

# FC Goa aim to reclaim 2<sup>nd</sup> spot

Team Herald  
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**FATORDA:** FC Goa will look to bounce back into second place on the Indian Super League table when they host East Bengal, who will be looking to get back to winning ways, at Nehru Stadium, here, on Sunday.

The Gaurs, currently third with 27 points from 15 matches, are coming off three draws in their last five outings.

## ISL PREVIEW

East Bengal, sitting 11th with 14 points from an equal number of games, on the other hand are searching for consistency after two consecutive defeats.

FC Goa's five-match winning streak against East Bengal FC gives them a psychological edge.

However, they recently dropped to third after

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— Manolo Marquez, FC Goa Head Coach



Jamshedpur FC's 1-1 draw against Mohun Bagan.

A victory will not only see Goa reclaim second place but also keep their hopes alive for a top-of-the-table finish. East Bengal, on the other hand, have struggled up front this season, creating the fewest goal-scoring chances in the league (126).

Their tally of 16 goals is among the lowest, with only bottom-placed Hyderabad FC (11) and debutants Mohammedan Sporting (8) scoring fewer.

For FC Goa, Armando Sadiku has been a stand-out performer, scoring nine goals this season. One more strike would make him the

11th player in club history to reach double digits in ISL goals. Brison Fernandes has also shone, with five goals, eight successful dribbles, and 16 goal-scoring chances as the duo will hold key to their return to winning ways.

East Bengal will rely on Hijazi Maher's defensive solidity, with the player averaging 1.36 interceptions per game.

Forward Naorem Mahesh Singh, who leads the team in goal contributions (three goals and two assists), will aim to break his scoring drought against FC Goa this season.

In nine ISL meetings, FC

Goa have dominated with six wins and two draws. East Bengal FC have managed just one victory, highlighting the Gaurs' upper hand in this rivalry.

FC Goa Head Coach Manolo Marquez accepted that the season has entered a challenging phase right now. “Every game is very tough. We are in a moment where collecting points is very difficult. But, this is football. We need to be focused on ourselves,” he said. “The team is slowly getting better”

East Bengal FC Head Coach Oscar Bruzon said his team is gradually improving themselves and laying the groundwork for their success ahead.

“The team is slowly getting better. We need to find the foundation that allows us to have an idea of what East Bengal FC has always been and what we need to do moving forward,” he said.

# Dempo SC to take on Rajasthan Utd

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**PANJIM:** Dempo Sports Club will take on Rajasthan United FC in their ninth I-League fixture of the 2024-25 season at the Vidyadhar Nagar Stadium, Jaipur, on Sunday, at 3.30 pm.

After a narrow 0-1 defeat to Gokulam Kerala FC in their last outing, the Golden Eagles are determined to bounce back stronger. Despite putting in a valiant effort at home, Abhijith Kurungodan's late strike in the 86th minute secured the win for Kerala, leaving Dempo SC eager to make amends on the road.

Meanwhile, Rajasthan United FC head into this match after a dramatic 1-1 draw against 10-man Delhi FC. James Singh's red card gave Rajasthan the upper hand, with Alan Oyarzun converting a penalty in the 70th minute to put them ahead. However, Delhi's resilience saw Okwa equalise late in the 83rd minute, forcing Rajasthan to settle for a point.

As it stands, Dempo SC sits in seventh place on the I-League table with 10 points from eight matches, while Rajasthan United is just one spot above in sixth with 11 points.

Head Coach Samir Naik remains optimistic and motivated despite the recent setbacks, sharing his thoughts ahead of the game, “The thing is that, unfortunately, we've lost

“The thing is that, unfortunately, we've lost both our home games. We played well, but conceding in the final moments hurt us. However, we've worked on certain aspects, and the team is well-prepared for this match. In fact, we've been performing better in away games. We've lost three home games in Goa, but the preparation for this one has been good, and the boys are ready

— Samir Naik, Head Coach

both our home games. We played well, but conceding in the final moments hurt us. However, we've worked on certain aspects, and the team is well-prepared for this match. In fact, we've been performing better in away games. We've lost three home games in Goa, but the preparation for this one has been good, and the boys are ready,” he stated.

Coach Samir also praised the team's spirit, “The atmosphere in the team is always positive. Whether I was a player or now as a coach, the environment has always been great. The boys are happy and motivated, even though the recent loss affected us momentarily. But we've regrouped, and the focus is now on giving our best in this upcoming game,” he signed off.

# IM Ayush, GM Sethuraman & IM Slizhevsky share lead

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**PANJIM:** The penultimate round of late Shri Manohar Parrikar 3rd Goa International Open Grandmaster Chess Tournament 2025 saw intense battles as IM Ayush Sharma (Madhya Pradesh), GM Sethuraman SP (Tamil Nadu) and IM Slizhevsky Alexander (Russia) emerged as joint leaders with 7.5 points each after nine rounds at the Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium, Taleigao Plateau, on Saturday.

The competition remains fierce, with Goa's IM Ethan Vaz, IM Aranyak Ghosh (RSPB) and IM Tologan Tegin Semetei (Kyrgyzstan) closely trailing at 7 points each, setting the stage for a thrilling final round. Nine players, including some of the tournament's highest-rated participants, are positioned at 6.5 points. This group features notable names - GM

Diptayan Ghosh (RSPB), GM Mitrabha Guha (West Bengal), GM Boris Savchenko (Russia), GM Alexei Fedorov (Belarus) and IM Agibleg Uurtsaikh (Mongolia), all keeping the competition tight as they head into the decisive final round.

Fourteen players, including Goa's IM Ameya Audi, follow closely with 6 points, ensuring the middle-tier battle remains equally captivating. IM Ethan Vaz continued his stellar run, securing a sensational victory against IM Rohith Krishna S (Tamil Nadu) to stay in contention for the top spot with 7 points.

IM Ameya Audi faced a challenging match, conceding a point to IM Slizhevsky Alexander, leaving him at 6 points. IM Ritviz Parab bounced back with a win against Moxit J Shah (Gujarat) and now stands at 5.5 points. GM Anurag Mhamal, after a tough game against IM Gochelashvili David (Russia) where he faced a loss, is at 5 points.

# Chhetri's goal snatches a point for Bengaluru FC

**PTI, HYDERABAD:** The great Sunil Chhetri scored his 10th goal of the season to help Bengaluru FC share the spoils with Hyderabad FC following a 1-1 stalemate in their Indian Super League match, here, on Saturday.

Devendra Murgaonkar's (21') first-half strike was neutralised by Chhetri (78') in the second essay of the match. Chhetri, 40, touched the 10-goal mark for the second time in his ISL career, after having netted 14 times in the 2017-18 campaign.

Bengaluru FC held 62.4 per cent of the possession, but had a solitary shot on target, which Chhetri converted to get them a point out of this match.

The opening phase of the game was slightly cagey as both teams struggled to create clear chances. Bengaluru FC attempted to break past the Hyderabad FC defensive line but were not exactly cohesive in their moves.

Chhetri was flagged off-side twice in the opening 20 minutes. The home side retaliated soon afterwards, as they embarked on a positive phase of play with Allan Paulista winning a free-kick in the attacking half. Ramhlunchhanga served a pinpoint cross for Devendra Murgaonkar, who was positioned at the centre of the 18-yard box and headed the ball into the bottom right corner to get the lead in the 21st minute.

Murgaonkar operated sharply in the offensive, making the right moves in



Hyderabad FC's Abdul Rabeeh dribbles with the ball against Bengaluru FC Sunil Chhetri at GMC Balayogi Stadium, Hyderabad, on Saturday

## 10-man Kerala Blasters snatch a point after goalless draw

**AGENCIES, KOCHI:** Kerala Blasters FC restricted North-East United FC to a goalless draw in the Indian Super League match played at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, here, on Saturday. The home team showed exceptional defensive prowess to hold the Highlanders at bay and secure a point despite playing with 10-man for over 60 minutes of the game.

the Bengaluru FC box to cause troubles to the visitors.

Twelve minutes after his goal, Joseph Sunny picked the attacker in a spot on the right side of the penalty area. Murgaonkar did well to exert power behind his shot from that angle, but the ball was saved by Gurpreet Singh Sandhu on the top right corner.

The Bengaluru FC camp made as many as four substitutions after the half-

accurately to pull the visitors back in the proceedings. This was the fourth instance this season when Williams assisted Chhetri's goal, showing the remarkable link-up between the two players. Bengaluru FC became increasingly probing of the Hyderabad FC defence post this strike. They threw bodies from the mid-field and frontline ahead in the quest of the winner.

A couple of minutes before the 90th minute mark, Alberto Nogueira tried his luck from distance upon receiving a pass from Diaz, but midfielder's shot wasn't directed on target.

**RESULT**  
Hyderabad FC 1 (Devendra Murgaonkar 21') Bengaluru FC 1 (Sunil Chhetri 78')

# Unstoppable Sporting Clube win

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**MAPUSA:** Sporting Clube de Goa proved unstoppable as they registered a fluent 3-1 win over Geno FC in the Goa Football Association's Goa Professional League match played at Duler Stadium, here, on Saturday.

Unstoppable Sporting Clube de Goa are now on 33 points from 12 matches leading the GPL table with Geno FC stays on 25 points from 11 matches are on second place.

## GOA PRO LEAGUE

Flaming Oranje were indeed a better side with more attempts at the rival goal where in the very first minute medio Ahongshangbam darted inside the 18-yard box from the left flank and squared the ball to his partner U-21 Francisco Fernandes who controlled, hoodwinked his marker and placed the ball into the far corner of the goal 1-0. Geno FC who are couple of points behind Sporting Clube, came back strongly and levelled terms in the 13th minute of play. Sporting Clube's de-



Geno FC's Velito Cruz and Sporting Clube de Goa's Ivon Costa in action during the Goa Professional League match played at Duler Stadium, Mapusa, on Saturday

fender brought a reckless tackle on Geno FC's Prajat Naik inside the 18-yard box prompting Referee Jan Rodrigues to point to the dreaded spot. Geno FC's skipper Velito Cruz, shoulder the responsibility and made no mistake to send Sporting Clube's custodian the wrong way, 1-1.

After much probing Geno FC colts almost doubled their lead in the 25th minute, where a firm header by stopper back Mohammad Rafi off Niraj Parekh curling corner went just past the goal post.

On resumption of play, Flaming Oranje almost once again took the lead in the very first minute but

## sportspopup

**Satwik-Chirag lose in semis as India Open campaign ends**  
**NEW DELHI:** Indian doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty's campaign at the India Open Super 750 ended in the semifinals after they suffered a straight-game loss to Malaysia's Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin, here, on Saturday. Satwik and Chirag, the 2022 champions, were outplayed 18-21, 14-21 in just 37 minutes by the world number 3 Malaysian duo, who produced a class act to derail the Indian pair's game plan.

**Sinner surges into Melbourne last 16**  
**MELBOURNE:** Defending champion Jannik Sinner raced to victory at the Australian Open on Saturday to sweep into the last 16 as Iga Swiatek demolished Emma Raducanu. Results: Jannik Sinner bt Marcos Giron 6-3, 6-4, 6-2. Gael Monfils bt Taylor Fritz 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7/1), 6-4. Ben Shelton bt Lorenzo Musetti 6-3, 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5). Lorenzo Sonego bt Fabian Marozsan 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (8/6), 6-1, 6-2. Learner Tien bt Corentin Moutet 7-6 (12/10), 6-3, 6-3. Women's singles: Elena Rybakina bt Dayana Yastremska 6-3, 6-4. Madison Keys bt Danielle Collins 6-4, 6-4. Elina Svitolina bt Jasmine Paolini 2-6, 6-4, 6-0. Emma Navarro bt Ons Jabeur 6-4, 3-6, 6-4. Eva Lys bt Jaqueline Cristian 4-6, 6-3, 6-3. Iga Swiatek bt Emma Raducanu 6-1, 6-0. Novak Djokovic, Carlos Alcaraz, Aryna Sabalenka and Coco Gauff are all in action on Sunday.

**Rohit hints players have reservations about 10-point diktat, to discuss issue with BCCI**  
**MUMBAI:** It's not a "punishment", said chief selector Ajit Agarkar but India captain Rohit Sharma on Saturday expressed his and his teammates' reservations towards the recent BCCI policy that placed restrictions on the time that players would get with their families while on tour. The BCCI has not officially announced the guidelines but media has already reported on the 10-point diktat. One of the major contentions in policy document is going back to the old days where families are allowed only for 14 days on long tours. Any deviation would need coach Gambhir's approval.

**Denis Law, Man Utd & Scotland great dies at 84**  
**MANCHESTER:** Denis Law, the Manchester United and Scotland great, has died. He was 84. The death of Law, the only Scottish player to win the Ballon d'Or, was announced by his family through United on Friday. In 2021 he was diagnosed with dementia. "It is with a heavy heart that we tell you our father Denis Law has sadly passed away. He fought a tough battle but finally he is now at peace," the statement read. Law is forever linked with Bobby Charlton and George Best, the three-pronged strike force that led United to English league titles in 1965 and '67 and the European Cup in 1968 — a first for an English club.

**GRAND FINALE TODAY**  
**15 INTER-VILLAGE FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT FINALS**  
Organised by: Fr. Agnelo Youth Sports Club, Paroda  
on Sunday, 19th January 2025 at 4:30 pm at Village Panchayat Grounds, Avedem, Paroda  
BETWEEN **FR. AGNELO YSC, PARODA** vs **ST. ANTHONY FC - ASSOLDA**  
Chief Guest: **Fr. George Ratos** (Parish Priest of Paroda Church)  
Guest of Honour: **Shri. Sidhesh Gauns Dessai**, (Vice-Chairperson of South Goa Zilla Panchayat)  
**Shri. Bhupendra Gauns Dessai**, (Sarpanch, V.P. Avedem-Cotombi-Chaifi)  
Special Invites: **Shri. Anthony Pango**, Sr. Vice President (South Goa) of GFA, **Shri. Petwin Fizardo**, Executive Member, GFA, **Rev. Fr. Peter D'Souza**, Assitant Parish Priest, Paroda, **Rev. Fr. Jose Antonio**  
Francis Fernandes President, Xavier Alonso Secretary, Pascoal Fernandes Treasurer, Gladson D'Costa Sports Secretary, Nevil Alphonso Compere.  
**MOUZIE PRIZE RS. 25,000**

**ALL ROADS LEAD TO BETALBATIM FOR THE FINALS TODAY**  
The Managing Committee of **BETALBATIM SPORTING CLUB** Cordially invite you for the finals of **7th MARTINS CUP 2024-25**  
All Goa Inter Village Football Tournament  
Date: 19th January 2025 Time: 4.30 p.m  
Venue: Betalbatim Panchayat Ground  
On the Occasion of the **Feast of Our Lady of Remedios**  
BETWEEN **SPORTING CLUB OF DAVORLIM** vs **RAIA SPORTING CLUB**  
Chief Guest: **Mr. Aleixo Sequeira** (Hon. Minister for Law and Environment)  
Guests of Honour: **Rev. Fr. Adriano Furtado** (Parish Priest, Our Lady of Remedios Church, Betalbatim) To Preside: **Mrs. Carafina Pereira** (Founder - Martins Corner)  
Special Invites: **Rev. Fr. Agapito D'Cunha** (Our Lady of Remedios Church) **Rev. Fr. Luciano Falcao**, (Pilar Society) **Mr. Anthony Fernandes** (Sarpanch V.P. Betalbatim) **Mr. Anthony Pango** (Vice President G.F.A.) **Mr. Prinston Rebello** (Punjab F.C.)  
Members of Village Panchayat, Betalbatim GFA Executive Committee Members  
**WINNERS 80,000/- AND TROPHY** Special Prize **Player of the Tournament Ticket to Goa - Dubai - Goa**  
**RUNNERS UP 60,000/- AND TROPHY** **Player of the Match Ticket to Goa - Bangalore - Goa**  
Bony Pereira President, Sergio D'Cunha Sports Secretary, Franky Rogzao Secretary, Gustavo Alfonso Asst. Treasurer, Merino Cota Treasurer, Levy Coelho Asst. Secretary, Johnson D'Souza Vice President, Santu Fernandes Asst. Sports Secretary, **BRASS BAND LED BY CARLOS (F. C. GOA BAND)**  
All are cordially invited for **'Annual Betalbatim Villagers Sports Day'** on 26th January 2025 at 4.30 p.m