

# Tributes pour in for Pujara after retirement

Mumbai, (UNI)

Cheteshwar Pujara called time on his international career via a post on social media.

Cricket pundits and former players led the way in tributes for India's former no.3 Test star Pujara.

The former India international received several plaudits on his international career. Leading the way was India's Test captain Shubman Gill.

"Thank you pujji bhai @cheteshwar1," Gill said.

India head coach Gavtamb Gambhir applauded the batter's fighting spirit.

"He stood tall when the storm raged, he fought when hope was fading. Congratulations Pujji @cheteshwar1," Gambhir said.

Anil Kumble, who coached India between 2016



and 2017, commended Pujara for his on-field contributions.

"Congratulations on a fantastic career! You have been a great ambassador of this wonderful game @cheteshwar1. We are all proud of all your achievements on the cricket field. You gave it your all for the team! It was a privilege to

have worked with you and may you continue to shine in your second innings! Best wishes to you, Pujji, Aditi and your Dad. Well Done!" he said.

Cricket commentator Harsha Bhogle recalled that Pujara played with "class and dignity" and that the batter gave his very best for India.

"You have been a symbol of everything Indian cricket stands for @cheteshwar1. You were tough, an absolute fighter, you played with class and dignity and every time you were on the field, you did your best for India. As followers, we could not have asked for more. Indian fans will stand up and clap wherever they are today," Bhogle said.

Former India batter VVS Laxman recalled Pujara's gritty Gabba knock in 2021, during which he overcame hostile pace bowling to help India secure a historic win.

"From the time I first saw Pujara and his potential, it was brilliant to see that potential translating into performance.

His courage, grit and determination stood out and the body blows that he took

in the Gabba test we won against Australia symbolised Pujara the cricketer for me, willing to give everything he has for his country. Well done @cheteshwar1 and wish you a happy and joyous second innings," he said.

Former India international Suresh Raina also congratulated Pujara on his prolific career.

The 37-year-old ended as India's eighth-highest run-getter in the Test format, with 7,195 runs at an average of 43.60 with 19 centuries to his name.

The batter who was crucial during India's prolific Test run during the late 2010s, was known for his fighting knocks in adverse conditions and his ability to soak in the pressure through classic Test match batting.

## Hockey Haryana clinch Junior Men National Championship title



Jalandhar, (UNI)

Hockey Haryana emerged as champions of the 15th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship 2025 as they defeated Hockey Association of Odisha 3-2 here.

Hockey Punjab won their 3rd/4th Place match against Uttar Pradesh Hockey 4-3 in shootout after a 3-3 draw over the four quarters to clinch the bronze medal.

In the final on Saturday, both sides couldn't be separated initially as they exchanged possession but failed to find an opening goal.

In the second quarter, Hockey Association of Odisha showcased brilliant skill by converting two successive penalty corners courtesy of Deepak Pradhan (17') and Pratap Toppo (19') to take a comfortable lead in the final.

The scores remained the same in the third quarter, but Hockey Haryana turned the game on its head in the final quarter of the match.

Chirag (50') scored his side's first goal through a penalty corner and in the very next minute, his

teammate Nitin (51', 60') scored a field goal to level the game.

Moments later in the final minute of the match, Nitin skillfully dribbled past two defenders and fired a shot from distance to score the winning goal for Hockey Haryana and claim the championship.

In the 3rd/4th Place Match, Uttar Pradesh Hockey scored early in the first quarter as Satyam Pandey (8') converted a penalty corner to open the scoring.

Hockey Punjab replied with two goals in the second quarter by Lovenoor Singh (21') and Japnit Singh (28', 59') to take the lead.

The third quarter saw the tide shift to Uttar Pradesh Hockey as Ujjwal Pal (48') and Fahad Khan (57') scored to take the lead again. With seconds left on the clock,

In the last minute, Hockey Punjab's Japnit Singh scored a penalty stroke to push the game into a shootout.

Charanjeet Singh, Lovenoor Singh, Om Rajesh Saini and Sunny were the goalscorers for Hockey Punjab in the shootout.

## KIWSF 2025 seeing strong competition, players clocked impressive timings: Jury Head

Srinagar, (UNI)

Deepak Kumar, jury head at the Khelo India Water Sports Festival 2025 (KIWSF), in an exclusive interaction with UNI said that the two-day water sports festival being held in Srinagar has seen participants clock impressive timings that is not too far from national record holders.

Kumar, who won gold in rowing in the Asian Championships in 1989, said that the Khelo India Water Sports Festival aims to broaden India's talent pool by developing a new generation of players.

"Senior players go for the nationals. In this tournament we are targeting giving a chance to the second rung players. And what is encouraging is that these new players are clocking time that is not that far behind the senior players, for example local boy Mohsin Ali."

Kumar said that while India aims to

host the Olympics in 2036, it should improve its performance at the tournament; at least qualify for as many events as possible.

"Our immediate aim is qualifying for the Olympics. We have not qualified for a kayaking event in the past 30 years. We need to qualify regularly before hosting the event."

He agreed that water sports equipment is very expensive as they are all imported, but Indian equipments can serve as substitute for the juniors

"An India-made Kayak 1 (single person) boat costs Rs 30,000, while a similar imported boat costs Rs 5 lakhs. For Indian camp players naturally foreign made boats shall be used, but for beginners at the nodal centers India-made boats will be used so that a large number of players can practice."

## NEUFC beat Diamond Harbour FC 6-1 in Durand Cup final & retains title

Kolkata, (UNI)

Indian Super League (ISL) club NorthEast United FC thumped Diamond Harbour FC by a 6-1 scoreline at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan here on Saturday night

in the Durand Cup final. With this commanding win, the Highlanders successfully defended the Durand Cup title under the stewardship of Juan Pedro Benali.

NorthEast United FC took control early, striking twice in the first half. Asheer Akhtar (30') opened the scoring before Parthib Gogoi (45' 1') doubled the advantage on the stroke of half-time.



The Highlanders kicked off the second half with more attacking intent. Thoi Singh found himself on the scoresheet to make it 3-0 with a simple tap-in in the

50th minute.

Diamond Harbour FC scored what proved to be a consolation goal in the 68th minute when Luka Majcen deflected in a header from

Joby Justin.

Spanish duo Jairo Samperio (81') and Andy Rodriguez (85') joined the party for the Highlanders with quick-fire goals as North-

East United FC increased the lead. Tournament top-scorer Alaaeddine Ajaraie then capped off a brilliant night, coolly converting a penalty in stoppage time (90' 3') to seal the historic victory.

Ajaraie, who finished the tournament with eight goals, was at the heart of everything in the final, not only scoring but also providing three assists to underline his all-around impact, deservedly winning the Golden Ball and the Golden Boot awards.

The Highlanders' goalkeeper, Gurmeet Singh, has also won the coveted Golden Glove award for back-to-back years.

## Venus defies age to play singles at US Open

New York, (UNI): Forty-five years old Venus Williams' return to the US Open singles arena after a two-year absence has stirred the tennis world, with much attention on her age, but fellow players and fans believe her iconic status outweighs numbers on paper.

Williams, who will face 2023 French Open runner-up Karolina Muchova under the lights at Arthur Ashe Stadium on August 25, is competing in a Grand Slam singles match for the first time since 2022. Her comeback follows surgery for uterine fibroids and a 16-month break from competitive play.

"It's really inspiring," said four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka. "I don't like that every headline mentions her age. What matters more is how much of a legend she is in this sport."

Widely recognised as a pioneer of equal prize money and as one of the greatest athletes of all time, Venus presence continues to resonate beyond the court.

Frances Tiafoe, two-time US Open semifinalist, described her and sister Serena as "so iconic, not just for women's tennis but for sports as a whole."

The Williams sisters' story remains one of the most remarkable in tennis: trained by their self-taught father, both rose to World No. 1 rankings, with Serena collecting 23 major singles titles and Venus herself winning seven Grand Slam singles trophies, including two at the US Open and five at Wimbledon. Together, the sisters also clinched 14 women's doubles majors and two in mixed doubles.

Coco Gauff, who defeated Venus at Wimbledon in 2019 as a 15-year-old, has often said her career was made possible by Venus' pathbreaking journey.

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