



India's Shivam Dube and Hardik Pandya celebrate a boundary during their 87-run partnership in the fourth T20I match against England in Pune on Friday

Pandya, Dube, Rana and Bishnoi seal series for India

PTI, PUNE: Harshit Rana and Ravi Bishnoi took three wickets each after Hardik Pandya's fiery knock and comeback man Shivam Dube's belligerence as India defeated England by 15 runs in the fourth T20 International, in Pune, on Friday.

Following the victory, India took an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series. Spinner

4TH T20I: INDIA VS ENGLAND

Bishnoi (3/28) and concussion substitute Harshit Rana (3/33) shared six wickets between them after Varun Chakravarty's 2-28 to bowl out England for 166.

Pacer Rana replaced all-rounder Shivam Dube as a concussion substitute after he was struck on the helmet in the final over of India's innings. Dube, who scored 53, was hit on the helmet by the penultimate delivery of the Indian innings from Jamie Overton.

Following the mandatory concussion test, Dube was cleared to play. However, he was run-out to the final delivery of the innings. Rana, who recently played in the opening Test against Australia

in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, came in to bowl in the 12th over and made an immediate impact, dismissing Liam Livingstone for 9. England skipper Jos Buttler appeared unhappy with the decision and was seen having a discussion with the umpires on the field. According to ICC's rules, teams are only allowed to name like-for-like replacements if a batsman is ruled out due to a concussion.

Bishnoi drew first blood for India, removing Ben Duckett in the

sixth over. Following that wicket, India had the upper hand and gradually ejected the top England batters. Skipper Jos Buttler (2 runs from 3 balls) failed to shine and succumbed against one from Bishnoi in the eighth over.

Harry Brook (51 runs from 26 balls, 5 fours and 2 sixes) was the only England batter to put up some resistance. His fiery knock gave the visitors hope before he was dismissed in the 15th over by Varun Chakravarty.

SCOREBOARD

India: Sanju Samson c Carse b Mahmood 1, Abhishek Sharma c Bethell b Rashid 29, Tilak Varma c Archer b Mahmood 0, *Suryakumar Yadav c Carse b Mahmood 0, Rinku Singh c Rashid b Carse 30, Shivam Dube run out (Buttler) 53, Hardik Pandya c Buttler b Overton 53, Axar Patel c Bethell b Overton 5, Arshdeep Singh run out (Overton) 0, Ravi Bishnoi not out 0. **Extras:** 10. **Total:** 181-9. **Fall of wickets:** 12-1, 12-2, 12-3, 57-4, 79-5, 166-6, 180-7, 180-8, 181-9. **Bowling:** Jofra Archer 4-0-37-0, Saqib Mahmood 4-1-35-3, Brydon Carse 4-0-39-1, Jamie Overton 4-0-32-2, Adil Rashid 4-0-35-1. **England:** Philip Salt b Patel 23, Ben Duckett c Yadav b Bishnoi 39, *Jos Buttler c (sub) Rana b Bishnoi 2, Harry Brook c Singh b Chakravarty 51, Liam Livingstone c Samson b Rana 9, Jacob Bethell c Yadav b Rana 6, Frydon Carse c Singh b Chakravarty 0, Axar Patel b Rana 19, Jofra Archer b Bishnoi 0, Adil Rashid not out 10, Saqib Mahmood c Patel b Singh 1. **Extras:** 6. **Total:** 166-10. **Fall of wickets:** 62-1, 65-2, 67-3, 95-4, 129-5, 133-6, 137-7, 146-8, 163-9, 166-10. **Bowling:** Arshdeep Singh 3-4-0-35-1, Hardik Pandya 1-0-11-0, Varun Chakravarty 4-0-28-2, Axar Patel 3-0-26-1, Ravi Bishnoi 4-0-28-3, Harshit Rana 4-0-33-3. **Man-of-the-match:** Shivam Dube

Bumrah is BCCI's Best International Cricketer for 2023-24, Mandhana bags women's honour



PTI, MUMBAI: Talismanic pacer Jasprit Bumrah was chosen for the BCCI's Polly Umrigar Award for Best International Cricketer 2023-24 in men's category while elegant batter Smriti Mandhana was picked for the corresponding women's trophy in the Board's annual honours that will be presented here on Saturday. Bumrah, who was selected as the ICC Test and overall Cricketer of the Year for delivering a "a master-class in skill, precision, and relentless consistency", was India's standout bowler last year, playing a pivotal role in India's home wins over England and Bangladesh. The 31-year-old was also the Player of the Series against Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Tro-

TENDULKAR TO GET BCCI LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

MUMBAI: Legendary former batter Sachin Tendulkar, whose records and impact on international cricket have stood the test of time, will be conferred with the BCCI's Lifetime Achievement Award at the Board's annual gala here on Saturday. Overall, Tendulkar will be the 31st recipient of the award, which was instituted in 1994 in the honour of India's first captain Col. C K Nayudu. The 51-year-old Tendulkar, who played 664 international games for India, holds the record for the highest number of Test and ODI runs in the history of the game. Tendulkar's 200 Test and 463 ODI appearances are also the highest by any player in the history of the game. He amassed 15,921 Test runs besides a whopping 18,426 in ODIs.



However, he played only one T20 International in his stellar career. In 2023, the lifetime honour was bestowed on former India head coach Ravi Shastri and wicket-keeping great

Farokh Engineer.

Considered the greatest batter of his era, Tendulkar was not just a prolific run-scorer but also an icon of the game, who played for more than two decades after debuting as a 16-year-old in a 1989 Test against Pakistan. The well-documented and numerous batting records apart, Tendulkar was also a key member of India's 2011 World Cup-winning team, which was his record sixth and last appearance in the showpiece.

At his peak, the diminutive right-hander could bring the nation to a standstill by simply walking out to bat. His dismissal was the most sought after among opposition teams, who did not hesitate to say that Tendulkar was the only Indian batter who could intimidate them.



ing 42nd time in the season, Mumbai also claimed the Irani Cup after a gap of 27 years.

The Mumbai Cricket Association would be given the Best Performance in BCCI Domestic Tournaments Trophy for winning various titles such as Ranji Trophy, U-16 Vijay Merchant Trophy, U-14 West Zone Championship, senior women's T20 Trophy, women's U-19 One Day Trophy, Bapuna Cup T20 Tournament and men's U-19 All India Tournament.

Mumbai teams also finished as runner-up in Cooch Behar U-19 Trophy and Vinoo Mankad U-19 Trophy. Akshay Totre from Indore was adjudged the Best Umpire in Domestic Cricket for the season.

phy, bagging 32 wickets across five Tests.

Mandhana, who was the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year, made 743 runs in the 2024 calendar year.

She scored four ODI centuries, a record in the women's game, and found the boundary more than a hundred times in the year, hitting 95 fours and six maximums. The 28-year-old cricketer's ODI runs came at an average of 57.86 and an impressive strike rate of 95.15. Spin great Ravichandran Ashwin, who retired from international cricket

in December 2024 as India's second highest wicket-taker in Tests with 537 dismissals and overall eighth highest, has been bestowed with a special award at the end of his career.

Among newcomers, Mumbai batter Sarfaraz Khan was picked for the Best International Debut among men for his quick-fire fifty against England in the Rajkot Test in February 2024.

Among women, Asha Sobhana has been chosen for the award for Best In-

ternational Debut as she picked up 4/21 against South Africa to help India win by 143 runs in their first ODI at Bengaluru in June 2024.

Mandhana will also be honoured with the Highest Run Getter in ODIs medal after she finished as the highest run-scorer in 2024, smacking 747 runs at 57.46 in 13 matches with four tons and one fifty.

Similarly, Deepti Sharma was awarded with the Highest Wickets in ODIs medal

for taking 24 wickets in 13 matches.

Tanush Kotian continued to make waves with his rise through the ranks in Mumbai in the 2023-24 season, which culminated with his maiden call-ups for the India A side for their tour of Australia and subsequently for the Indian team for the last two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Kotian will be awarded with the Best Performance in BCCI Domestic Tournaments trophy.

Having won the Ranji Trophy for a record-extend-

Messi keen to play 2026 World Cup

AP, BUENOS AIRES: Argentina great Lionel Messi wants to play in the 2026 World Cup, but is too early to make any official announcements, his national coach Lionel Scaloni said on Thursday.

Scaloni, who led Argentina to the 2022 World Cup title in Qatar, explained the 37-year-old record eight-times Ballon d'Or winner's desire to remain in the squad. "The first thing to say is that both he and his teammates are aware that there is a reasonable amount of time left and that he and everyone else are keen to play in the World Cup," Scaloni told mediapersons.

"We will have to wait and see how things develop. He (Messi) knows what we are thinking and he is the most intelligent of us all," the coach added.

Scaloni also spoke about former Argentina forward Angel Di Maria's decision to retire from international football after winning his second Copa America tro-



Argentina great Lionel Messi wants to play in the 2026 World Cup, but is too early to make any official announcements, his national coach Lionel Scaloni said

phy last year.

"From what he said, it is over. And in the best possible way. If he had written his film, his book, his football story, I don't think he would have written it as well as he ended it," Scaloni said.

Marsh out of CT, in doubt for IPL

PTI, SYDNEY: Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh has been ruled out of next month's Champions Trophy and is also in doubt for the Indian Premier League after that owing to lower back pain that has "not responded sufficiently to rehabilitation".

Cricketer Australia informed about Marsh's injury in a statement ruling him out of the Champions Trophy, which will be held in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19 to March 9. A few other reports suggest Marsh is also doubtful for the IPL.

"Mitchell Marsh has been ruled out of the upcoming ICC men's Champion's Trophy with ongoing lower back pain and dysfunction," CA said in a release.

"The National Selection Panel and Australian men's medical team ruled Marsh out of the tournament with the injury which has not responded sufficiently to rehabilitation."

"His lower back pain flared in recent weeks leading the NSP to make the longer term decision for Marsh to complete a more extended period of rehabilitation," it added.

Neymar eyeing 2026 WC returns to Brazil's Santos

AFP, SAO PAULO: Neymar announced Thursday he was returning to Brazilian club Santos, where he started his career, after ending his injury-plagued spell with Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal.

"I will sign a contract with Santos Futebol Clube," Neymar wrote on social media in a post accompanied by images of his past with the Sao Paulo-based team, where football icon Pele spent most of his career.

"My feelings for the club and fans have never changed."

Santos' X account replied to Neymar's post, saying: "Your home awaits you. Your people await you."

Neymar will be presented to fans in a ceremony at the club's Estadio Urbano Caldeira, featuring concerts by several local music stars, on Friday. The 32-year-old former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain forward played just seven times for Al Hilal despite a reported salary of around \$104 million a year.

Neymar, Brazil's all-time top scorer, joined Al Hilal in August 2023, following fellow superstars Cristiano



Ronaldo and Karim Benzema to the Gulf.

But two months after his arrival in Riyadh, he ruptured a cruciate ligament in his left knee while playing for Brazil in a 2026 World Cup qualifier, which kept him on the sidelines for a year. He then suffered a series of hamstring and knee injuries as he tried to return to action.

The club's coach Jorge Jesus said recently: "He can no longer play at the level we are used to. Things have become difficult for him,

unfortunately."

Neymar's return to Brazil is likely the last chance of his faltering career. Neymar has scored 79 goals in 128 matches for his country.

Neymar had been courted by MLS teams in the United States but has chosen to return home with the goal of earning selection for the Brazil squad for the 2026 World Cup in Mexico, the United States and Canada.

"Now I need to play again," said Neymar. "And only a club like Santos can provide the love I need to prepare for the coming challenges of the next years." He faces a huge challenge at Santos, who only returned to the elite division in 2024 after a year in the second tier.

Neymar will face a busy schedule punctuated by long flights across Brazil, with the Sao Paulo State tournament, the Brazilian Cup and the national championship which begins at the end of March on the programme.

The presence of such a big name will attract huge interest from Santos fans, but Neymar's best days are almost certainly behind him.

sportspopup

Kohli's first Ranji Trophy innings in 13 years lasts 15 balls

NEW DELHI: Virat Kohli's first Ranji Trophy innings in 13 years lasted all of 15 balls, extending his lean run and fuelling the raging debate over his form. For the 5000-odd crowd that assembled here to watch Kohli (6 off 15 balls), it was fun while it lasted but when he had his off-stump uprooted by Railways pacer Himanshu Sangwan in the 28th over of Delhi's first innings, a majority of them took no time to exit the Arun Jaitley Stadium. The frequent chants of 'RCB, RCB' and 'Kohli, Kohli' dried up as the superstar took the long walk back to the dressing room, giving Railway employee Sangwan the most prized scalp of his career. Ahead of his first domestic red-ball appearance since November 2012, Kohli had trained with former India coach Sanjay Bangar to iron out flaws in his batting that crept up on the tour of Australia. More specifically, it was the ball outside the off-stump that haunted the former India captain on the two-month long tour Down Under.

WPL: Mumbai Indians appoint Nicole Bolton as fielding coach

MUMBAI: Women's Premier League side Mumbai Indians on Friday announced the appointment of Australian Nicole Bolton as fielding coach ahead of the upcoming season. Nicole, who has served as an assistant coach for South Australia and Adelaide Strikers in the Women's Big Bash League, will work with head coach Charlotte Edwards at MI. Nicole has played 50 WODIs, 3 WTests, and 2 WT20Is and was the first Australian woman to score a century on ODI debut, and the first woman of any nationality to score such a hundred against a team fielded by a Full Member of the International Cricket Council (ICC). The WPL is set to begin on February 14 in Vadodara and Mumbai are eyeing their second WPL title after the inaugural edition in 2023.

Ambani family clinch deal to buy stake in Hundred's Oval Invincibles

LONDON: The owners of Indian Premier League side Mumbai Indians have won the race to buy a 49 percent stake in English cricket Hundred franchise Oval Invincibles, according to reports on Thursday. All eight of the competition's city-based franchises, each of which has a men's and women's team, will be matched with preferred investors over the next week. English cricket chiefs are aiming to bring in private money in order to attract the world's top players in a competitive global market. ESPN Cricinfo said Mumbai Indians owners Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) had won a virtual auction, with the minority stake worth about £60m (\$75m). It is understood that RIL will enter a period of exclusivity during which they will negotiate with county club Surrey and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB). The Invincibles, based at Surrey's London home ground the Oval, are two-time defending champions in the men's 100-ball competition while Mumbai Indians are viewed as the most powerful Indian Premier League franchise.

Slot urges Salah to sign new Liverpool deal after Saudi links

LONDON: Arne Slot has urged Mohamed Salah to sign a new contract with Liverpool, advising the Egypt star against a lucrative move to Saudi Arabia. Salah has been in sensational form this season but is out of contract in June, with speculation persisting that the Saudi Pro League could be a possible destination for the Egyptian superstar. Saudi Sports Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal was asked whether the forward was the "big prize" for the Middle East nation in an interview on the Piers Morgan Uncensored YouTube channel on Thursday. "Definitely, because if he ticks all the right boxes, even for us, we'd love to have him," the sports minister said. "We feel like we are one with the Egyptians, from our culture and our history and so on." The 32-year-old Salah, who tops the Premier League goalscoring charts with 19 goals this season, said at the end of December he was still "far away" from reaching an agreement over a new deal at Anfield.

Man City face Real Madrid in pick of Champions League play-off ties

PARIS: Reigning champions Real Madrid will face 2023 winners Manchester City in the plum tie of the play-off round of this season's Champions League, following Friday's draw. It is the fourth year running in which the sides have been drawn against each other in a knockout tie, with Real emerging victorious in a penalty shoot-out in the quarter-finals last season. City, who scraped through after finishing 22nd in the league phase in this first season of the new format for Europe's elite club competition, knew they faced a tough draw with Bayern Munich their other possible opponents. This season's Champions League final will be played at the Allianz Arena in Munich on Saturday, May 31. Champions League play-off round draw: Brest vs Paris Saint-Germain, Club Brugge vs Atalanta, Manchester City vs Real Madrid, Juventus vs PSV Eindhoven, Monaco vs Benfica, Sporting vs Borussia Dortmund, Celtic vs Bayern Munich, Feyenoord vs AC Milan. First legs to be played February 11/12, second legs February 18/19. Draw for the last 16, quarter-finals and semi-finals will take place on February 21.

Roma face Porto in Europa League play-offs

PARIS: Former winners Porto were drawn on Friday to face Claudio Ranieri's Roma in the stand-out tie of the Europa League knockout phase play-offs. Porto, who won the Europa League in 2011 as well as its predecessor, the UEFA Cup, in 2003, will be at home in the first leg on February 13 with the return in Italy a week later. The eight winners from the play-off round will go through to the last 16, where they will join the top eight teams from the league phase. The draw for the last 16 will take place on February 21, with the ties being played in the first half of March. This season's Europa League final will be played in Bilbao on Wednesday, May 21. Play-off round draw: Ferencvaros vs Viktoria Plzen, FC Twente vs Bodo/Glimt, Union Saint-Gilloise vs Ajax, AZ Alkmaar vs Galatasaray, FC Porto vs Roma, Fenerbahce vs Anderlecht, PAOK vs FCSB, Midtjylland vs Real Sociedad

Indian challenge ends at Thailand Masters badminton

BANGKOK: Former world no.1 shuttler Kidambi Srikanth and Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian crashed out of the Thailand Masters Super 300 tournament as Indian challenge ended, here, on Friday. While Srikanth lost 17-21 16-21 against sixth seed Zheng Xing Wang of China, former world junior no.1 Subramanian gave a tough fight to another Chinese Xuan Chen Zhu before losing 21-19 18-21 13-21 in a match that lasted one hour and 10 minutes. Later in the day, eight-seeded Indian men's doubles pair of Pruthvi Krishnamurthy Roy and K Sai Pratheek lost 19-21 18-21 to second seeds Muhammad Shohibul Fikri and Daniel Marthin of Indonesia. Young Raghshitha Ramraj also couldn't cross the quarterfinal hurdle, going down fighting 21-19 14-21 9-21 to Thailand's Thamonwan Nithittikrai in another match.