

Kohli, Gill under spotlight as India face Aus in final ODI

Sydney, (UNI)

All eyes in Sydney are on two men who carry not just the weight of expectation but the hopes of an entire cricketing nation: Virat Kohli and Shubman Gill.

As India prepares to face Australia in the third and final ODI of the 2025 series at the Sydney Cricket Ground, the spotlight shines brightest on these senior stalwarts, whose performances, or lack thereof, may well decide the course of the match and the final impressions of India's tour down under.

Kohli, the indomitable former captain and masterful anchor, has yet to assert his authority in this series, while Gill, leading the side, has struggled to impose control at the top of the order. The burden on their shoulders is immense, and



the question is simple yet compelling: can these two men rise to the occasion when their team needs

them most? Cricket, after all, is a game of skill, temperament, and mental resolve, but it is

also a game of timing and confidence. India's middle order - Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, and Axar Patel — has

battled valiantly in the first two ODIs, crafting partnerships and offering resistance, yet without foundational contributions from Kohli and Gill, totals have fallen short, leaving Australia with straightforward chases and the psychological edge firmly in their favor.

For India to mount any meaningful challenge in Sydney, it is clear: Kohli must find his rhythm, timing, and authority, and Gill must lead by example at the top of the innings, setting the tone for those who follow.

Australia, in contrast, arrives brimming with confidence. Mitchell Marsh and Travis Head provide early aggression, while Matthew Short and Matt Renshaw stabilise the innings in the middle overs.

Anand inaugurates Global Chess League experience center in Dallas



Plano, (UNI)

Tech Mahindra has launched the Global Chess League (GCL) Experience Center at its U.S. headquarters in Plano, Dallas. Five-time World Chess Champion Viswanathan Anand inaugurated the center, marking a significant milestone in Tech Mahindra's mission to combine technology, innovation, and the spirit of chess.

The GCL Experience Center serves as a unique hub for showcasing the intersection of technology, sports, and strategy, offering fans, players, and innovators an immersive environment.

to explore how cutting-edge AI, analytics, and digital platforms are transforming the chess world. Located at Tech Mahindra's Dallas headquarters, the space offers a panoramic view of Plano's skyline and features state-of-the-art facilities for tournaments, live analysis, digital chess engagement, and community events.

At the launch event Anand

said "The Global Chess League has always stood for innovation and collaboration. This Experience Center represents the next step in making chess more engaging, interactive, and global. I'm proud to see how Tech Mahindra is leveraging technology to expand the reach of the game and inspire the next generation."

The Experience Center is designed to foster collaboration with universities, chess federations, and technology partners, promoting the study of AI in chess, digital coaching tools, fan engagement innovations, and esports integration. It also serves as a base for Tech Mahindra's growing global chess initiatives, including Global Chess League Season 3, set to take place in Mumbai later this year. Speaking about the vision behind the center, Peeyush Dubey, Chairperson, Tech Mahindra Global Chess League, said, "The Experience Center is more than just a space; it's a living ecosystem for the global chess community."



Badminton Asia U-17 & U-15 Championships: Manimuthu, Diksha lead India's Charge into QF's

Chengdu, (UNI): India's girls continued to shine on Day 2 of the Badminton Asia U-17 & U-15 Championships, with top seed Shaina Manimuthu and sixth seed Diksha Sudhakar storming into the quarterfinals of the U-15 girls' singles after impressive victories in Chengdu.

Shaina maintained her fine form, ousting China's Li Man Lin 21-17, 21-16 with commanding control from start to finish. In the U-17 section, Diksha showed her composure as she outclassed Chinese Taipei's Pin Hsuan Chiang 21-19, 21-15 to secure a last-eight berth.

Among other standout results, Lakshya Rajesh advanced with a

strong 21-16, 21-11 win over Korea's Lee Yun Seo in the girls' singles U-17 contest, while the U-17 girls' doubles pair Aditi Deepak Raj and Ponnamma BV Vriddhi held their nerve to edge Korea's Lee Yun Seo/Park Yoo Jeong 17-21, 21-15, 21-17. In boys' doubles, Charan Ram Thippana and Hari Krishna Veeramreddy produced a clinical 21-14, 21-8 victory against Japan's Kosuke Shinohara/Hiroto Nakatsuka, and Jagsher Singh Khangurra eased past Malaysia's Winson Choh 21-12, 21-17 in singles.

In the U-15 boys' singles, Wazir Singh narrowly missed out on a quarterfinal spot after a valiant 19-21, 22-20, 22-24 loss to seventh seed Revan Adrilleo Saputra of Indonesia.

India had won a gold and a bronze in 2024, and one gold, one silver, and one bronze in 2023, with both editions taking place in Chengdu. A 36-member squad is fighting for silverware across two age categories this time around.

J&K sports council mandates use of govt infra for championships, trials

Jammu, (UNI)

To ensure uniformity, transparency and optimum utilization of government sports facilities, the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council has directed all its recognised sports associations to mandatorily conduct district/UT level championships and selection trials in government-owned sports infrastructure available across J&K. In a circular issued by the secretary, J&K Sports Council, Nuzhat Gul, all recognised sports associations are directed to mandatorily utilise the government sports infrastructure to ensure uniformity, transparency and its optimum utilization.

The circular directed that the non-compliance with these instructions shall be viewed seriously and may lead to appropriate administrative action, including suspension of financial assistance or recognition of the association con-

cerned.

"It has been observed that various sports associations recognized with the J&K Sports Council are conducting district and UT level championships and selection trials in privately owned sports facilities despite the availability of adequate government owned sports infrastructure developed and maintained by the J&K Sports Council," the circular read. It said the J&K Sports Council has over the years established sufficient sports infrastructure across the UT to facilitate proper training, competitions and selection activities. "Conducting official championships and trials in private venues not only undermines the optimal utilization of government infrastructure but also affects the participation levels and performance standards of athletes, as the facilities available in private setups often do not meet the requisite norms and specifications," it said.

Narwal exudes confidence ahead of PKL playoffs

New Delhi, (UNI)

Dabang Delhi K.C. Head coach Joginder Narwal today exuded confidence that his team will excel in the PKL season 12 playoffs scheduled to start at the Thyagaraj Indoor Stadium here.

Speaking exclusively to UNI after the pre-playoff press conference, Narwal said his team has performed consistently throughout the four legs of the tournament (Vizag, Chennai, Jaipur and Delhi legs) and have enough depth in the squad to go all the way "We did well in all the legs, we were able to check out new players as well, we went through many tough contests so we are ready for the playoffs and would do well at home."

Dabang Delhi K.C. are tied with Puneri Paltan at 26 points at the top of the points table.

Narwal, who won Season 8 as a play-



er with Dabang Delhi K.C. felt that the new format that allows for eight teams to qualify for the 'play ins', and involves

a five raid tie breaker, is a very viewer-friendly format

"The tie-breaker format is exciting

both for the players and for the viewers as well. The new 'Play in' rules mean that a team can make a comeback in the league even at a later stage, which means the interest in the league and unpredictability in the league remains till the end, which is a viewer-friendly format."

He refused to pick any single player as the standout player, attributing the team's success to team spirit.

"Fazel (Atrachali), Ashu Malik, Neeraj, Naveen, all the players have played their part, it has been a team effort," he said, expressing happiness at the growing success of the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL). "As there have been several close matches, this has been a very good season for the players, coaches and the viewers and it is heartening to see that the PKL is now the second most-watched league in India after the IPL."

Messi extends Inter Miami contract to 2028

Miami, (UNI)

Lionel Messi has agreed to extend his contract with Inter Miami until beyond his 41st birthday, the MLS club said.

The 38-year-old, whose previous contract had been due to expire in December, agreed personal terms of a deal that runs until the end of 2028.

"Our vision was to bring the best players to Inter Miami and to this city, and that's exactly what we have done," co-owner David Beckham said in a statement. "He's still as committed as he's ever been and he still wants to win."

Messi has scored 71 goals and provided 37 assists in 82 appearances since joining the club in 2023, helping Miami win the 2023 Leagues Cup and 2024 Supporters' Shield.

The Argentine World Cup winner claimed this year's MLS Golden Boot with 29 goals and is one of five



players shortlisted for the league's MVP award.

"Having Leo commit his future to Inter Miami shows his belief in what we're building here," Beckham added. "He's changed the face of the game in this country, and we couldn't be prouder to have him

lead our club into the future."

Inter Miami finished third in the MLS Eastern Conference at the end of the regular season. The Florida outfit is due to play Nashville on Friday in the first round of the playoffs, to be decided over three matches.

No athletes from Russia, Belarus likely to qualify for Winter Paralympics

Beijing, (UNI)

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) said that athletes from Russia and Belarus are unlikely to qualify for the Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games because they are unable to participate in qualification events.

The IPC already voted to fully reinstate the membership rights and privileges of the Russian and Belarusian Paralympic Committees, opening the door for Para athletes from the two countries to compete at Milano Cortina, at its General Assembly in Seoul, South Korea, in late September.

However, eligibility criteria for qualification events in each Paralympic sport are determined by the relevant international federation.

The IPC said it has received confirmation from each of the four international federations with sports on the Milano Cortina 2026 program -- the International Ski



and Snowboard Federation (FIS), International Biathlon union (IBU), World Curling and World Para Ice Hockey -- that, in practice, no athletes from the two countries are likely to qualify for the Games.

Andrew Parsons, IPC president, said: "The positions of FIS, IBU and World Curling currently mean that athletes and teams from Belarus and Russia cannot compete in their events, making it impossible for them to qualify for the Mi-

lano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games."

"While Belarus and Russia can now compete in Para ice hockey competitions, at this late stage of the qualification cycle, the six teams for November's Paralympic Games Qualification Tournament have already been determined."

The Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games will take place March 6-15, with 79 medal events across six sports.

Karnataka aim to bounce back in Round 2 Ranji clash

Shivamogga, (UNI)

Karnataka will look to bounce back after a drawn match against Saurashtra, leveraging home advantage at KSCA Navule Stadium when they face Goa in an Elite Group B Ranji Trophy 2025-26 fixture starting tomorrow.

The match is expected to be a crucial encounter as both teams aim to build momentum in a tightly contested group stage.

Karnataka's batting is led by Devdutt Padikkal, Manish Pandey, and R Samarth, while leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal provides a potent spin threat. In their opening match, Karnataka scored 372 in the first innings, with top-order contributions from Padikkal (84) and Pandey (76). The bowlers matched Saurashtra nearly run-for-run,



with Gopal taking eight wickets (4/72 & 4/55) to keep the defending champions under pressure. Vidwath Kaverappa and Ronit More added crucial breakthroughs, highlighting the team's balanced attack and depth.

Goa, promoted from the Plate group last season, enters the fixture on the back of a

dominating performance against Chandigarh, winning by an innings. Twin double-centurions from Lalit Yadav (213) and Abhinav Tejrana (205) marked a historic first for Goa in the Ranji Trophy.

The bowling unit, led by Darshan Misal and Suyash Prabhudessai, dismissed Chandigarh twice inside three days, showcasing a well-rounded team capable of competing at the Elite level.

The pitch at KSCA Navule Stadium is expected to offer good bounce and early assistance for seamers, becoming increasingly batter-friendly as the game progresses. Spinners may play a significant role from Day 3 onwards. The weather forecast indicates dry conditions with clear skies, suggesting that a full four-day match is likely. The toss could prove decisive, with batting first seen as the preferred option to build a substantial first-innings total.

Karnataka are favourites to win. The contest is expected to revolve around Karnataka's home advantage and all-round strength versus Goa's in-form batting lineup and incisive bowling attack.

Chennai Open WTA Tennis : Shrivalli Bhamidipaty gets Wild Card for main draw



Chennai, (UNI)

India's Shrivalli Bhamidipaty has been given Wild Card for the main draw of the Chennai Open WTA Tennis Championship beginning here on October 27.

The organisers had earlier announced a wild card for Lois Boisson of France, semi-finalist at the French Open 2025.

Unfortunately, due to a knee injury she has been advised rest for two weeks and will miss the Chennai Open.

Her withdrawal has made the fourth wild card free, which the organisers have now allotted to 23-year-old Shrivalli Bhamidipaty, ranked No. 2 in India and No. 377 in the world.

She will now join 22-year-old Sahaja Yamalappalli and 16-year-old Maaya Revathi in the Main Draw--a lineup that promises to energize Indian tennis fans and add strong national representation to the international field.

With three Indian women in the main draw, the Chennai Open 2025 is set to offer home supporters an exciting opportunity to witness emerging stars from India compete on a global stage. Fans can look forward to thrilling matches, inspiring performances, and anecdotal atmosphere as the tournament unfolds, the organisers said.