

# PSG COMEBACK FLOORS MAN CITY, ARSENAL NEAR LAST 16

## Real Madrid thrash Salzburg to get back on track; Feyenoord stun toothless Bayern

AFP, PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain pushed Manchester City to the brink of Champions League elimination after coming from two goals down to win 4-2 on Wednesday, while Arsenal all but secured their place in the last 16.

Holders Real Madrid remain in contention for a top-eight spot after sweeping aside Red Bull Salzburg 5-1, but Bayern Munich's hopes of automatic qualification took a hit with a 3-0 defeat by Feyenoord.

Pep Guardiola's City were left stunned as they blew a two-goal lead after Jack Grealish and Erling Haaland struck early in the second half in pouring rain at the Parc des Princes.

Substitute Ousmane Dembele soon halved the deficit for PSG and Bradley Barcola equalised on the hour after Desire Doue's effort came back off the crossbar.

Joao Neves' diving header put PSG on top before Goncalo Ramos added a late fourth as the French champions climbed from 26th in the table to 22nd and bumped City out of the qualifying spots for the knockout phase.

City, the European cham-



Arsenal's Norwegian midfielder Martin Odegaard scores third goal during the UEFA Champions League match against Dinamo Zagreb at the Emirates Stadium, London

ions in 2023, are down in 25th having failed to win any of their last four games in the competition and must beat Club Brugge at home next week to salvage their campaign.

Arsenal are on the verge of the last 16 as goals from Declan Rice, Kai Havertz and Martin Odegaard sealed a 3-0 home win over Dinamo Zagreb -- their fifth victory in seven games in Europe.

The Gunners, who go to



### CHAMPIONS LEAGUE RESULTS

RB Leipzig 2 (Sesko 19, Poulsen 78) Sporting Lisbon 1 (Gyokeres 75), Shakhtar Donetsk 2 (Kevin 18, Sudakov 37-pen) Brest 0, Real Madrid 5 (Rodrygo 23, 34, Mbappe 48, Vinicius 55, 77) RB Salzburg 1 (Bidstrup 85), Paris Saint-Germain 4 (Dembele 56, Barcola 60, Neves 78, Ramos 90+6) Manchester City 2 (Grealish 50, Haaland 53), Sparta Prague 0 Inter Milan 1 (Martinez 12), Arsenal 3 (Rice 2, Havertz 66, Odegaard 90+2) Dinamo Zagreb 0, Celtic 1 (Benito 86-og) Young Boys 0, Feyenoord 3 (Gimenez 21, 45+9-pen, Ueda 89) Bayern Munich 0, AC Milan 1 (Leao 37) Girona 0

Girona in their final game in the league phase, are third in the 36-team table and three points clear of ninth-placed Aston Villa with a far superior goal difference.

Rodrygo Goes and Vinicius Junior both struck twice, with Kylian Mbappe also on target as Madrid thumped Salzburg to move up to 16th, but just a point back from eighth-placed Bayer Leverkusen.

The record 15-time European champions are just

behind Bayern Munich after the German giants came unstuck in Rotterdam.

Santiago Gimenez scored two goals, including a penalty, in the first half before Ayase Ueda's late goal completed a superb display from Feyenoord, who could also still finish in the top eight.

Inter Milan look guaranteed to reach the last 16 after their 1-0 win away to Sparta Prague courtesy of Lautaro Martinez's volley.

The Italian champions are fourth on 16 points, level with Arsenal, and one above city rivals AC Milan.

Rafael Leao's first-half strike was enough to earn Milan a 1-0 win that also eliminated Girona.

Celtic advanced to the Champions League knockout stage for the first time in 12 years after inflicting a seventh successive defeat on Young Boys, with Loris Benito's 86th-minute own goal handing the Hoops a 1-0 win in Glasgow.

French club Brest saw their bid for an automatic spot in the last 16 dented by a 2-0 loss to Shakhtar Donetsk in Germany.

Sporting Lisbon suffered a third straight defeat as previously pointless RB Leipzig won 2-1 with goals from Benjamin Sesko and Yussuf Poulsen.

**ICC chairperson Shah inducted into World Cricket Connects Advisory Board**  
LONDON: The ICC chairperson Jay Shah has been inducted into a newly instituted World Cricket Connects Advisory Board, an independent group that will discuss the many challenges and opportunities in the sport during a discussion at the Lord's on June 7 and 8. Former BCCI secretary Shah, regarded as the most influential man in world cricket, had taken over as the ICC chairperson on December 1 last year, and his presence at the 'World Cricket Connects' forum is a chance for him to convey his ideas to a wider stage. Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the custodian of the laws of cricket, on Tuesday announced that World Cricket Connects, the event to bring together the most prominent thinkers, voices and influencers in the game, will take place once again this year. "The forum, which proved hugely popular in bringing together influential people from across all aspects of cricket in its inaugural year in 2024, will be held ahead of the ICC World Test Championship Final between South Africa and Australia," said MCC in release.

### MCA achieves Guinness World Record for largest cricket ball sentence

MUMBAI: The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) on Thursday achieved the Guinness World Record for the largest cricket ball sentence using 14,505 red and white varieties of the ball here at the Wankhede Stadium. The feat came as a part of MCA's grand celebrations for the completion of 50 years of one of India's iconic cricket venues, the Wankhede Stadium here, which has been home to some of Indian cricket's superstars. It was also the venue where India achieved their second 50-over World Cup title in 2011 under the legendary MS Dhoni. "We are thrilled to announce that the Mumbai Cricket Association has achieved a Guinness World Record for the largest cricket ball sentence at Wankhede Stadium, using 14,505 red & white cricket balls," said MCA President Ajinkya Naik.

### FC Bengaluru United appoint former India player Mohanraj as head coach

BENGALURU: FC Bengaluru United on Thursday roped in former India international Nallappan Mohanraj as their new head coach for the upcoming season of the I-League second Division. Mohanraj, who holds an AFC 'A' Diploma Coaching Certificate, has had stints with India's U-19, U-20, and U-23 teams. He also guided Tamil Nadu to Santosh Trophy final round after an eight-year hiatus. Mohanraj represented the Indian national team from 2008 to 2013, and was also captain of the U-19 team during the AFC U-20 Asian Cup Qualifiers in 2007. At the club level, he played for Mohun Bagan, ATK Kolkata, and Chennaiyin FC, achieving significant milestones, including winning the Indian Super League (ISL) in 2014. FC Bengaluru United launch their bid to qualify for the I-League with the first I-League 2 game against SAT Tirur on January 25.

### Indian Davis Cup team begins preparations for Togo tie

NEW DELHI: Youngsters Karan Singh, Yuvan Nandal and Chirag Duhan sweated it out at the DLTA here on Thursday, doing fine live drills to start preparations for the upcoming Davis Cup tie against Togo earnestly. Senior player Ramkumar Ramanathan joined the team in the middle of the session and will begin training on Friday, while Sasi Mukund, N Sriram Balaji, and Rithvik Choudary Bollipalli will arrive soon. Balaji and Bollipalli competed at the Australian Open. Coach Ashutosh Singh conducted the two-and-a-half-hour session in the evening after an equally intense morning session. Since the DLTA Centre court was still being prepared, the evening session was held at the show court, which is faster than the match court.

### Michael Clarke inducted into Australian Cricket Hall of Fame

MELBOURNE: World Cup-winning former captain Michael Clarke has become the 64th player to be inducted into the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame, the sport's governing body in the country announced on Thursday. The induction ceremony took place at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday. "Over 8600 Test runs, 28 hundreds and the only cricketer to hit a Test triple-century on the SCG. Congratulations to former Australian captain Michael Clarke AO on his induction to the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame," wrote Cricket Australia on X. In his 12-year career, Clarke piled on the runs in Tests and ODIs, aggregating 8643 and 7981 respectively, at an average of 49.10 and 44.58. He reserved his best for the longest format in which he amassed 28 hundreds including a memorable 329 against India at the Sydney Cricket Ground. He played as many as 35 Tests against England and 22 against India, averaging more than 56 against both the top teams with seven hundreds apiece. The 43-year-old captained Australia to a 5-0 series win the 2013-2014 Ashes and also the ODI World Cup triumph at home in 2015.

### Pathan backs Shami's delayed return; says team will make right call at right time

KOLKATA: Former pace bowling all-rounder Irfan Pathan believes India made the right decision by delaying Mohammed Shami's international return following a prolonged injury lay-off by not fielding him in the first T20I against England here. Shami was not included in India's playing XI for the first T20I against England here on Wednesday, despite proving his fitness in practice sessions and domestic cricket for Bengal. All eyes were on Shami's return after a 14-month injury lay-off, but India opted for a three-pronged spin attack instead, a decision that paid off as they bowled out England for a meagre 132 before cruising to the target in 12.5 overs with seven wickets in hand. Irfan said Shami is experienced enough to take an honest assessment of his body. "When you've been such a seasoned campaigner and are among India's top 10 bowlers, you understand your body's limits well," said Irfan at a promotional event here.

### Very sure no prohibited substance has entered my body: Banned shuttler Krishna

NEW DELHI: Leading men's doubles shuttler Krishna Prasad Garaga on Thursday denied taking any prohibited substance after he was banned for four years for a doping violation, insisting that the adverse finding could be a result of hormonal issues. While Garaga, a member of the Thomas Cup-winning Indian squad in 2022, has been banned, women's doubles player Swetaparna Panda too could be facing a similar sanction after the National Anti Doping Agency's (NADA) adverse findings against her. Garaga, who partners Sai Prateek in competitions, tested positive for findings for Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (HCG) in September last year but has been banned now after his appeal apparently failed to convince NADA. HCG is a prohibited stimulant. "I am 100 per cent sure that nothing has entered my body. In badminton, doping is not at all common... and there is no reason for me to do."



Jos Buttler

## We struggled to impose our game, some faced spinners for first time: Buttler

PTI, KOLKATA: England captain Jos Buttler attributed the crushing seven-wicket defeat against India in the first T20 International here to his batters' inability to "impose the game" when faced with quality spin bowling. England's new white-ball coach Brendon McCullum began his new innings with a defeat against India after England collapsed against the spin trio of Varun Chakravarty, Axar Patel and Ravi Bishnoi to fold for 132.

The target was comfortably chased by India in just 12.5 overs, handing England a 0-1 deficit in the five-match series here on Wednesday.

"Yeah, we just didn't quite manage to impose the game that we wanted to play against them. They bowled well," Buttler said at the post-match media interaction here at Eden Gardens.

"A few guys were probably facing a few of those guys for the first time as well. It would be better for seeing them. You want to play better and put them under pressure and get a

big score that we can defend." The England skipper acknowledged that spin will remain a consistent challenge in India and urged his team to develop individual plans to tackle it. "They're all really good players in the team, and we know they're going to be hit by a lot of spin against India. I expect them always to play at least three spinners in the side."

"So it's just (about) those individual plans and really committing to it to put the pressure back on them."

Despite the loss, Buttler said England will not stray from their aggressive brand of cricket that has been their hallmark since 2015.

"We are always trying to be aggressive in T20 cricket. I think that's been the way in English white-ball cricket ever since 2015, to be honest. The message has never really wavered from that."

"It's down to individuals being able to play well and put guys under pressure and have options against spin as well as we've got against seam."

Buttler was the lone bright spot in England's innings, top-scoring

with a 44-ball 68 at number three, while wickets tumbled around him. He credited his IPL experience for helping him evolve as a player.

"I have always quite enjoyed playing against spin. I think the main thing that happens in the IPL is just an abundance of bowlers and the time you can practice against them."

"I don't think that (learning) ever stops, to be honest. I think Jimmy Anderson, at 42, is still talking about how he wants to learn and improve. I think at whatever age, that's a constant thing," he said.

Looking ahead to the second T20 International in Chennai on Saturday, a venue known for its spin-friendly surface, Buttler said adaptability would be key.

"I think every venue you play at in India is a little bit unique. They have got lots of guys who have experienced playing in Chennai."

"It's a great place to play and brings the different challenges to this game and obviously the games after that. That's the beauty of the game is to adapt to the different conditions," he said.

## India outclass Sri Lanka by 60 runs, enter Super 6

PTI, KUALA LUMPUR: Opener G Trisha's composed 49 and pacers' excellent new ball spell fashioned India's lopsided 60-run win over Sri Lanka and their entry into the Super Six of the ICC U19 T20 Women's World Cup as Group A toppers, here, on Thursday.

On a spiteful pitch, Trisha's 44-ball knock (5x4, 1x6) was worth its weight in gold as it guided India to a competitive 118 for nine.

Pacers VJ Joshitha and Shabnam then tore through the Lankan top-order to reduce them to 9 for four in 3.2 overs, and run out of skipper Manudi Nanayakkara an over later had them reeling at 12 for five.

### WOMEN'S U-19 T20 WORLD CUP

Sri Lanka were eventually restricted to 58 for nine in 20 overs as India finished the group engagements with all-win record in three matches.

There was not much life left in Sri Lanka's chase once the spinners were introduced, and India's assortment of left-arm orthodox tweakers did the mopping up job to perfection.

Rashmika Sewwandi (15, 12b, 2x4) looked in good touch for the while she lasted, but mounting asking rate forced her to take chances against Parunika Sisodia, and got caught in the deep.

It was also the only double digit score in the Lankan innings. Sisodia (2/7) was the pick among spinners as she and her colleagues Ayushi Shukla and Vaishnavi Sharma, who picked up stunning figures of 5/5 against Malaysia in the previous match, dismantled the lower order without much ado.

Earlier, India's batting too went through stormy seas but Player of the Match Trisha held together the defending champions with exemplary maturity. The right-hander placed her shots cleverly and in a rare show of aggression slammed Shashni Gimhani over long-off for a six.

She fell to the part-time medium pace of Nanayakkara, but Joshitha's (9-ball 14) and Mithila Vinod's (10-ball 16) helped India add some precious runs in the back end of the innings.

## Man City sign Marmoush

AFP, LONDON: Manchester City on Thursday announced the signing of Eintracht Frankfurt forward Omar Marmoush, with Kyle Walker joining AC Milan on loan, as the club step up their rebuild during a disappointing season.

Egypt forward Marmoush has signed a four-and-a-half-year contract with the Premier League champions for an initial fee of £59 million (\$72.6 million) with add-ons worth a potential £4 million. He is City's third signing of the January transfer window following the arrivals of defenders Abdoukadir Khusanov and Vitor Reis.

## Keys shocks Swiatek to set up Sabalenka final

AFP, MELBOURNE: Madison Keys fought back from a set down on Thursday to shock Iga Swiatek in a nail-biter and set up an Australian Open final against two-time defending champion Aryna Sabalenka.



The 19th seed battled through a thrilling semi-final on a final-set tiebreak against the world number two 5-7, 6-1, 7-6 (10/8) after Sabalenka swept aside Paula Badosa in straight sets.

Five-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek had not dropped her serve



USA's Madison Keys celebrates beating Poland's Iga Swiatek in women's singles semi-final match

since the first round but was broken eight times by



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka celebrates her victory against Spain's Paula Badosa in women's singles semis match

Keys, who saved a match point on her way to edging

a titanic battle.

It will be the American's first final in Melbourne, only her second in Slams, and she broke down in tears after finally getting over the line in 2hr 35min.

It was the first time an Australian Open semi-final had been decided by a third-set 10-point tiebreak. Earlier, Sabalenka put her close friendship with Badosa aside to stay on track for a 26-year first.

The Belarusian world number one romped home 6-4, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena against the 11th seed.

Keys predicted a slugfest between two of the hardest ball-strikers in the women's game in Saturday's showpiece.

On his return to the board, Gukesh has not lost a single game in Wijk Aan Zee. He has two victories and three draws so far in the tournament with eight rounds still to go.

Erigaisi had become India's top-rated player in September last year and in December achieved his peak rating of 2801.

## Gukesh at 4th in latest FIDE rankings, displaces Erigaisi

PTI, NEW DELHI: Continuing his rapid rise, world champion D Gukesh dethroned compatriot Arjun Erigaisi to become the highest-ranked Indian chess player, at fourth, in the latest FIDE rankings on Thursday.

Gukesh, 18, achieved the

feat when he logged his second victory in the Tata Steel Tournament in Wijk Aan Zee (Netherlands) defeating Vincent Keymer of Germany.

Gukesh, who was awarded the Dhyani Chand Khel Ratna recently, has amassed 2784 rating points, while Erigaisi, who was the highest-ranked Indian for a long time, has

slipped to fifth with 2779.5 rating points.

Norway's Magnus Carlsen continues to be the undisputed world No.1 with 2832.5 points, followed by United States' Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura (2802) and country-mate Fabiano Caruana (2798).

Gukesh has been in sub-

lime form ever since he beat China's Ding Liren to clinch the world title in Singapore in December last year.

He took a break from the game to attend to functions and festivities back home and skipped the World Rapid and Blitz Championship in New York.

On his return to the