

Gill seizes top position ahead of ICC Champions Trophy

Dubai, (UNI) India batter Shubman Gill goes into the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 as the top-ranked ODI batter after overtaking Pakistan's Babar Azam in the latest weekly rankings update carried out on Wednesday. Gill's 112 off 102 balls opening the batting against England in the third ODI in Ahmedabad last Wednesday put him 23 rating points ahead of Babar with an aggregate of 796 points in the ICC Men's ODI Batting Rankings. The India vice-captain regains top position after first clinching it for the



first time in November 2023, during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup. Shreyas Iyer, who struck 78 in that match, has also moved up one slot to ninth position as India go into the eight-team tournament with four batters in the top 10.

Captain Rohit Sharma is in third position and star batter Virat Kohli is sixth. Pakistan, who open their campaign in the Champions Trophy against New Zealand in Karachi, see captain Mohammad Rizwan progress six places to 15th after a couple of fine knocks in the Tri-Nation series played in Pakistan - 122 not out against South Africa and 46 in the final against New Zealand. Salman Agha, Player of the Series with an aggregate of 219 runs, has galloped 24 places to 48th after scores of 134 against South Africa and 45 in the final against New Zealand over the past week.

Australia edges China to top Group A in U20 AFC Cup

Shenzhen (China), (UNI) Australia scored two goals in two minutes to upset host China 2-1 here, winning the group A of U20 AFC Cup. The two teams made several changes in their starting line-ups on Tuesday, as they have already secured their spots in the final eight after both beating Qatar and Kyrgyzstan in their first two matches. Australia broke the deadlock in the 23rd minute as Medin Memeti slotted home by China's goalkeeper Liu Qiwei. The young Soccerroos needed only two minutes to double its lead, as Louis Agosti's shot was deflected by Qi Qiancheng into the back of the net. The host pulled one goal back in the 29th minute when Xu Junchi rolled across from the



right, Kuai Jiwen flicked it up into the air before hitting in a volley. China continued to push for the equalizer but its attempts fell in vain as Australia held firm to finish its group stage with a perfect record. Having won all three matches, Australia will play the Group B runner-up in the quarterfinal while China will face the Group B winner.

Foreign players arrive ahead of Uganda International Badminton Challenge

Kampala, (UNI) Several foreign players have arrived in Kampala ahead of the Uganda International Badminton Challenge 2025. The Challenge sanctioned by the Badminton World Federation (BWF) with a prize of 17,500 USD will take place from February 19 to 23 at the Lugogo Indoor Stadium in Kampala, capital of Uganda. Keisha Fatimah Azzahra from Azerbaijan, who ranks 56th in the women's singles told Xinhua that she is happy to be in Uganda for this championship. "I am very happy that I can compete in this tournament because my target is to perform well so that I continue to improve my ranking in the world," added Azzahra. Uganda highest ranked



women's player Fadilah Shamika Mohamed Rafi, who is fresh from winning a bronze medal at the All Africa Senior's Championship in Cameroon last week has also made it clear she will go all out to prove herself on home soil. "I know it will not be so easy against top players from around the world, but I am well prepared," said Mohamed Rafi.

Bad moment for Atletico captain Koke to suffer muscle injury

Madrid, (UNI) Atletico Madrid has lost club captain Koke to a muscle injury at almost the worst possible moment of the season. The club informed on its website that Koke "ended the game last Saturday against RC Celta experiencing some discomforts," and adding that "the midfielder underwent some tests following the match, and the medical tests conducted by the medical staff confirmed that the captain has suffered an injury to right leg." Atletico explained that he will "undergo physiotherapy session and recovery work in the gym," although the club doesn't say when he will recover, the Spanish sporting press indicated the in-



jury is "not unimportant," meaning Koke could be out of action for several weeks. The injury came a week before

Atletico's visit to FC Barcelona in the first leg of its Copa del Rey semi-final tie and a fortnight ahead of the first leg of the knockout stage of the Champions League, where they could possibly face Bayern Munich or local rival, Real Madrid. Atletico also has some vital games in La Liga coming up as it looks to make up its one-point deficit with FC Barcelona and Real Madrid, with a visit to an improving Valencia next Saturday and a home game against fourth place Athletic Club Bilbao in the following weekend. Atletico coach Diego Simeone has already lost Pablo Barrios for the visit to Valencia after the midfielder's red card in Saturday's 1-1 draw at home to Celta.

Ponting ponders new role for Steve Smith at Champions Trophy

Dubai, (UNI): ICC Hall of Famer Ricky Ponting believes Australia should consider using star batter and stand-in captain Steve Smith in an unfamiliar role as opener at the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. Ponting was speaking about Australia's current injury woes with host Sanjana Ganesan on the latest episode of The ICC Review, with regular skipper Pat Cummins, fellow fast bowlers Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood, all-rounders Cameron Green and Mitchell Marsh, plus even recently-retired all-rounder Marcus Stoinis (retired from ODIs) all missing from their 15-player squad for the event. While Travis Head looks certain to feature in Australia's top-order at the Champions Trophy, Ponting thinks promoting Smith up from his regular role at No.4 is something selectors may be considering ahead of their first match at the tournament against England in Lahore on February 22.

Zverev praises Chinese opponent Buyunchaokete after difficult Rio Open debut

Rio De Janeiro, (UNI) German top seed Alexander Zverev praised Chinese opponent Buyunchaokete after a gruelling opening round match at the Rio Open on Tuesday. Zverev admitted he was made to work harder than he had hoped in a 7-6(4), 6-4 victory over Buyunchaokete on the outdoor clay of the Jockey Club Brasileiro. "It wasn't a great match by me but he played some good tennis," the world No. 2 told reporters after a duel that lasted more than two hours in stifling heat and humidity. Zverev raced to a 4-1 lead in the opening set before 23-year-old Buyunchaokete suddenly found his groove with an array of impressive groundstrokes and a dependable serve. Buyunchaokete was unable to convert a set point on serve and Zverev capitalized by wresting back control of the match, though he was far below his best. The Tokyo 2020 Olympic gold medalist served three double faults and put just 60% of his first serves in play while committing 28 unforced errors.



"He made it difficult for me," Zverev said. "Actually it's surprising because you know I actually played really, really well in practice here the whole week, so I hope it's just the first match. I lost focus. I lost my shots and my rhythm a little bit." In a drama-filled day, local favorite Joao Fonseca was eliminated from the ATP 500 tournament just two days after winning his maiden title.

New-look Blue Tigresses begin Pink Ladies Cup campaign against Jordan

Sharjah, (UNI) The senior India women's national football team are back in action in the FIFA International Window, and are gearing up to face Jordan in the first match of the Pink Ladies Cup 2025, here in UAE. The Blue Tigresses, who are set to face Jordan on Thursday, landed here on Tuesday. The match will kick off at 4.30 pm IST at the Al Hamriya Sports Club Stadium, and will be streamed live on fanzone.tv. India will play two more matches against Russia and the Korea Republic on February 23 and 26, respectively. India head coach Crispin Chettri feels it imperative for his side to get the desired result in order to progress as a team at the continental level. "Jordan have progressed in a



good way over the last few years, but I think these are matches that we have to win if we want to progress," said Chettri. "We have a good mix of young and experienced players, so it will be a competitive game." The Blue Tigresses had a 10-day camp in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, before travelling to Sharjah, where they will have two training sessions, before their first match. The 44-year-old feels that women's football, especially the national team, has benefitted from the shift to a longer Indian Women's League season.

Babar reveals Pakistan's mindset ahead of Champions Trophy defence

Karachi, (UNI): One of the world's best batters, Babar Azam, holds the key for Pakistan in their home ICC Champions Trophy 2025 tournament and he reveals his thoughts ahead of their first game. In what will be Pakistan's first ICC tournament played on home soil since 1996, there is a lot on the line for this team. Pakistan are the defending Champions Trophy title holders, winning in 2017, and one thing that carries over from that success eight years ago is the presence of none other than Babar Azam. He was instrumental, as a budding 22-year-old, with the cricketing world at his feet, when Pakistan reigned supreme in the UK. And now, as a 30-year-old and one of the top batters in the world according to the ICC's ODI Rankings, he will look to help his side do it all again, an ICC report said.

Jamshedpur FC to face Mohammedan SC in ISL match on Feb 20

Kolkata, (UNI) Jamshedpur FC are set to face Mohammedan SC at the Kishore Bharati Krirangan in the Indian Super League (ISL) match here on Thursday. The Red Miners are third in the points table with 34 points from 20 matches; however, they have ended up losing thrice in their previous five encounters. Their away form has been concerning, having faced six defeats on the road, but Mohammedan SC have not really optimised their home advantage either. In fact, the Kolkata-based side is presently on a four-game-long losing streak and have garnered just 11 points from their 20 games until now, with both of their wins coming away from home. In the reverse fixture, the Khalid Jamil-coached team had clinched a convincing 3-1 win, and they will have to iron out their offensive concerns, having gone scoreless in



their previous two outings, to repeat that feat. Another game without a goal would see them go three encounters without finding the back of the net for the first time since December 2022. Mohammedan SC, on the other hand, eye their first win in 11 attempts at home - having drawn thrice and lost seven times in their backyard this season. Jamshedpur FC are realistically chasing a second-placed finish, but they trail FC Goa (39) by five points. Ending up in the second spot will see them qualify directly for the semi-finals and not participate in the one-legged knockout, but they cannot afford to drop any more points hereon for that. Mohammedan SC have given away seven goals to substitutes in ISL 2024-25, with only Chennaiyin FC (8) having conceded more.

IOC president Bach issues rallying cry to youth

Beijing, (UNI) International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach expressed his expectations for the younger generations during his visit to Beijing Sports University. Bach Tuesday emphasized the IOC's effort to bridge esports with traditional sports, highlighting the importance of maintaining Olympic values throughout this process. He said the fact that esports has already become a phenomenon among youngsters has raised concerns, such as those over fair play and gender equality. "From the very beginning there is a very clear red line what we would not engage with are the games which are not aligned with the Olympic values. We need the young generation who knows how to communicate, and they must seize the opportunities and take the responsibilities." Bach also expressed his concern



on advancing Olympic education and underscored the need to foster global cooperation and mutual respect to bridge cultures and promote peace worldwide. "I think solidarity is going beyond respect. It doesn't only mean I respect you, but also means I'm ready to help you and accept help from you." Asked how artificial intelligence might transform the Olympic movement, Bach noted that the IOC is working to adapt and foster the integration of AI and the Olympic movement, including initiatives like the "Olympic AI Agenda."

UEFA: Bayern strike in 94th minute to end Champions League journey of Celtic

Munich, (UNI) Celtic's Champions League adventure came to a halt in gut-wrenching fashion as Bayern Munich struck in the 94th minute to deny them a stunning victory in Germany and snatch a 3-2 aggregate victory. Trailing 2-1 after the first leg of the play-off round at Parkhead, Celtic led when Nicolas Kuhn capitalised on Kim Min-jae's error to give Brendan Rodgers' side a shock lead just after the hour, the BBC reported. That was after a first half in which Celtic passed up four fine opportunities to score - Kuhn, Calum McGregor, and Daizen Maeda, twice, all going close - while England captain Harry Kane hit the bar before he was substituted at half-time. Celtic would not be denied after the break, though, when Maeda

burst forward and funnelled the ball to Kuhn, who took advantage of Kim's hesitancy to slip past Manuel Neuer. Bayern, stunned into action, pushed for a leveller. Leon Goretzka nodded wide; Joshua Kimmich forced Kasper Schmeichel into a fine save; and Leroy Sane drilled a shot just past the post. Celtic were on the back foot, unable to get out of their own half and counter Vincent Kompany's side, and eventually - with extra time within sight - they cracked to concede with the last kick of the game. Michael Olise's cross was met by Goretzka, whose header was brilliantly saved by Schmeichel. The ball dropped in front of the empty goal, and Cameron Carter-Vickers' attempts to clear were thwarted by Alphonso Davies, who bundled over the line.

Egypt & United States remain perfect at FIH Hockey Nations Cup 2 Oman 2025

Muscat (Oman), (UNI) Day 2 of the FIH Hockey Nations Cup 2 Oman 2025 witnessed more thrillers, with two strong contenders emerging in Egypt and United States, with both teams winning a second consecutive game on the trot. Egypt's win also ensured them of a place in the semi-final that will be played on February 22, while USA are one point away from booking their place in the semi-final, as Austria's narrow win over Scotland keeps Pool B completely open going into the final day of pool matches on Thursday, following a rest day tomorrow. For the second day in a row China made a lightning quick start to the game, however, unlike against Egypt yesterday, China managed to get on the board against Poland early with Chao Jieiming scoring with a back post tap in, in the second minute of the game.



While both teams created plenty of chances in the first half, no more goals were scored with both defences holding down the fort and not even conceding a penalty corner, despite multiple circle penetrations. Poland were more threatening after the break, winning 6 penalty corners over the course of the second half, but the Chinese defence, especially keeper Gu Runze stood firm and kept the Polish out until the final minute. As China looked to protect their one goal lead, Polish pressure mounted and a poor tackle by Qijun Chen with 5 seconds left on the

clock gave Poland a penalty stroke which was promptly smashed in by Gracjan Jarzynski to earn Poland a crucial point at the death to take their tally to 4 points in two games. Chinese keeper Gu Runze was awarded player of the match for his stellar performance in the goal that almost led to a Chinese win, and ended up earning them their first point of the tournament. An end to end start to the game saw Chile capitalise, converting on their first penalty corner of the game in the 6th minute through a roaring Juan Amoroso drag flick. It took Egypt multiple circle penetrations to score their opener but when they did it was glorious with Mohamed Nasr beating 4 defenders and the goalkeeper before passing it to Ahmed Elganaini who had an open goal to tap the ball into, leveling the score at 1-1 which would hold till the half time.

