

Test tons hard to get: Broad on handshake drama

London (UNI)
A rare postscript of tension unfolded at The Old Trafford on the final evening of the fourth India-England Test, when Indian batsmen Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar declined Ben Stokes' offer to draw the match, choosing instead to chase personal milestones. The moment triggered visible frustration from the England camp, but former pacer Stuart Broad defended the move, stating, "Test hundreds are bloody hard to get."

With India reaching 430 for four and the match heading inexorably toward a draw, England captain Ben Stokes signaled the customary handshake at the start of the final hour. Having already spent 143 overs in the field, England sought closure. However, Jadeja and Sundar opted to bat on, well within the laws, to try and complete their well-earned centuries.

What followed was an unusual phase of Test cricket. With all hopes of a result gone, part-timer Harry Brook was summoned to bowl off-spin—despite being a medium pacer. The bowling lacked intensity, and the field closed in as England players tried to hurry pro-



ceedings.

"There was frustration, sure," said Broad during post-match commentary. "But Sundar was on the brink of a maiden hundred, Jadeja was close too. They've been out there grinding for four hours. You can't blame them. Test hundreds are bloody hard to get."

As Brook delivered wayward off-spin, India cautiously pushed singles, with Jadeja even launching a six. On more than one occasion, England players, Brook included offered handshakes, only to be

turned down.

Broad empathised with the situation on both sides. "If I was fielding, I'd be taking my boots off near the dressing room, ready to go in. But I can't fault India either. That was four hours of serious determination."

Sundar's emotions after the match struck a chord. "He said this was for his family," Broad recounted. "That hit me. The work wasn't in the final 50 minutes. It was in the four hours they dug in to save the game."

Gambhir in heated exchange with Oval Groundsman

London (UNI)
India's build-up to the final Test at The Oval took an unexpected turn when head coach Gautam Gambhir was seen involved in a heated exchange with Lee Fortis, the head groundsman at Surrey. The incident, which unfolded during today's optional training session, cast an uneasy shadow over what was expected to be a routine practice ahead of the high-stakes series decider.

Eyewitnesses described Gambhir wagging his finger at Fortis in what appeared to be an animated disagreement.

Reportedly, the dispute stemmed from his objections to India using parts of the main square for warm-ups and drills. Groundsmen are traditionally protective of the square, and with The Oval set to host more domestic matches through early September, Fortis was reportedly anxious to limit traffic around the pitches.

India's assistant coach Sitanshu Kotak confirmed tensions on the



ground, admitting that the team felt "awkward" after being instructed to maintain a 2.5-metre distance from the pitch, despite not wearing spikes.

"When some of us coaches went to see the wicket, a member of the groundstaff said stay away at least 2.5 metres, which was a little surprising," Kotak said. "Because it is the pitch, the match is starting day after, it will be a five-day Test, and we're standing in our joggers, so we felt a little awkward."

Kotak did not directly comment on the Gambhir-Fortis confrontation but defended the team's conduct. "(We were) just looking at

the wicket, with rubber spikes... There's nothing wrong with that. Curators also need to understand the people they are talking to, they are highly skilled and intelligent," he said. "For example, if you go on the ground now where we practised, you won't even see that any bowler in the outfield would have marked it with his spikes. That all comes from the head coach. We try and see this ground also doesn't get damaged."

The assistant coach suggested that the tone of communication may have triggered the episode. "You can be protective, but at the end of the day it is a cricket pitch, not an antique. We were standing there with rubber spikes. You tell me — a day after, a batsman will be sliding to survive a run-out, a bowler will be sliding to stop the ball. Maybe he (Fortis) is thinking we are trying to grow the grass. I mean, I don't know. He said that we are trying to get this grass on the next wicket to the centre wicket. I don't know how much grass will grow in one day."

Katie Ledecky wins 1500m gold at World Aquatics



Singapore (UNI)
USA swimming great Katie Ledecky clinched her first gold medal and 22nd world title at the 2025 World Aquatics Championships, dominating the women's 1500m freestyle final on Day 3 of the meet here today.

After settling for bronze in the 400m freestyle on Day 1, the nine-time Olympic champion returned to familiar territory in the distance event, leading from start to finish in front of IOC President Kirsty Coventry and IOC Honorary President Thomas Bach.

The day's most anticipated duel saw Australia's Kaylee McKeown outpace American Regan Smith to win the women's 100m backstroke. The reigning double Olympic champion stopped the clock ahead of world record holder Smith, who took silver in a thrilling contest.

In the men's 200m freestyle final, David Popovici of Romania showcased his class once again, capturing the crown to add to his Olympic gold from Paris 2024.

South Africa's Pieter Coetzee triumphed in the men's 100m backstroke final, grabbing his first senior world title.

In the night's biggest upset, Germany's Anna Elendt stormed to victory in the women's 100m breaststroke, edging out USA's Kate Douglass, the Olympic 200m breaststroke champion from Paris.

Earlier in the day, USA's Bobby Finke advanced to the men's 800m freestyle final alongside top contenders Lukas Martens of Germany and Daniel Wiffen of Ireland — the latter still recovering from recent appendicitis surgery.

Australia sweep Caribbean tour 8-0 across format

St Kitts (UNI)
Australia wrapped up their Caribbean tour in dominant fashion, sealing a clean sweep across formats with a thrilling 3-wicket win over West Indies in the fifth and final T20I today IST.

The result ensured a comprehensive 8-0 scoreline for the visitors, following a 3-0 Test series sweep and a 5-0 rout in the T20Is.

Chasing 171, Australia overcame a shaky start to reach 173/7 with three overs to spare, thanks to another impactful display by their middle order led by Mitchell Owen (37), Tim David and Cameron Green (37). For his consistent all-round performances throughout the T20I series, Green was named Player of the Series.

Earlier, West Indies, opting to bat, were bowled out for 170 in 19.4 overs despite a brisk 30-ball 52 from Shimron Hetmyer. Returning left-arm seamer Ben Dwarshuis impressed with figures of 3 for 41, removing both openers early and breaking partnerships at crucial junctures.

Sherfane Rutherford provided early impetus with a quickfire 35 but was bowled by Glenn Maxwell against the run of play. Hetmyer's



counterattack, including a 17th over assault on Dwarshuis, briefly lifted West Indies' hopes, but his dismissal immediately after his fifty led to a late collapse, with the hosts managing only 14 runs in the final three overs.

In reply, Australia were rocked early by Alzarri Joseph and Akeal Hosein as they slipped to 25/3, with Maxwell falling for a golden duck. But Tim David, returning after a rest, turned the momentum with a flurry of sixes before falling for a brisk cameo. Owen and Green maintained the tempo with aggressive strokeplay before Hosein struck

twice more to keep West Indies in the hunt.

Despite those blows, Aaron Hardie held firm to guide Australia home, staying unbeaten to finish the match with 18 balls to spare. Hosein's 3/17 stood out for the West Indies in an otherwise forgettable campaign.

BRIEF SCORES

West Indies 170 in 19.4 overs (Shimron Hetmyer 52, Sherfane Rutherford 35; Ben Dwarshuis 3/41); Australia 173/7 in 17 overs (Mitchell Owen 37; Akeal Hosein 3/17)
RESULT: Australia won by 3 wickets.



PM Modi congratulates Divya Deshmukh on historic chess victory

New Delhi, July 29 (UNI) Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Indian chess prodigy Divya Deshmukh for her remarkable triumph at the 2025 FIDE Women's World Cup, where she not only clinched the prestigious title but also earned the title of Grandmaster.

In a message shared on X, the Prime Minister wrote, "It's been a phenomenal day for Indian Chess! Divya Deshmukh has not only won the 2025 FIDE Women's World Cup but also become a Grandmaster. Congratulations to her. Her accomplishment will motivate many people and contribute to chess becoming even more popular among the youth."

The 19-year-old Deshmukh defeated seasoned Koneru Humpy in a tense final held in Batumi, Georgia yesterday. With this win, she became the first Indian woman to win the FIDE women's world cup and only the fourth Indian player to attain the Grandmaster title.

Mitchell Santner to lead NZ in Latham's absence

Bulawayo (UNI)
Mitchell Santner will lead New Zealand in the opening Test against Zimbabwe starting tomorrow in Bulawayo, stepping in for regular skipper Tom Latham, who has been sidelined with a shoulder injury.

Santner, the Black Caps' white-ball captain, takes over red-ball leadership duties after a strong outing in the recent T20I Tri-Series in Harare, where he led New Zealand to an unbeaten title win. The all-rounder brings with him the experience of 30 Tests, with 1066 runs and 74 wickets under his belt.

New Zealand's team management confirmed that Latham,



who sustained the injury while fielding during a domestic T20 game in England, has not recovered sufficiently to be part of the playing XI. However, he will remain with the squad in Zimbabwe, with the hope of regaining fitness ahead of the second Test.

Head coach Rob Walter expressed disappointment over

Latham's absence but said the team was optimistic about his return. "It's never great when you lose your captain, who's a world-class opening batsman and a great team man," said Walter. "We'll continue to assess and see whether a replacement player is necessary, but at this stage we are hopeful that he'll recover in time."

On Santner's promotion, Walter added, "Mitch did a wonderful job with the T20 squad in the recent series. Whilst the format is different, he certainly has the respect of the players and will be supported by some highly experienced Test cricketers, so I trust that he's going to do a great job."

Hope eyes Pakistan Test after 5-0 Aussie drubbing

Bridgetown: West Indies skipper Shai Hope has called for a reset after his team endured a 5-0 T20I series whitewash at the hands of a dominant Australian side, pointing to inconsistency in the batting department as a major factor in the team's downfall.

Reflecting on the series, Hope said, "I just didn't think we put together a proper batting display. We either started well and finished poorly or the other way around. When you're playing against quality opposition like Australia, you've got to put things together for a more complete game."

Throughout the series, West Indies repeatedly squandered promising starts. In the first match, they were cruising at 123 for 1 in the 13th over but could only reach 189. A strong opening in the second game – 63 for no loss – similarly fizzled out with a final total of 172.

134th Durand cup to begin today in Manipur

Imphal (UNI)
The 134th Durand Cup, 2025, will begin today at the Khuman Lampak Main Stadium in Imphal, organized by the Indian Army and the Department of Youth Affairs & Sports (YAS), Government of Manipur.

The Manipur Police has announced special traffic arrangements around the stadium starting today.

Dr. Mayengbam Veto Singh, Director of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of Manipur, stated that the 134th edition of the Durand Cup will be the first major sporting event in the state since the COVID-19 pandemic.

He said six matches will be hosted

in Manipur during the tournament, scheduled for July 30, August 1, 4, 7, 10, with the final match on August 12. Four teams will compete in the Imphal leg of the tournament — Real Kashmir FC and the Indian Navy Football Team from outside the state, and local teams NEROCA FC and TRAU FC.

On July 10, Imphal warmly welcomed the 134th edition of the Indian Oil Durand Cup with a grand trophy tour, marking the return of Asia's oldest football tournament to the Manipur capital after a two-year hiatus. The three iconic trophies — the Durand Cup, the Shilpa Trophy, and the President's Cup — were formally unveiled.

Football India women's team clubbed with best Asian teams

Sydney (UNI)
The Indian women's football team has been drawn into a formidable Group C alongside continental heavyweights Japan, Vietnam and Chinese Taipei for the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026, to be held in Australia from March 1 to 21.

The draw ceremony, conducted at the Sydney Town Hall, saw Indian midfielder Sangita Basfore, who netted twice in India's final qualifier against Thailand, serve as one of the three draw assistants, along with Australia's Tameka Yallop and Korea Republic's Jeon Yu-gyeong.

Placed in Pot 4 prior to



the draw, based on the latest FIFA rankings released on June 12, India (world No. 70) face a daunting group stage. Japan, Asia's highest-ranked team at world No. 7, are joined by Vietnam (No. 37)

and Chinese Taipei (No. 42) in Group C.

Twelve teams have been split into three groups of four for the group stage of the 21st edition of Asia's premier women's football tournament, the oldest of its kind on the continent. The top two teams from each group and the two best third-placed sides will qualify for the quarterfinals.

India booked their spot in the tournament by topping Group B in the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers, registering victories over Thailand, Iraq, Timor-Leste and Mongolia.

This will mark India's first full-fledged appearance in the tournament since 2003. The Blue Tigresses did feature in the 2022 edition as hosts but were forced to withdraw following a COVID-19 outbreak in the squad.

Historically, India's best performances in the tournament came in the early 1980s, when they finished runners-up in 1980 and 1983, and secured a third-place finish in 1981.

Australia, as hosts, and the top three teams from the 2022 edition — China, South Korea and Japan — received automatic qualification.

The 2026 tournament will be hosted across three cities — Sydney, Perth and Gold Coast. Defending champions China, who have won a record nine titles, will look to extend their dominance on the continental stage.

