This has to be

implemented, and then we can see the consequences it has in the future," he says.

However, the inclusion of cricket will have a direct impact on the number of players who will be able to take part in other events at the Olympics.

The Olympic Charter itself lists a maximum of 10,500 athletes for the Olympics. Paris is expected to adhere to the maximum quota of 10,500 athletes, down from 11092 at the Tokyo 2020 Games.

However, the four optional sports at the Paris Games — breaking, skateboarding, sport climbing, and surfing — are all individual sports. The inclusion of four team events (and one individual event in squash) in Los Angeles means that should the overall athlete quota remain capped at 10,500, the cuts will have to come from somewhere else.

"Right now, we are at about 742 quotas above what we have in Paris.



We will have to start talking to international federations to find a good balance between the new sports and the traditional ones," Stoss said.

One of the concerns raised by the IOC about the inclusion of cricket was the relatively small number of national federations in the sport.

Only flag football has fewer associated members among Olympic sports — 74 national federations affiliated with the international body compared to 108 affiliated with the ICC.

Furthermore, one of the purposes of including cricket in the Olympics is to bring high-profile players to the competition. However, if we take sports like tennis, football, and golf as examples, the highest-profile players don't always take part in the Olympics — especially in cases where the quadrennial event isn't the most important tournament in the sport.

The IOC has made it clear they are including cricket (and indeed

baseball-softball) under the assumption that the biggest names will be taking part. "The expectation is that the ICC will provide the best players for the Olympics. This will be monitored carefully," Stoss said. However, neither the IOC nor the ICC mentioned what would happen should this not be the case.

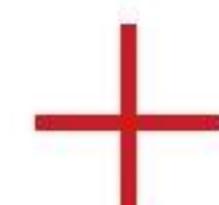
"That is hypothetical. Right now, we have no reason to think that the top cricketers would not want to be part of the Olympics," Bach said.

The nature of qualification is also

Taking over the world: Cricket, which is making its return to Olympics after a lengthy break, owes much to the growth of the sport and in particular, the T20 format. SPORTZPICS FOR IPL

uncertain, although both the ICC and IOC have said the modalities would be worked out.

"We have another five years to figure out how exactly these things will work. For today, we just want to celebrate," ICC chairman Greg Barclay said.



The IOC has made it clear they are including cricket under the assumption that the biggest names will be taking part. However, neither the IOC nor the ICC mentioned what would happen should this not be the case.



Golden touch: The Indian men's kabaddi team celebrates its gold medal win over Iran at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou. The Indian men have now won eight of the nine titles at the Asian Games. AFP

India sets gold standard in kabaddi amid tangled controversy subplot

India won the men's kabaddi gold at the Asian Games after a controversial final against Iran involving a one-hour stoppage.

Lavanya Lakshmi Narayanan

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India won the men's kabaddi gold at the Asian Games after a controversial final against Iran involving a one-hour stoppage.

The final leg of the Asian Games saw a gold medal match the world will not forget. Archrivals India and Iran sparred in a closely fought final, where a disagreement over a point saw the ensuing referral

stretch for over an hour, eventually forcing a temporary suspension of the match. The impasse saw the Indian coaching contingent and players, including captain Pawan Sehrawat, get into a war of words with the judging panel. The Asian and International Kabaddi Federation officials also got involved. In the end, the ruling went India's way, allowing

the men in blue to reclaim their place on top of the podium with a 33-29 win. The Iranians, wearing silver medals like albatrosses around their necks, stood silently a few centimetres below them.

All the arguing gave Indian head coach Edachery Bhaskaran a fever, something he struggled to recover from days after the ill-tempered final.



INDIA AND IRAN SPARRED IN A CLOSELY FOUGHT MEN'S KABADDI FINAL, WHERE A DISAGREEMENT OVER A POINT SAW THE ENSUING REFERRAL STRETCH FOR OVER AN HOUR

"I've been popping Dolos to stay on my feet," the veteran kabaddi coach told *Sportstar* from Hangzhou. One could detect fatigue and disappointment in his voice, but there was no trace of regret.

Sorry, not sorry

Here's how things played out at the Xiaoshan Guali Sports Centre. With scores tied at 28-28 and a little under a minute-and-a-half left on the clock, Pawan went in for a do-or-die raid, where the raider must pick a point via touch or bonus. Pawan moved down the right flank and managed to draw an error from Iran defender Amirhossein Bastami, who stepped out of the mat. In attempting to make his way back to the midline with a circle of defenders coming his way, Pawan stepped into the lobby (the narrow space between the inner part of the mat and the region outside the periphery) without getting a touch on any defender. The four defenders pursuing him also stepped into the lobby. As per the existing rules of international kabaddi, when a raider steps into the lobby without a touch, he must forfeit his place on the mat.

Marred by controversy: The play in the men's kabaddi final between India and Iran was suspended for over an hour as both teams disputed the rule governing usage of the lobby area. AFP

If defenders step into the lobby without a touch on the raider, they, too, make their way to the sidelines.

"Pawan stepping off gives Iran a point, yes. But the four defenders who followed him, plus Bastami stepping out, gave India five points if you follow the rule," Bhaskaran explained.

"Umpires are there to oversee these things, but the final call is the referee's. The umpire gave the advantage to India, but the referee, Iraqi official Alghali Basim Raisan Mejbel, quickly came and said 1-1. I teach this sport to kids every single day. I know the rules," he added, pointing to what caused all the fracas — a lack of clarity about international rules in play.

While amateur kabaddi deems defenders following a raider must walk if they go into the lobby without a touch, the hugely popular Pro

Kabaddi League, the sport's most successful franchise entity, amended this rule due to a perceived lack of sporting spirit and a way to turn matches on their heads, which could be used deviously, deeming that if a raider stepped out without a touch, only they lost their place and not the defenders pursuing them.

"When the deliberations were happening in court, the secretary general of the Asian Kabaddi Federation, Pakistan's Rana Muhammad Sarwar, signalled to the referee on the mat that the correct decision was 1-1. The referee oddly kept looking towards the gallery. So, we decided to refer. The panel then gave us four points and one point for Iran, which the same referee came forward and declared.

The Iranians then protested. When this happened, the Federation official came to the jury and said 1-1 was enough. I then asked him in what capacity he was intervening. According to the rules, he's not supposed to be near the field of play. He then got mad at me and said he would ban me for my tone. I stood my ground. I am an Indian, a retired



BHASKARAN'S TWIN TRIUMPH IN HANGZHOU FOLLOWS THE MEN'S SIDE'S GOLD FROM THE 2010 GUANGZHOU GAMES AND THE WOMEN'S TEAM'S GOLD IN 2014 IN INCHEON

army man. I will decide what I do for my nation," Bhaskaran said.

Refereeing standards must improve

The seasoned coach was proactive. He signalled to members of the Indian women's team sitting on the stands to source the PDF of the International Kabaddi Federation's rules and take it to the jury.

"On the jury panel, there was a Kenyan official, Laventer Oguta, a seasoned coach and official. She took a very stern stand. She also had a copy of this PDF. She deemed one point for Iran and three points for India. At the time, we thought, even though it's five if we're getting three, it's still fairer than just 1-1. So, we were okay with it, as the advantage would rightly come to us. The real issue started after this. The president of the Iran Federation came and asked to see the replay again and claimed that there was a touch between raider and defender, by which 1-1 would be valid, which did not happen. I told the boys to stay put on the mat," Bhaskaran added.

"I have been posted at Kargil for

Leap of joy: The Indian women's kabaddi team was down by two points in the second half but staged a comeback, securing a 26-25 victory over Chinese Taipei. It was also India's 100th medal in Hangzhou. PTI

six months. Even that didn't get to me as much as this final did," he said with a weak chuckle.

The sport of kabaddi and its promoters, especially in the subcontinent, have long nursed ambitions of taking the sport to the Olympics.

However, this verbal brawl in the biggest game of arguably the biggest stage in the sport made for a poor advertisement of the discipline and those who play it. Bhaskaran feels this will continue to happen as long as competition and administration in Asian Kabaddi remain inconsistent.

"In the semifinal against Pakistan, decisions almost always went against us. In that game, we had a massive lead, so we let it go and didn't want to be petty. But here, the fate of the game rested on this, and to have such refereeing at such a stage was disappointing. Such things should

not happen on a platform like this," he said.

Working overtime

The 59-year-old's responsibilities didn't begin and end with the men's team. A few weeks before the squad's scheduled departure for Hangzhou, Bhaskaran was approached by federation officials to step in as manager of the women's national side too.

"There was a lack of camaraderie in the team. Confidence was low, and pressure was high. My message to players, coaches, and staff was simple — if we don't medal here, we are no one in this ecosystem, so that needs to be the priority," he said.

The apprehensions were there for all to see in India's opening game against Chinese Taipei, a closer-than-comfortable and, frankly, lucky 34-34 draw.

"In the first game, we conceded 18-19 bonus points. That only means that the defence is under immense pressure if they can't string together basic defensive ploys, which was not ideal at all," Bhaskaran recalled.

The broadcast showed Bhaskaran, coaches V. Tejeswini Bai, and Kavitha Selvaraj each talking to groups of players, potentially creating a 'too

Vital cog: Pooja Hathwala was instrumental in ensuring the Indian women's kabaddi team won its third gold medal in the Asian Games. PTI

many cooks' scenario. At the halftime mark, Bhaskaran was on all fours with captain Ritu Negi by his side, explaining ploys on paper.

"The competition protocol was very strict. You are not to bring a clipboard, a strategy sheet, or even a pen and paper inside the hall. I was using the *bottle ka dhakkan* (cap of a water bottle) to show strategies to the players. You think airport checks are strict; you should have been at the competition arena at the Asian Games," he said.

Golden fault lines

After cruising through the initial stages of the competition, India and Iran left Hangzhou with medals in hand but a bitter aftertaste. India's men's and women's teams were dethroned in the 2018 edition of the Games; the men lost to Iran in the semifinals, while the women lost to Iran in the final.

"The gold you lose, if it comes back, always feels great. It's like when there is a robbery at your house and you manage to recover all your stuff; it's the same feeling. We have got back what was always ours," Pawan said after the final.

The irony of the situation would not have been lost on Iranian all-rounder Mohammad Esmaeil Nabibakhsh. In 2022, during the eighth season of the Pro Kabaddi League, Nabibakhsh, playing for the Bengal Warriors, went into the lobby without a touch, taking the entire Bengaluru Bulls defence with him. According to international rules, Bengal was awarded seven technical points and a bonus for Nabibakhsh, which turned the game on its head. The Iranian then slunk away with the naughtiest of smiles.

INDIA'S MEDALS TALLY IN KABADDI

GOLD
2



There was no smiling in Hangzhou, though.

"By all means, the rule can change. Get stakeholders together, hear the arguments, and make an official amendment to the rulebook, which is available well ahead of the next Asian Games," Bhaskaran said. India's success in kabaddi at the continental event has pros and cons. It births stars overnight. But it also maintains the status quo for systems that aren't working. The women's team's campaign in Hangzhou was an example of succeeding despite circumstances.

"The issue with kabaddi, and India in particular, is that we don't have long-term training or competition plans available. We need qualified coaches at all levels of Indian kabaddi — those who know and can implement scientific coaching methods," said Bhaskaran, the high-performance coach at the Sports Authority of India Bengaluru campus. "Hockey, for instance, has camps all year round. The players

are constantly in the system and are working towards something," he pointed out.

"We have the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in Bangkok (rescheduled multiple times since 2021) and the Kabaddi World Cup, both tentatively after the PKL season. So, there's a fair bit of competitive action to look forward to."

This is Bhaskaran's fourth gold medal at the Asian Games. His twin triumph in Hangzhou follows the men's side's gold from the 2010 Guangzhou Games and the women's team's gold in 2014 in Incheon.

The coach now wants to focus on the women's ecosystem.

"We need to work on the basics here. We need to improve speed, agility, and fitness. In 2014, when I was with the team for two months, the camp was fitness-oriented. We stepped onto the mat only after the fundamentals were sorted," he explained.

Hopefully, the champions are just getting started.

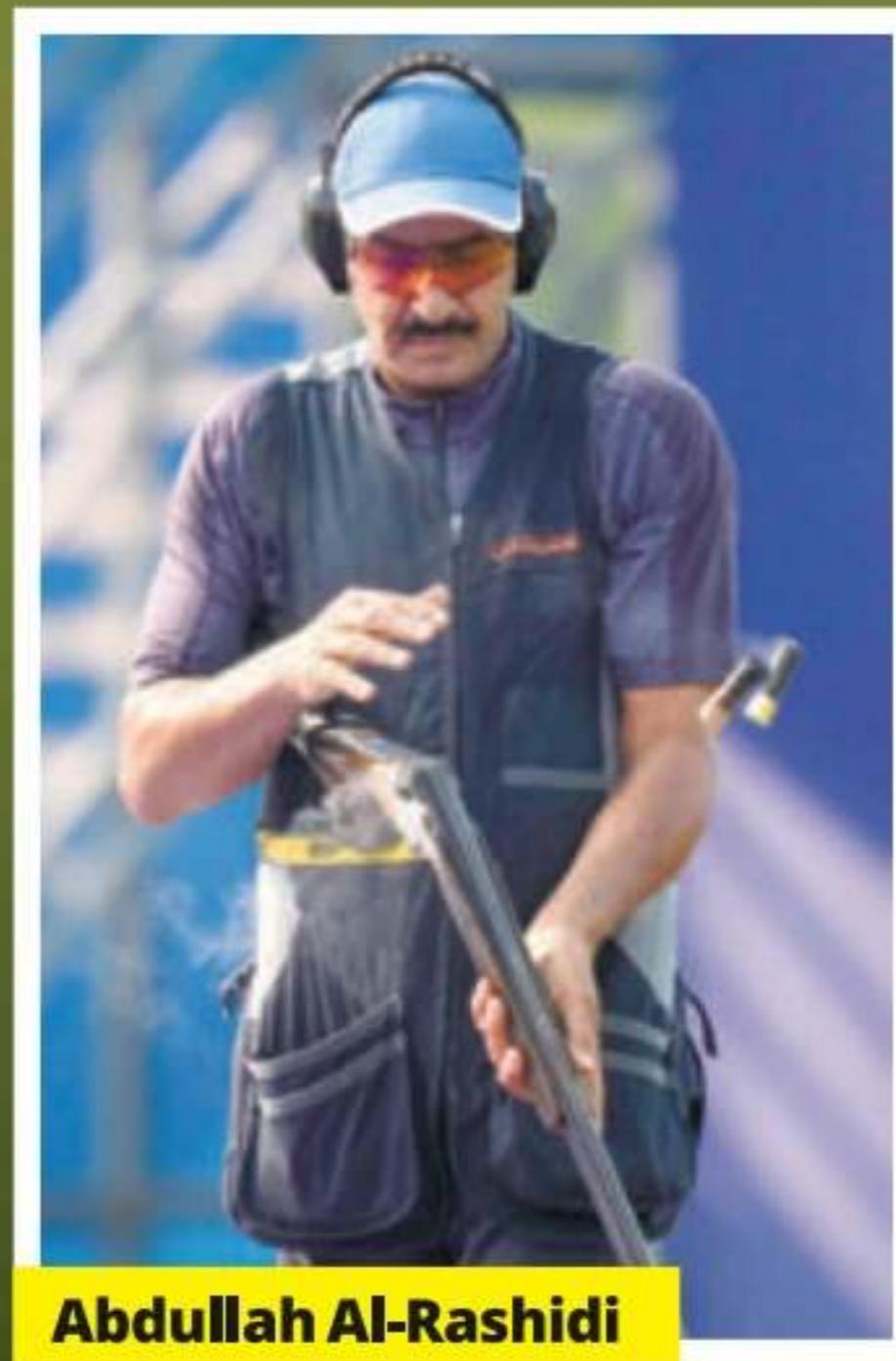
From athletics to shooting, the 19th edition of the Asian Games, held in Hangzhou, China, from September 23 to October 8, saw a plethora of records being broken at the national, continental and global levels. Here is the sportwise list of records broken during the Games.

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Jiang Yiting

Shooting



Abdullah Al-Rashidi

Men's Skeet Final: Abdullah

Al-Rashidi won the gold medal with a new Games record (equalled the World Record) of 60 points. The previous mark of 52 points was set by Jin Di and Mansour Al-Rashidi at the 2018 Asian Games in Palembang

10m Air Rifle Men's Qualification: **Sheng Lihao** broke the Qualification Area and Games Record with 634.5 points. The previous mark of 632.9 was set by Yang Haoran in 2018

10m Air Rifle Men's Final: **Sheng Lihao** won gold with World/Area/Games Record with 253.3 points. The previous World Record was set by Yang Haoran in 2019 with 252.8 points

10m Air Rifle Team Men:
Rudrankksh Balasaheb Patil, Divyansh Singh Panwar, and Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar won gold

with World/Area/Games Record with 1893.7 points. The previous World Record was set by China at the 2023 Baku World Championships with 1893.3 points

Trap Team Men: **Zoravar Singh, K.D. Chenai, Prithviraj Tondaiman** broke the Games Record with 361 points. The previous record of 357 points was set by Kuwait in 1994

50m Rifle 3 Positions Men's

Final: Du Linshu broke the Games Record with 460.6 points. The previous Record of 455.5 points was set by Cao Yifei in 2014

50m Rifle 3 Positions Team Men:

Swapnil Kusale, Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Akhil Sheoran won gold with World/Area/Games Record with 1769 points. The previous World Record of 1761 points was set by USA in 2022

Skeet Women's Qualification:

Jiang Yiting broke the Qualification Games Record with 123 points. The previous Record of 121 points was set by Zhang Donglian in 2018

Skeet Women's Final: Jiang Yiting broke the Games Record with 57 points. The previous Record of 55 points was set by Sutiya Jiewcha-loemmit in 2018

10m Air Rifle Women's Qualification: Han Jiayu broke the Qualification Area and Games Record with 634.1 points. The previous Area record of 634.0 was set by Zhao Ruozhu in 2019 while the Games



Sift Kaur Samra



(From left)
Prithviraj
Tondaiman,
Zoravar Singh
and K.D. Chenai

Record of 631.9 was also set by her in 2018

10m Air Rifle Women's Final: Huang Yuting broke the Games Record with 252.7 points. The previous Record of 250.9 points was set by Zhao Ruozhu in 2018

10m Air Rifle Team Women Team Round: China's Wang Zhilin, Han Jiayu, Huang Yuting broke the Area/Games Record with 1896.6 points. The previous Record of 1893.0 points was also set by China in 2018

Trap Women's Qualification: China's Wu Cuicui broke the Qualification Area and Games Record with 124 points. The previous Area Record of 121 was set by Lebanon's Ray Bassil in 2019 while the Games Record of 119 belonged to Mariya Dmitriyenko of Kazakhstan

Trap Women's Final: China's Zhang Xinqiu broke the Area and Games Record with 47 points.

The previous Area Record (46) was set by her compatriot Deng Weiyun in 2019 while the Games Record (45) from 2018 belonged to Xinqiu only

Trap Team Women: China's Zhang Xinqiu, Wu Cuicui and Li Qingnian broke the World/Area/Games Record with 357 points. The previous World Record of 354

points was set by USA in 2018

25m Pistol Women's Final: Liu Rui broke the Games Record with 38 points. The previous Record of 34 points was set by India's Rahi Sarnobat in 2018

50m Rifle 3 Position Women's Final: Sift Kaur Samra broke the World/Area/Games Record with 469.6 points. The previous World Record of 467 points was set by Seonaid McIntosh earlier this year

10m Air Pistol Women's Qualification: Jiang Ranxin, Zhao Nan broke the Qualification Games Record with 581 points. The previous Record of 580 points was set by Wang Qian in 2018

10m Air Rifle Mixed Team Qualification: China's Sheng Li Hao and Huang Yuting broke the Qualification Area Record with 634.4 points. The previous Record of 633.2 points was set by China's Yang Haoran and Yang Qian in 2021

Skeet Mixed Team's Qualification: Abdul-rahman Al-Rashidi and Eman Alshamaa of Kuwait broke the Qualification Area Record with 149 points. The previous Record of 146 points was set by India in 2019



Yuehong Li

25m Rapid Fire Pistol Men's Qualification: Li Yuehong broke the Qualification Games Record with 590 points. The previous record of 589 points was set by Kim Seojun at the 2018 Asian Games in Palembang

25m Rapid Fire Pistol Team Men: Wang Xinjie, Liu Yangpan, Li Yuehong broke the World/Area/Games Record with 1765 points. The previous World Record of 1756 points was also set by China in 2018



Sheng Li Hao

Athletics

Men's 5000m:
Birhanu Yemataw Balew of Bahrain set a new Games Record of 13:17.40s. Previous mark was 13:26.13s set in 2014 by Qatar's Mohamad Algarni

Men's 3000m Steeplechase: Avinash Sable set a new Games Record of 8:19.50s, going past the previous mark of 8:22.79s set in 2018 by Iran's Hossein Keyhani

Men's Pole Vault: Ernest John Obiena of Philippines set a new GR of 5.90m. Previous mark was 5.70m set by Japan's Seito Yamamoto in 2018

Women's 3000m Steeplechase: Winfred Yavi of Bahrain set a new GR of 9:18.28s, going past the previous mark of 9:31.36s by compatriot Jebet Ruth in 2014

Women's 400m Hurdles: Kemi Adekoya of Bahrain bettered her own Games

Record (55.09s) from 2014 with a timing of 54.45s in Hangzhou

Women's Pole Vault: Li Ling of China bettered her own Games Record (4.60m) from 2018 to 4.63m in Hangzhou

Women's Discus Throw: China's Feng Bin set a new GR of 67.93m, going past the previous mark of 66.18m set by compatriot Li Yanfeng in 2010

Women's 4x400m Relay: Bahrain set a new GR of 3:27.65s. Previous mark was 3:28.68s set by India in 2014

Men's Decathlon: Tejaswin Shankar (7666) broke the National Record of Bhartinder Singh (7658) from 2011



4x400m Mixed Relay: Indian quartet of Muhammed Ajmal Variyathodi, R. Vithya Ramraj, Rajesh Ramesh and Subha Venkatesan set a new National Record of 3:14.34s. Previous mark was 3:14.70s set earlier this year at Asian Athletics Championships by Rajesh, Aishwarya Mishra, Amoj Jacob and Subha

Women's 400m Hurdles:
R. Vithya Ramraj equalled PT Usha's National Record of 55.42s from 1984 LA Olympics



Cricket

Highest total: Nepal became the first men's team to score more than 300 runs in a T20I when it posted a total of 314/3 against Mongolia. Nepal overtook Afghanistan's 278/3 scored against Ireland in 2019

Biggest margin of victory: Nepal beat Mongolia by 273 runs, the biggest margin of victory in terms of runs in men's T20Is. Previous record belonged to Czech Republic who beat Turkey by 257 runs in 2019

Fastest 100 in T20Is:
Nepal's Kushal Malla

scored a century in 34 balls against Mongolia, breaking the previous record of 35-ball hundred jointly held by South Africa's David Miller (against Bangladesh in 2017), India's Rohit Sharma (against Sri Lanka in 2017) and Czech Republic's Sudesh Wickramasekara (against Turkey in 2019)

Fastest 50 in T20Is:
Nepal's **Dipendra Singh Airee** scored a 50 in just nine balls against Mongolia, breaking India's Yuvraj Singh's record of scoring a fifty in 12 balls against England in 2007

Dipendra Singh Airee



Weightlifting

Women's 49kg - Clean & Jerk

and overall: North Korea's **Ri Songgum** broke the World Record in clean and jerk with a lift of 124 kg and 216 kg overall. She broke China's Jiang Huihua's World Record of 120 kg in clean and jerk and 215 kg overall.

Women's 55kg – Snatch, clean & jerk and overall:

North Korea's Kang Hyongyong broke the World Record in snatch with a lift of 103 kg, clean & jerk lift of 130 kg and total of 233 kg. She broke the snatch WR of China's Li Yajun (102kg), clean & jerk WR of China's Liao Qiuyun (129kg) and the overall WR of Qiuyun (227kg)

Women's 59kg – Snatch: Kim Ilgyong broke the World Record in snatch with a lift of 111 kg. Previous mark (110kg) belonged to Chinese Taipei's Kuo Hsing Chun

Men's 73kg - Clean & Jerk:

Rahmat Erwin Abdullah of Indonesia bettered his own World Record of 200kg in clean & jerk from last year with a lift of 201 kg.

Ri Songgum



Archery



Men's Compound Ranking Round: Joo Jaehoon of South Korea scored 712 to go past the previous Games Record of 710 set in 2014 by Esmaeil Ebadi of Iran



Men's Recurve Ranking Round: Lee Wooseok of South Korea scored 690 to break the previous Games Record of 683 set in 2018 by compatriot Oh Jin-hyek



Women's Compound: In the round of 32, Aditi Swami (149) broke the Games Record of compatriot Trisha Deb (146) from 2014. Jyothi Surekha Venkam later matched Aditi's record in the semis and final





Men's Team Compound Ranking Round:

South Korea broke its own Games Record of 2116 set in 2018 with a score of 2117

Men's Recurve Team Ranking Round:

South Korea (2048) bettered its own Games Record (2037) from 2018

Men's Team Compound Ranking Round:

South Korea broke its own Games Record of 2116 set in 2018 with a score of 2117

Men's Recurve Team Ranking Round:

South Korea (2048) bettered its own Games Record (2037) from 2018

Mixed Team Compound Ranking Round:

Jyothi Surekha Vennam and Ojas Deotale set a new Games Record of 1413. Previous record was 1412 set in 2018 by South Korea's Choi Yong-hee and So Chae-won

Mixed Team Recurve Ranking Round:

Lim Sihyeon and Lee Wooseok set a new Games Record (1368). Previous mark was 1364 set in 2018 by Oh Jin-hyek and Kang Chae-young of South Korea

Men's Compound: Ojas Deotale (150) broke the Games Record of Iran's Esmaeil Ebadi (149) from 2014

Mixed Team Compound: Jyothi Surekha Vennam and Ojas Deotale (159) set a new Games Record. Previous mark (157) was set in 2018 by South Korea's Choi Yong-hee and So Chae-won

Jyothi Surekha Vennam & Ojas Deotale



Cycling

Men's Sprint Team: Yanglem Rojit Singh, David Beckham Elkatochoongo, Ronaldo Singh Laiton-jam and Esow Alben set a new National Record of 44.609s. Previous mark of 44.625s was set in 2019

Men's Sprint Qualification: China's Zhou Yu set a new Games Record of 9.623s. Previous mark of 9.865s was set by South Korea's Im Chae-Bin in 2018

Men's Team Sprint: Japan won gold medal with a new Games Record of 42.934s. Previous mark of 43.899 was set by Japan itself in 2018

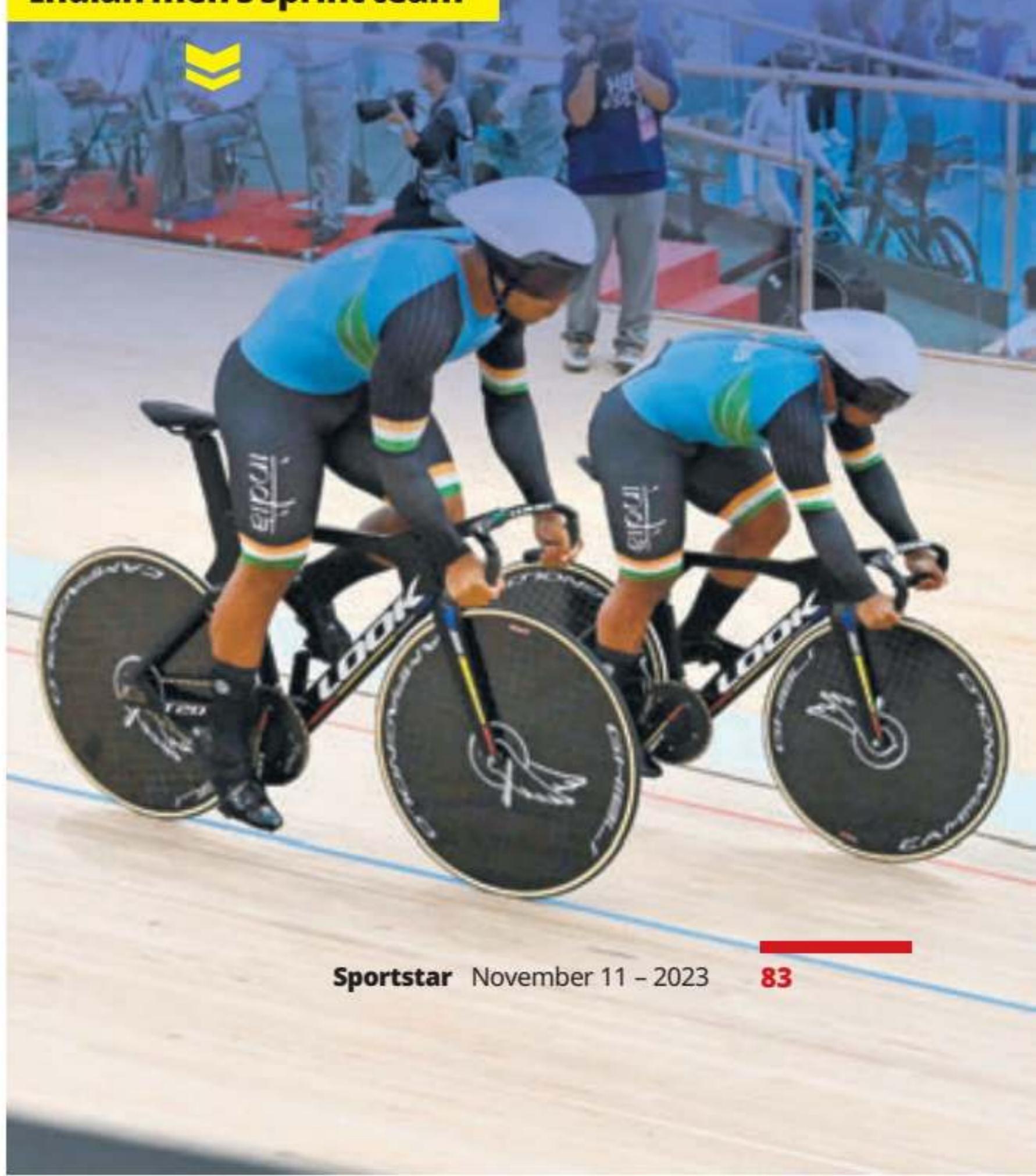
Men's Team Pursuit: Japan won gold medal with a new Games Record of 3:52.757s, bettering South Korea's 3:56.247s from 2018

Women's Sprint Qualification: China's Yuan Liying (10.557s) broke the Games Record of Lee Wai Sze of Hong Kong, China (10.583s) from 2018

Women's Team Sprint: China set a new Area Record with a timing of 46.376s. Previous Area Record (46.446s in Glasgow this year) too belonged to China.

Women's Team Pursuit: Japan set a new Games Record of 4:21.224s. Previous mark of 4:23.652s was set in 2018 by South Korea

Indian men's sprint team



Swimming

Women's 50m Freestyle Final:

China's **Zhang Yufei** broke the Games Record, clocking 24.26s in the finals. The previous mark of 24.53s was set by Japan's Rikako Ikee in 2018

Women's 100m Freestyle Final:

Siobhan Bernadette Haughey of Hong Kong, China, broke the Area and Games Record clocking 52.17s in the finals. She broke her own Area Record of 52.27 set at the Tokyo Olympics 2021 while the Games record of 53.27 was set by Japan's Rikako Ikee in 2018

Women's 200m Freestyle Final:

Siobhan Bernadette Haughey broke Games Record clocking 1:54.12s in the finals. She broke China's Zhu Qianwei's record of 1:56.65s set in 2010

Women's 400m Freestyle Final:

China's Li Bingjie broke Games Record clocking 4:01.96s in the finals. She broke Wang Jianjiahe's record of 4:03.18 set in 2018

Women's 1500m Freestyle Fast Heat:

China's Li Bingjie broke Games Record clocking 15:51.18. She broke China's Wang Jianjiahe's record of 15:53.68s set in 2018

Women's 50m Breaststroke:

Tang Qianting broke Area and Games Record clocking 29.92. She bettered her own Area Record of 30.08s from this year's World Championships while the previous Games record (30.83s in 2018) belonged to Japan's Satomi Suzuki

Women's 50m Butterfly Final:

Zhang Yufei broke Games Record clocking 25.10s. She broke Rikako Ikee's record of 25.55 from 2018

Women's 100m Butterfly Final: Zhang Yufei

Zhang Yufei broke the Games Record clocking 55.86s in the finals, breaking Rikako Ikee's record of 56.30s from 2018

Women's 200m Butterfly Final:

Zhang Yufei broke the Games Record clocking 55.86. She broke Jiao Liuyang's record of 2:05.79 from 2010

Women's 200m Individual Medley Final:

Yu Yiting broke the Games Record clocking 2:07.75. She broke Kim Seo-Yeong's record of 2:08.34 from 2018

Women's 4 x 100m Freestyle Relay Final:

China's Cheng Yujie, Wu Qingfeng, Yang Junxuan, **Zhang Yufei** broke the Games Record clocking

3:33.96. The previous record of 3:36.52 was set by Japan in 2018

Men's 50m Freestyle Final: South Korea's Ji Yuchan broke the Games Record clocking 21.72 in the finals. The previous record of 21.94s was set in 2014 by China's Ning Zetao

Men's 100m Freestyle Final:

Pan Zhanle broke the Area and Games Record clocking 46.97s in the finals. He bettered his own Area Record of 47.43s from this year's World Championships while the previous Games Record (47.70s) belonged to Ning Zetao

Men's 200m Freestyle Final: Hwang Sunwoo broke the Games Record clocking 1:44.40s. He broke Park Tae-Hwan's record of 1:44.80 set in 2010

Men's 800m Freestyle Fast Heat:

Kim Woomin broke the Games Record clocking 7:46.03s. He broke Sun Yang's record of 7:48.36 from 2018

Men's 100m Backstroke Final: Xu Jiayu broke the Games Record clocking 52.23. He broke Irie Ryosuke's record of 52.34 from 2014

Zhang Yufei



Qin Haiyang

Men's 50m Breaststroke Heat 3:

Qin Haiyang broke the Games Record clocking 26.25. He broke Yan Zibei's record of 27.06 from 2018

Men's 100m Breaststroke Final:

Qin Haiyang broke the Games Record clocking 57.76 in the finals, bettering Japan's Yasuhiro Koseki's timing of 58.86s from 2018

Men's 200m Breaststroke Final:

Qin Haiyang broke the Games Record clocking 2:07.03. He broke Kazakhstan's Dmitriy Balandin's record of 2:07.67 set in 2014

Men's 50m Butterfly Final:

Baek Inchul broke the Games Record clocking 23.29s in the finals, bettering Shi Yang's timing of 23.46s from 2014

Men's 200m Butterfly Final:

Tomoru Honda broke the Games Record clocking 1:53.15 in the finals, bettering Takeshi Matsuda's timing of 1:54.02s from 2010

Men's 200m Individual Medley

Final: Wang Shun broke his own Area Record of 1:55.00s from 2021 by clocking 1:54.62 in the finals in Hangzhou. The previous Games record (1:55.34s) belonged to Japan's Kosuke Hagino

Men's 4 x 100m Freestyle Relay

Final: China's Pan Zhanle, Wang Haoyu, Hong Jinquan, Chen Juner broke the Asian/Games Record clocking 3:10.88. They bettered their own Area Record of 3:11.38 set earlier this year

Men's 4 x 200m Freestyle Relay

Final: South Korea's Yang Jaehoon, Kim Woomin, Lee Hojoon, Hwang Sunwoo broke the Asian/Games Record clocking 7:01.73. They broke Japan's Area Record of 7:02.26 set in 2009

Men's 4 x 100m Medley Relay Final:

China's Pan Zhanle, Wang Changhao, Xu Jiayu, Qin Haiyang broke Area/Games Record clocking 3:27.01s. The previous Area Record (3:29.00s at 2023 World Championships) and Games Record (3:29.99s at Jakarta 2018) also belonged to China

Mixed 4 x 100m Medley Relay Final:

China's Yang Junxuan, Xu Jiayu, Qin Haiyang, Zhang Yufei broke Area/Games Record clocking 3:37.73. They bettered their own Area Record of 3:38.41 set in 2020

DESIGN: Rajasekhar JVSN

Plachutta interference

By C.G.S.Narayanan

Plachutta is a device in problem chess in which a white piece is sacrificed on a square where it could be captured by one of two similarly moving black pieces, like a bishop and a queen moving along a diagonal, or two rooks, moving along a different line—whichever black piece captures it interferes with the other. This theme is named after Joseph Plachutta (1827–1883). It finds better expression in three or more-movers. A simple illustration of the theme can be seen in diagram below.

A.W.Mongredien&P.Bansac
L'Exchequier de Paris 1947



Mate in three moves

After the **key 1.N(7)c5!** White threatens 2.Na4 and 2.Qb4. Now depending on as to which rook takes the WNc5 white sets up the continuation. 1...cRxc5 2.Nb2 (3.Na4). Now the BRc5 loses vertical control of c4 as after 2...Ra5 3.Qc4 mates. Similarly 1...hRxc5 2.Nf4 (3.Ne2) 2...Rc4 (cutting off the guard for b4) 3.Nd5 mates. Plachutta is related to other problem themes such as Wurzburg-Plachutta, Novotny or Bristol. The quiet manouvre of setting up the defences differentiates Wurzburg Plachutta from the normal one.

W.A.Shinkman
Pittsburg Gazette Times 1916



Mate in three moves

The **key 1.Kb2!** quietly threatens 2.Bb1 followed by 3.Qc3.hRf6 frees BRf8 in time to defend 3.Qc3 and similarly fRf6 plans 2...Rh3. But white bishop cuts off rook lines with sacrifices. 1..Rhf6 2.Bf4 Rxf4 3.Nc6 and 1...Rff6 2.Bd6 Rxd6 3.Nf3. In either case the flight square e5 is covered by the mate.
Looking at the third problem below given for solving it can be seen that white would like to play either 1.Ra8 or 1.Rg8, but the former is prevented by black's bishop and the latter by the black queen.

W.A.Shinkman 1910



Mate in three moves

Solution to problem for solving in the article 'Munich theme': **Key 1.Re3!** (2.Re1); 1..d2 2.Rg3 (3.Rg1) 2...Kf2 3.Rf3; 1...Be2 2.Nf3(3.Nd2) 2...Bxf3 3.Re1

Readers may send in their queries to
cgsnarayanan@hotmail.com



Rajiv Sethu crowned champion

Rajiv Sethu, the 25-year-old from Chennai, was crowned champion of the premier Pro-Stock 301-400cc Open category on debut as the fifth and final round of the MRF MMSC fmisci Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship 2023 concluded at the Madras International Circuit.

Sethu was nursing an injured left shoulder and delivered a third straight rider championship to his team, RACR Castrol Power1 Ultimate, in the Pro-Stock 301-400cc Open category.

The 16-year-old Sarthak Chavan from Pune, racing for the Petronas TVS Racing team, put an end to Sethu's eight-race winning streak with an impressive victory. Chavan, who began from the 17th position, overtook Sethu on the final lap, marking a significant achievement in his burgeoning national championship career.

In the second position was Chiranth Vishwanath, a 16-year-old from Bengaluru who was also part of the same team. He made a strategic move against Sethu, who ended up in third place. Despite the P3 finish, Sethu's lead in the points table was insurmountable before the race. Sethu concluded the season with a stylish victory in the Pro-Stock 165cc Open race.

TEAM SPORTSTAR

» INDIAN PLAYGROUND

SPORTOON



1 **Madhya Pradesh Academy, Bhopal**, had a strong start and a sound finish to beat Round Glass Academy, Punjab, 5-2 in the final of the Steelbird 40th Nehru sub-junior hockey tournament at the Shivaji Stadium in New Delhi. The champion team was presented Rs.1,60,000, and its coach, Lokendra Sharma was awarded Rs.15,000. The runner-up team was presented Rs.96,000 and the coach Bittu Shigroha was given Rs.10,000. Aashiraadil Khan was adjudged the 'best player' of the final, and presented Rs.21,000 and a Flash hockey stick.

TEAM SPORTSTAR

2 **An outstanding performance by Rohit Yadav ensured Aravalli Arrows** defeated Murthal Magnets from Haryana 48-30 to emerge champion in the Yuva Kabaddi Series Monsoon Edition 2023 played at the Fatima College Indoor Stadium in Madurai. Aravalli Arrows not only upgraded its runner-up trophy it had won in the 2022 Monsoon Edition but also bagged the winner's purse of ₹20 lakhs. The event commenced on September 24, with 16 teams from across the country competing for the coveted trophy and a total prize money purse of ₹58.5 lakhs.

TEAM SPORTSTAR



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Ryan Fernando



FOR MORE
STORIES

Recipe for a blockbuster

11 players. 11 recipes. Here's a curated list of dishes that can elevate performances when combined with an all-round nutrition strategy.

The Indian cricket team has started their campaign with flying colors with consecutive crucial wins, stirring the passions of millions of cricket fans as the nation is gripped by World Cup fever. But how can the players maintain such a high level of vigour, agility, and performance on the field? It's not simply their extraordinary talent and unshakeable resolve; it's also their meticulous attention to diet. Just like how a balanced team is crucial to on-field success, well balanced nutrition helps to fuel the athletes with the right nutrients. And to deliver them, we plan the right recipes. Here is a list of perfect recipes created to help sportsmen perform at their very best:

Healthy Beetroot Pav

Just as Rohit Sharma is known as Hitman because of his expanded



range of shots, beetroot is considered to be a hit food among athletes because of its ability to aid in

vasodilation i.e. expansion of the blood vessels thus allowing more oxygen and nutrients to the muscles.

Ingredients:

- 2 medium-sized beetroots, boiled and grated
- Gluten-free pavs
- 1 cup boiled and mashed potatoes
- 1/2 cup breadcrumbs
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onions

- 2 green chilies, finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin powder
- 1/2 teaspoon coriander powder
- Salt to taste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil for cooking

Bernergy Smoothie

It is a delicious combination of healthy food items that not only complements Shubman Gill's vibrant and young cricketing style but also offers crucial nutrients to increase energy, improve stamina, and aid in muscle recovery.

Ingredients:

- 1 ripe banana
- 1/2 cup yogurt
- 1/2 cup fresh strawberries
- 1/2 cup fresh blueberries
- 1/4 tablespoon honey
- 1/4 cup oats
- 1/2 cup almond milk (or your choice of milk)

Dry Fruit Oats Porridge

This is a filling and sustaining dish that exemplifies Virat Kohli's tenacious and resilient nature on the cricket field. It is the ideal option for

athletes since it is a great source of complex carbs which provide energy gradually. It also provides protein and nutrients required for peak athletic performance.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 2 cups milk (or a milk substitute)
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1/4 cup mixed dry fruits (almonds, walnuts, cashews, and

raisins)

- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- A pinch of salt

Dry Fruit Ladoo

Whether to recover from early wickets or to give a quick energy boost to the run rate, Shreyas'



performances are power packed. food helps provide essential nutrients, quick energy boost

and protein for muscle recovery and growth.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup mixed dry fruits (almonds, cashews, pistachios, and walnuts), finely chopped
- 1/2 cup pitted dates, chopped
- 1/4 cup dried figs, chopped
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 1/4 cup desiccated coconut
- 1/2 teaspoon cardamom powder

Kale Salad

Similar to how KL Rahul blends flair and substance when batting, this salad balances the kale's boldness with the fresh fruit's sweetness.

A smart choice to improve general well-being, it preserves vitality, offers natural hydration and speeds up recovery.

Ingredients:

- 3 cups fresh kale, washed and chopped

- 1 cup mixed fresh fruits (strawberries, blueberries, and oranges), diced
- 1/4 cup pomegranate seeds
- 1/4 cup almonds
- A handful of fresh mint leaves
- Dressing - salt/pepper/olive oil/honey

All-round Veggies Pulao

On the cricket pitch, Ravindra Jadeja is recognised for his versatility and success in a variety of roles. Similar to this, this healthy pulao is a flexible recipe that mixes a range of



healthy veggies and spices to provide a dinner that is both wholesome and filling. It offers

anti-inflammatory and antioxidant qualities that lessen muscular fatigue and improve performance.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup basmati rice
- 2 cups water
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil or ghee
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 1 cup mixed vegetables (carrots, peas, bell peppers, etc.)
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- Salt to taste
- Coriander leaves for garnish

Isotonic Energy Elixir

Hardik Pandya is renowned for his frantic and energetic playing style. His all-around performance is a rush of vigour and energy, just like 1CHAZE Isotonic Sports Drink. It is a reviving drink that mixes the tangy tastes of lemon with the essential electrolytes to keep athletes energised and performing at their peak.

Ingredients:

- 30g 1CHAZE powder
- 500 ml cold water
- Lemon (optional)

Protein-rich Chicken Curry

Shardul Thakur is renowned for his power and capacity to perform well under pressure. With its high protein content, which promotes

muscular growth and recuperation, the Protein-Packed Chicken Curry symbolizes that same strength. Additionally, it increases stamina and energy levels to support high-intensity performance.

Ingredients:

- 500g boneless chicken pieces
- 1 cup yogurt
- 2 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 tomato, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- Salt to taste

Wholesome Spinach & Lentil Soup

The Spinach and Lentil Soup imitates Kuldeep Yadav's spinning skill, fusing numerous flavors and textures into a nutritious dish. It promotes healthy digestion and effective nutrition absorption and is rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup red lentils (masoor dal)
- 4 cups water
- 2 cups chopped spinach leaves
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-inch piece of ginger, grated
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- Juice of one lemon
- Coriander leaves for garnish

Fiery Grilled Chicken Tandoori

The high-protein, high-energy fiery Grilled Chicken Tandoori meal is a perfect representation of Jasprit Bumrah's fiery speed and aggressive attitude. It gives quick bowlers looking to succeed in cricket a combination of energy, taste, and muscle-building protein.

Ingredients:

- 500g boneless chicken pieces
- 1 cup yogurt
- 2 tablespoons ginger-garlic

paste

- 1 tablespoon red chili powder (adjust to taste)

- 1 tablespoon garam masala
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Salt to taste
- Skewers for grilling
- Cooking spray or oil for greasing

High-Energy Quinoa Salad

This dish relates to Mohammad Siraj's outstanding endurance and capacity to maintain



pressure on the opposition. Like Siraj's steady and purposeful bowling, this

salad blends many components to produce a balanced and long-lasting source of energy.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cooked quinoa
- 1 cup chickpeas, cooked or canned
- 1 cup mixed bell peppers, diced
- 1/2 cup cucumber, diced
- 1/4 cup fresh mint leaves, chopped
- For Dressing - olive oil, salt & pepper, lemon

Recipes are only a small component of a comprehensive nutrition strategy designed to meet the particular nutritional needs of a certain athlete. While these nutritious recipes give you a taste of the kinds of meals that might improve athletic performance, a well-rounded nutrition strategy is essential for getting the best benefits. Proteins, carbs, good fats, vitamins, and minerals are all essential nutrients that athletes need in the proper proportions to power their training and perform at their best. It's crucial to stick to a customised nutrition plan that takes your individual needs and goals into account if you want to reach your maximum potential in your athletic adventure.

◀ Proteins, carbs, good fats, vitamins, and minerals are essential nutrients ▶

Bidding for sports' biggest spectacle

The Olympics is hosted by a city, and it is **most likely** that India, which plans to host the 2036 Olympics, will decide its city is Ahmedabad.

Suresh Menon

India's plan to host the 2036 Olympics speaks of a rare confidence and a certain recklessness. The Olympics is hosted by a city, and it is most likely that India will decide its city is Ahmedabad.

There is a long list in the race for 2036 (or 2040) just now. These range from Guadalajara in Mexico to Istanbul and Warsaw and from Doha and Turin to Toronto. But as the realities begin to filter in, there will be dropouts.

Boston, for instance, pulled out of the bid for 2024 because, in the words of its mayor, they "refuse to mortgage the future of the city away." Budapest, Hamburg and Rome who were in the running for 2024 withdrew, too, leaving only Paris and Los Angeles in the fray; the next two Games were awarded to these cities.

Major reasons for second thoughts are the escalating costs and the sports infrastructure which turn out to be white elephants. In 2012, a study in Oxford found that there was a 252 per cent cost overrun since 1976, the year Montreal was host. It took Montreal three decades to pay off its debts. Not surprisingly, getting the Olympics is called the 'winners' curse'.

Beijing's Olympic stadium, the Bird's Nest, cost \$460 million to build, needs \$11 million annually to maintain, and is now just a museum piece.

The argument that revenue that comes from tourism, and other multiplier effects brings a whimsical smile to



Making a point: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi confirmed that India would bid to host the 2036 Summer Olympics at the 141st session of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), in Mumbai. AFP

the faces of economists. The 2012 London Olympics cost \$18 billion, while the revenue was \$5.2 billion. The 2004 Games in Athens contributed in large measure to the debt crisis in Greece.

Only the Los Angeles Games of 1984 ended with a profit (\$215 million) in recent years.

Against that background, should a developing country anywhere in the world be asking for the Games at all? The psychology of why it does so is not difficult to guess. Seeking a place at the high table no matter what it costs is a very human thing to do. As is the hope of being taken seriously.

Of the many suggestions to avoid the economic setbacks is the call to have a permanent host city (Athens perhaps?), financed to some extent by all countries. This will eliminate the need to construct stadiums every time and also bring in the expertise that comes from experience.

Another is to perhaps decide on a venue in each continent which will host by rotation. A third would be to give the Olympics to a country, not a city, so that it can be held across various venues.

The cost of bidding that forced cities to offer fancy venues, luxurious accommodation and spectacular ceremonies to impress the IOC might be in the past (Tokyo spent \$150 million on a failed bid for 2016 and \$75 million on the successful bid for 2020). As part of its "Olympic Agenda 2020", the IOC will now evaluate bids based on economic (and environmental) sustainability.

But 13 years is a long time in sport and politics.

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