

Leeds centurions Pant and Duckett big winners in latest rankings update

Dubai, (UNI)
India's Rishabh Pant and England's Ben Duckett have been rewarded for their big scores during the first Test in Headingley by reaching new career-high ratings in the latest ICC Men's Test Batter Rankings.
Pant became just the second wicket-keeper behind Zimbabwe's Andy Flower to score two centuries in the same Test match when contributing 134 and 118 in the thrilling Leeds contest that England won by five wickets and gained a new career-best rating by improving one spot to move to seventh overall on the list for Test



batters. Duckett claimed Player of the Match honours for his innings of 62 and 149, with the left-hander also ob-

taining a new career-best rating, jumping up five places to eighth in the updated rankings for Test batters.
Duckett's England teammates Ollie Pope (up three spots to 19th) and Jamie Smith (up eighth places to 27th) also made some ground on the weekly update to the rankings, while India captain Shubman Gill jumped five rungs to 20th overall following his century in the first innings of the match.
England veteran Joe Root remains the No.1 ranked Test batter, with teammate Harry Brook his closest challenger.

FC Barcelona confirms Camp Nou stadium return date on August 10

Madrid,(UNI): FC Barcelona today confirmed the club will end its two years in exile and return to Camp Nou Stadium on August 10. The official Barcelona website announced the club will play its traditional Joan Gamper pre-season opener in the ground, which has been undergoing extensive renovation works over the past two years.
Barca has been forced to spend that time in the former Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium on the top of Montjuïc, although the venue hasn't been popular with supporters, who despite large numbers of tourists among their number, have rarely been able to fill the ground, which has a capacity of just below 57,000. The club returns to its traditional home with building work still going on, with Barcelona confirming that; "among the parts still needing to be finished, are the construction of the new third stand, the double VIP ring, the installation of the roof and the preparation of some interior spaces and the remodeling of the area around the ground."
The ongoing work means the capacity on August 10 will be around 60,000, which is well below the final capacity of 99,354, but considerably more than the 25,000 initially expected for the Joan Gamper game.



Our shooters converting more final qualifications into medals: NRAI chief K N Singh Deo

Dehradun, (UNI): Encouraged by the improving conversion rate of tournament final appearances to medals for the country's shooters, the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) is aiming to hold at least two major International events every year to give more exposure to the domestic competitors.
"Our problem was that even if we were making it to the finals we were not able to convert them into medals. Now if you look at our performance at the World cups, Asian games, Olympics and even world championships, medal conversions have reached almost 50 per cent," NRAI President Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo said in an interview to UNI here.
Singh Deo said at the Paris Olympics last year, India had a 22-member squad. "We got three medals, we got three number four positions. one number five position, one number six position. So the conversions from the quota places to the final is almost 50 per cent, and from final to medals is almost 50 pc as well, we have to take this percentage to 60 and 70 per cent," he said. The NRAI chief was on a visit to the city to oversee selection trials 3 group A for Rifle and Pistol.
He credited the NRAI's high performance team led by Director Dr. Pierre Beauchamp for the improvement graph
"our high performance team led by Dr Pierre Beauchamp, is a big asset for us, they had meticulous and detailed training sessions/ modules especially focused for the final matches, which will help our shooters perform better once they get into the finals," he said.
Praising 19-year-old 10-metre shooter Suruchi Singh, who won three consecutive golds in three recent ISSF World cups held in Argentina, Peru and Germany.

60 international shooters have registered for SLI auction: NRAI President

Dehradun, (UNI)
Sixty international athletes and more than 500 domestic qualifiers have registered for the Shooting League of India (SLI) auction till date, National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) President Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo said today.
In an exclusive chat with UNI, Deo emphasised that the SLI will further enhance the visibility of shooting which is already booming in India. The NRAI chief was on a visit to the city to oversee the NRAI selection trials 3 group A,
"The league will be the first of its kind in the world, it will be a mix of entertainment and shooting, it will help the players becoming brands onto themselves," he said.



Deo said the franchise and player bidding process will start by August.
The first season of the SLI will have a window between November 20 and December 2, 2025 and feature mixed team events across pistol (10m, 25m), rifle (10m, 50m 3 positions), and shotgun (Trap & Skeet), as outlined by the NRAI Technical Committee.
A minimum of six teams will participate in the competition, divided into two pools during the league stage. Players will be selected and grouped into four tiers- Elite Champions, World Elite, National Champions, and Junior & Youth Champion- to ensure a competitive mix of experience and emerging talent.

FIH Academy announces strategic partnership with RSI Sports Group 'Fikagear' brand

Lausanne (Switzerland),(UNI)
The International Hockey Federation (FIH) today announced a new partnership with RSI Sports Group 'Fikagear' brand, as an official FIH Academy Partner.
This collaboration marks an exciting step forward in the FIH's mission to empower hockey development and education worldwide.
As a global leader in sports infrastructure and performance equipment, RSI Sports Group brings innovative solutions and extensive expertise to the hockey community. Through the FIKAGEAR brand, the company has become known for delivering high-quality, sustainable hockey products that support player development at all levels – from grassroots to high performance.
This new partnership will see RSI Sports Group (Fikagear) working alongside the FIH Academy to sup-



port a wide range of educational initiatives across its 6 programme areas. Together, FIH and RSI Sports Group aim to expand access to quality learning opportunities and create environments that foster the next generation of the global hockey family.
FIH President Tayyab Ikram said, "We are delighted to welcome RSI Sports Group and Fikagear as our FIH Academy Partner. Their passion for innovation and commitment to excel-

lence align perfectly with our values. This partnership will help us empower our National Association members, equipping them with the tools and knowledge to grow hockey in their communities."
Arnoud Fiolet, Managing Partner of RSI Sports Group (Fikagear), added, "We are proud to partner with the FIH Academy to support the global growth of hockey through education and innovation. With FIKAGEAR, our mission is to empower athletes and coaches with smart, sustainable (Hockey5's) solutions that enhance learning and performance. This partnership is a natural fit, and we're excited to contribute to the development of hockey communities worldwide." The partnership officially launches this month, with upcoming activations planned around FIH Academy events and regional development activities.

Former England midfielder Lallana retires

London, (UNI)
Former England midfielder Adam Lallana has retired from playing at the age of 37.
Lallana, who won 34 caps for his country, returned to Southampton last season after making his name in his first spell there.
He only made five starts as Saints were relegated to the Championship but also worked as a coach, a role he will continue at St Mary's under new boss Will Still. Lallana joined Liverpool from Saints for £25m in 2014 and went on to win the Premier League and Champions League.
"As I call time on my playing career, I do so with an overwhelming sense of gratitude and pride," Lallana said on his social media accounts.
"Southampton... the place where it all started, and fittingly where it ends. It's the club I ultimately owe everything to." Lallana came through Southampton's academy before making his debut for the first team as an 18-year-old in 2006.
He featured almost 300 times for Saints across the two spells and was part of the squad that won back-to-



back promotions from League One to the Premier League, according to a BBC news.
Lallana was captain when he left for Anfield during a summer where he also played for England at the 2014 World Cup.
After winning the Champions League with Liverpool in 2019 and the

league title the following campaign, Lallana joined Brighton before returning to St Mary's in 2024.
"I'm proud of the playing career I've had and have no regrets about any of it," Lallana added.
"I embrace all the highs and all the lows as they've shaped me into who I am.

Raducanu battles into Eastbourne second round

London, (UNI)
Emma Raducanu said her emotional reaction to her first-round comeback victory at Eastbourne was because she received "some really bad news" before the match.
British number one Raducanu wrested control of a topsyturvy second set against Ann Li before finishing strongly to win 6-7 (5-7) 6-3 6-1 on Tuesday.
The 22-year-old, who had trailed the American by a set and a break, held back tears after securing victory.
Coach Mark Petchey and Raducanu's Billie Jean King Cup team-mate Fran Jones were court-side for the match.
"I'd prefer to not go in to it, if that's OK, but I just received some really bad news so I'm trying to overcome that in the background," Raducanu told BBC Sport.
"Mentally, in the first set, I wasn't really present. Fran Jones was there for me because she's a good friend of mine, so she knows what's going on be-



hind the scenes.
"Having her support me was so meaningful."
Having still managed to keep her Wimbledon preparations on track, Raducanu will meet Australian teenager Maya Joint for a place in the quarter-finals on Wednesday.
Speaking in her on-court interview, Raducanu said, "I want to thank the crowd for getting me through some really sticky moments."
"It really meant a lot to me and I'm really proud of how I fought back after losing the first set."
"It was tough, it was up and down. But from the middle of the second set I think I found another gear and another level." World number 38 Raducanu is building towards her fourth Wimbledon appearance, where she has twice reached the fourth round since her debut in 2021.

World Pickleball League launches 'WPBL On Tour'



Mumbai, (UNI)
The World Pickleball League (WPBL) today announced the launch of 'WPBL On Tour' today – a series of off-season events including a unique multi-city tournament bringing together the League and its franchises in a shared vision to grow the sport across the country. This off-season initiative of franchise-led tournaments and events is aimed at expanding the community engagement of India's fastest-growing sport, asserted by the resounding success of Season 1 of WPBL. WPBL on Tour will be held in the six franchise cities over a span of four months with 20+ days of on-ground engagement. Each WPBL franchise

will play host to a city-based tournament in their home territory, which shall see the League assist with strategic, marketing, and financial support.
The World Pickleball League will enable the franchise to organise tournaments that will be open to local pickleball players and enthusiasts, and offer an unparalleled opportunity to them to compete under the banner of their city's team. They will also have a chance to experience the high-octane and inclusive energy of WPBL first-hand.
Gaurav Natekar, Co-founder & CEO, World Pickleball League, said, "From day one, our vision for WPBL has been to unlock maximum value for our franchises, players, partners and all our stakeholders keeping fan engagement at the heart of all initiatives. We were extremely humbled witnessing the success of season 1, especially the interest shown by fans and partners, encouraging us for more Pickleball action. 'WPBL On Tour' is our way of empowering our franchises to grow their local presence, build loyal communities, and embed pickleball into the cultural fabric of their cities with a year-round engagement. Along with this six-city tournament, WPBL will soon announce innovative and pioneering activations, programs and partnerships that will further elevate the game in India," Natekar added. With Season 2 of the World Pickleball League set to unfold between January 24 – February 8, 2026, WPBL On Tour serves as the perfect build-up to India's biggest sportainment spectacle.

Good job Test cricket is over five days: Stokes



London, (UNI)
Captain Ben Stokes said "it is a good job Test cricket is played over five days" following questions over his decision at the toss in England's epic victory over India. Stokes opted to field despite ideal batting conditions on the opening day of the first Test at Headingley. India reached 430-3 in their first innings, but England battled back and completed a superb run chase of 371 late on the fifth day.
"You make a decision and you don't know what is going to happen," Stokes told Test Match Special.
"We did what we needed to do in the crucial moments of this game. This win is not down to just the

skill, but the attitude of this dressing room."
Stokes' decision to field followed a trend in his captaincy. On the 10 occasions England have won the toss in home Tests since Stokes became captain in 2022, they have fielded first on nine occasions.
In those nine matches, they have won seven, lost one and drawn one, the latter a game they probably would have won against Australia at Old Trafford in 2023 had rained not wiped out most of the final two days.
Headingley is also a ground suited to batting second. From the 81 venues that have hosted Tests since 2011, Leeds is the only one that has progressively produced more runs per wicket, innings on innings, throughout a match.
And Stokes was vindicated by victory in the opener to the five-match series against India. England's pursuit, led by an astonishing 149 from Ben Duckett, was their second-highest in Tests, bettered only by the 378 chased to beat the same opponents at Edgbaston in 2022, according to BBC news.
After the opening day at Headingley, former captain Michael Vaughan said he was "staggered" by England's decision to field first, but Stokes said, "It's a good job Test cricket is played over five days."
Asked if his belief in his decision was ever shaken, Stokes said, "Imagine thinking that way after day one, before we've even had chance to bat on a wicket."