

# ICC Men's T20 WC 2026 sets new digital benchmarks

Dubai, (UNI) The ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 in India and Sri Lanka has surpassed engagement records across its digital platforms - ICC.tv and the International Cricket Council's (ICC) social media channels, helping cricket expand its global footprint.

Having started with 20 teams, the tournament is down to its final four with India, England, South Africa and New Zealand securing their place in the semi-final.

The tournament reached a fever pitch on Sunday, when India defeated former champions West Indies to seal the last remaining semi-final spot. The match set a new concurrent streaming record on ICC's streaming service, surpassing the previous peak set during the Men's T20 World Cup final in 2024.

With the knockouts still to go, the record for the total number of users and total minutes watched on ICC.tv is already more than the



entirety of the 2024 T20 World Cup. Compared to this stage in the 2024 event, unique users have grown by 28 percent while total playtime has increased by 56 percent, according to ICC.

The ongoing edition of the World Cup has surpassed 10 billion video views across ICC's social media platforms and is on track to exceed the 16 billion record set in 2024.

More fans are enjoying the tournament in-depth than ever before. The average watch time per unique user has increased to 58 minutes this time around, a new high from the 47 minutes at the end of the Super 8 stage in 2024.

While multi-language feeds have expanded reach and accessibility in existing markets, growth in non-traditional territories have contributed to a sharp rise in engagement and enriched fan experience.

Three of the top five streams during the tournament have been non-English feeds, with ICC.tv broadcasting in Hindi, Urdu, Nepali, Japanese and Bahasa Indonesia. This focus on language accessibility has helped establish a connection with viewers in diverse cricketing communities around the world. The strongest percentage growth has come from non-traditional markets, which have seen a 69 per cent increase in users.

# Alana King, Smriti Mandhana claim top ICC ODI spots



Dubai, (UNI)

Alana King and Smriti Mandhana have climbed to the top of the ICC Women's ODI Bowling and Batting Rankings, respectively, in the latest update released on Tuesday.

According to the International Cricket Council (ICC) website, King (775 rating points) ended Sophie Ecclestone's near four-year reign at No.1 after an impressive week in which she claimed seven wickets at an average of 16.71.

Her standout spell of 4/33 in the third ODI helped Australia seal a 185-run victory and propelled her to a career-best rating and maiden No.1 ranking.

King is joined by four Australian bowlers in the top eight: Ashleigh Gardner (third), Annabel Sutherland (fifth), Megan Schutt (seventh), and Kim Garth (eighth).

Mandhana (790) moved past Laura Wolvaardt to reclaim the No.1 spot in the batting rankings after scores of 58 and 31 during the week. Wolvaardt will have a chance to regain the top position during South Africa's upcoming ODI series against New Zealand.

Australia, who bounced back from losing the T20s to win the ODI leg of the multi-format series, also saw gains for Beth Mooney, Gardner, and Alyssa Healy. Healy, who scored a century in her final ODI before announcing her retirement from the format, signs off ranked fourth (744), behind Mooney (749) and ahead of Gardner (724). Gardner (516) continues to dominate the ODI All-Rounder Rankings, nearly 100 points clear of Hayley Matthews (418). Sutherland (408) climbed two spots in the all-rounder list, while youngster Georgia Voll jumped 23 places to 34th in the batting rankings after averaging 54 in the series.

Despite a 3-0 series loss, India captain Harmanpreet Kaur (652) re-entered the top 10, moving up four places to ninth following scores of 53, 54, and 25.

In South Africa's ODI series against Pakistan, Sadia Iqbal climbed five places to 14th (583) in the bowling rankings, while Fatima Sana moved up five spots to 15th (180) in the all-rounder standings, overtaking Sune Lusu, who also rose one place to 16th.



# Sindhu safely returns home from Dubai amid Middle East tensions

Bengaluru, (UNI): Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu on Tuesday confirmed that she has safely returned home to Bengaluru after being stranded in Dubai amid escalating regional tensions. "Back home in Bangalore and safe. The last few days have been intense and uncertain, but I'm truly grateful to be back at my house," Sindhu wrote on X, expressing relief after the harrowing experience.

She thanked the ground teams, Dubai authorities, airport staff, immigration officials and all those who assisted her and her team during the disruption. "The empathy and professionalism meant more than words can say. For now, it's time to rest, reset, and figure out the next steps," she added.

In earlier posts, Sindhu had described the situation in Dubai as "terrifying", mentioning interceptions overhead and the rapid escalation of tensions amid the evolving conflict involving Iran.

She had said that she and her team were stranded at the airport along with several families as flights were disrupted.

The ace shuttler also recounted a tense moment when an explosion occurred near the airport area where they were present, prompting her coach to quickly move away from the smoke and debris.

She later confirmed that the group had been shifted to a safer location with assistance from local authorities and the Indian High Commission.

# New full-time role a keeper as Mooney relishes consistency

Perth, (UNI)

Beth Mooney says she is relishing the challenge of keeping wicket full time for Australia but acknowledges she will need to carefully manage her increased workload in her new role.

Mooney will take the gloves for this week's day-night Test against India at the WACA Ground, a role she also performed at the MCG last summer during the women's Ashes. On that occasion, it was to relieve Healy who was playing through a foot injury, and Mooney later admitted she had been daunted in the lead-up to the match.

This time, with a Test under her belt and greater confidence borne of her increased opportunities with the gloves in the Australian team, the 32-year-old is looking forward to the challenge at her adopted home ground. Australia have been blessed across the last decade to have their back-up wicket-keeper entrenched in their best XI as one of the world's leading batters.



The post-Healy era will throw up fresh questions for selectors, who will need to consider coverage when choosing future squads. For Mooney's part, she is conscious of making the small adjustments needed to how she trains and recovers to ensure she remains on the park.

"It's been a lot of fun, I've really enjoyed it, and the consistency of doing it a little bit more frequently," Mooney said at Perth airport on Monday.

# Lakshya, Satwik-Chirag lead India at All England Open Badminton

Birmingham, (UNI)

With PV Sindhu ruled out, India's challenge at the All England Open Badminton Championships 2026 will be spearheaded by Lakshya Sen and the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty in Birmingham from Tuesday.

Sindhu, who was travelling to the tournament via Dubai, was stranded in transit due to the evolving situation in the Middle East and subsequently withdrew from the prestigious BWF Super 1000 event.

In her absence, India's women's singles campaign will be led by rising talent Unnati Hooda, who notably defeated Sindhu at the China Open last year, along with Malvika Bansod, as per Olympics.com.

In men's singles, world No. 12 Lakshya Sen enters as India's top-



ranked shuttler. The 22-year-old had reached the final in 2022 and the semi-finals in 2024 at the All England Open and will look to mount another strong run.

The fourth-ranked men's doubles combination of Satwiksairaj and Chirag will aim to bounce back after an early exit at the India Open in January.

India's only women's doubles pair in the draw is the two-time All England semi-finalist duo of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand.

In mixed doubles, Olympian Tanisha Crasto will partner Dhruv Kapila.

One of the most prestigious tournaments on the BWF World Tour calendar, the All England Open has seen only two Indian champions, Prakash Padukone (1980) and Pullela Gopichand (2001).

# Shastri, Ponting urge faith in under-pressure India batter Abhishek Sharma

Mumbai, (UNI)

Despite a lean run at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, both Ravi Shastri and Ricky Ponting have thrown their weight behind Abhishek Sharma, backing the opener to deliver when it matters most.

Speaking on The ICC Review, Shastri stressed that any decision regarding his place in the semi-final of the T20 World Cup 2026 against England must first be based on the left-hand batter's mental space.

"Unless the team management realises that, mentally he's not there. If mentally, his mindset has taken a beating, it's for them to judge from the outside, in conversations with him, just seeing the way he's batting in the nets," the former India head coach said.

Abhishek's numbers in this tournament - 80 runs in six matches at an average of 13.33, with a highest score of 55 and a strike rate of 131.14 - reflect the struggle. But Ponting too believes the batter's attacking instinct



should be trusted. "He's obviously not made the runs that any of us expected," Ponting stated. "I had him down as the leading run scorer and possibly the player of the tournament going back about a month ago. That hasn't happened yet, but I would agree with Ravi. I would stick with him."

Shastri outlined the only scenario in which he would consider a tweak to the batting order, where Ishan Kis-

han, who has had a strong tournament himself with 224 runs from seven games, would move up the order.

"If that's the case, then and only then will I think of putting Ishan Kishan up the order and then probably Rinku Singh bringing him, at the bottom," he added.

"That could be the only change, but I would still persist with him because last time India played England, he had a terrific series against them."

# Korea, Wales arrive for Hyderabad FIH World Cup Qualifiers

Hyderabad, (UNI)

South Korea and Wales women's national field hockey teams have arrived in Hyderabad ahead of the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup 2026 Qualifiers, scheduled to be held from March 8 to 14.

The eight-nation tournament will determine three qualifying spots for the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup 2026, to be co-hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands, according to the Hockey India website.

Led by captain Lee Yuri, Korea arrive with the experience of nine previous World Cup appearances and will look to return to the global stage while aiming to better their best-ever finish, a bronze medal in 1990.

Wales, meanwhile, come into the tournament after finish-



ing runners-up at the 2025 EuroHockey Championship II and are eyeing their first World Cup appearance since 1983.

Korea have been placed in

Pool A alongside England, Italy women's national field hockey team and Austria. Wales are in Pool B with India, Scotland, and Uruguay.

# Mohun Bagan Super Giant condemns AIFF stadium closure, calls decision 'unfair to fans'

Kolkata, (UNI)

Mohun Bagan Super Giant have expressed strong disappointment after the All India Football Federation (AIFF) Disciplinary Committee ordered a full stadium closure for their upcoming home fixture against Odisha FC on March 6, following alleged spectator misconduct during their recent match against Chennaiyin FC.

In a statement posted on X, the club said it had accepted the financial penalty imposed in good faith but termed the decision to



shut the stadium as "extreme" and unfair to supporters.

"We are deeply disappointed with the AIFF Disciplinary Committee's de-

cision to impose a full stadium closure for our home fixture on 6 March 2026," the statement read.

"We believe closing the stadium unfairly punishes thousands of passionate, law-abiding supporters who are the heartbeat of our Club. Our appeal to reconsider this decision in the interest of our fans has not been accepted. Football belongs to the fans. They deserve better," it added. The home side had defeated Chennaiyin FC 2-0 at the Salt Lake Stadium on February 23 in an Indian Super League (ISL) match.

# Head leads Aussie state inclusions after World Cup exit



Perth, (UNI)

Travis Head is back to spearhead South Australia's push to reach a second straight Sheffield Shield final as members of Australia's T20 squad return to domestic cricket following their early exit from the T20 World Cup. Josh Inglis, Cooper Connolly (both Western Australia), Matthew Renshaw (Queensland), Matthew Kuhnemann (Tasmania) and Sean Abbott (NSW) will join Head in turning out for their respective states in round nine of the Shield, beginning this Thursday.

Head's availability for this week's clash

with NSW before joining Indian Premier League side Sunrisers Hyderabad will be a major boost for the defending champions who are locked in a tight tussle with Queensland in the race to face Victoria in the Shield final later this month. SA are (33.43) less than a point behind the second-placed Bulls (34.38) with two rounds to go, with the Tigers (28.23) and Blues (27.83) further back but still a chance of claiming second spot. WA (17.19) are the only team out of contention and sit at the bottom of the standings with one win from eight games.

Test opener Head, who batted at No.4 in his last appearance for his state in November prior to taking over from Usman Khawaja during the Ashes, will suit up alongside Aussie teammate Alex Carey, who has been a fixture for the Adelaide Strikers and SA sides since the end of the Test summer.

Head and Inglis will only be available for round nine, with the latter also part of the Sunrisers' squad for the second half of IPL 2026 following his wedding in early April, while Cameron Green will play for WA in round 10 as a specialist batter before linking up with Kolkata Knight Riders.