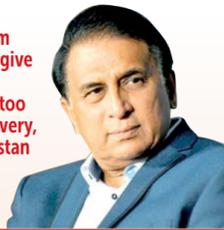


Pakistan will find it hard to beat India's B team: Sunny

PTI, NEW DELHI: Pakistan's cricket team continued to invite scathing criticism a day after being knocked out of the Champions Trophy with the great Sunil Gavaskar saying that it would struggle to beat even a second-string Indian team.

I think a B team (from India) certainly (can give Pakistan a run for their money). C team, I am not too sure. But a B team will be very, very hard to beat for Pakistan in their current form
- Sunil Gavaskar



India, the 2023 ODI World Cup finalists, defeated defending champions Pakistan by six wickets in the Champions Trophy in Dubai on Sunday, continuing their dominance over the arch-rivals.

"I think a B team (from India) certainly (can give Pakistan a run for their money). C team, I am not too sure. But a B team will be very, very hard to beat for Pakistan in their current form," Gavaskar said on 'Sports Today'.

tournament for the first time since 1996, were knocked out of the Champions Trophy after New Zealand beat Bangladesh in another Group A match. Pakistan are still winless in the event.

Since winning the Champions Trophy in 2017, Pakistan's cricketing fortunes have declined, with the team finishing fifth in the last two ODI World Cups.

"I think it's surprising this lack of bench strength. Paki-

stan always had natural talent. Natural in the sense that they may not have always been technically correct, but they had an instinctive understanding of bat and ball," Gavaskar said.

"Look at Inzamam-ul-Haq, for example. If you look at his stance, you wouldn't recommend that to a young batter, but he had great temperament. With that kind of temperament, he made up for any

technical shortcomings."

Gavaskar also noted that despite the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and domestic white-ball tournaments, Pakistan has struggled to produce quality players.

"How has India produced so many young stars in white-ball cricket? It's because of the IPL," said the former India skipper.

"Players from there have gone on to play in the Ranji Trophy and eventually for India. That is something Pakistan cricket must analyse. They need to figure out why they no longer have the bench strength they once did."

An India-Pakistan match is always a highly-anticipated event, but former England captain Michael Atherton believes the contest has become "one-sided" and the cricket does not live up to the hype.

Rain leads to no result in Rawalpindi

PTI, RAWALPINDI: The Champions Trophy match between Australia and South Africa was abandoned here on Tuesday due to persistent rain.

The weather did not allow even the toss to be completed. With the conditions not getting any better, the match officials called off the game.

Both teams had won their opening game in Group B. After the no result, South Africa and Australia share one point each and it means that contest between England and Afghanistan has turned into a virtual knockout with the loser becoming the third team to be eliminated.

TODAY'S FIXTURE
Afghanistan vs England, at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore, at 2.30 pm (IST)

I haven't seen a better ODI player than Kohli: Ponting

PTI, DUBAI: Former Australian skipper Ricky Ponting said he has not seen a "better player" than Virat Kohli in ODIs, and backed the Indian batting star to go past legendary Sachin Tendulkar as the highest run-getter in the 50-over format.

"I don't think I've ever seen a better 50-over player than Virat Kohli. Now that he's gone past me (in run-maker's list) and only two (batters) ahead of him, I'm sure he would want to give himself the best chance to be remembered as the all-time leading run scorer in the game," Ponting told ICC Review.

During the course of that hundred, Kohli went past the 14000-run mark in one-dayers, joining former Sri Lankan captain Kumar Sangakkara and Tendulkar in a rare club.

Kohli (14085 runs) is still 4,341 runs behind Tendulkar (18426) and at 36, the champion batter has limited time in his hand to overhaul the latter's mark.

But Ponting did not see it as an impossible task for Kohli.

"Obviously physical-wise, he's probably as fit as he's ever been and works exceptionally hard on that side of his game. It's crazy when you think about it, isn't it? Just how good Virat's been over such a long period of time, yet he's still 4,000 runs behind Sachin.

"It just goes to show how good Sachin was, but also his longevity in the game. But with someone like Virat, you never write him off. If the hunger's still there, then I'm never going to write him off (to overtake Tendulkar)," he added.

Tendulkar rolls back years as India Masters win

PTI, NAVI MUMBAI: The iconic Sachin Tendulkar rolled back the years with a 21-ball 34 as India Masters notched up a convincing nine-wicket win over their counterparts from England in the International Masters League (IML) here on Tuesday.

Set a target of 133, India Masters completed the chase in 11.4 overs at the DY Patil Sports Academy. Skipper Tendulkar delighted those present inside the stadium with five fours and a six before getting dismissed by Chris Schofield.

Surkeerat Singh Mann top-scored with an unbeaten 63 off 35 balls, while the flamboyant Yuvraj Singh remained not out on 27 off 14 deliveries, as India registered their second successive win.

Seamer Dhawal Kulkarni led the way with impressive figures of 3/21 in four overs.

sportspopup

Yuki-Popyrin pair down world No.1 duo

DUBAI: India's Yuki Bhambri and his Australian partner Alexei Popyrin combined brilliantly to stun the world number one pair of Marcelo Arevalo and Mate Pavic in their men's doubles round of 16 match at the Dubai Tennis Championships. After dropping the first set, Bhambri and Popyrin staged an incredible comeback to defeat the top seeds from El Salvador and Croatia 4-6 7-6(1), 10-3.

Indian women's hockey team stuns reigning Netherlands in shootout

BHUBANESWAR: The Indian women's hockey team on Tuesday stunned reigning Olympic champions and world No. 1 Netherlands in shootout after the two sides were locked 2-2 in regulation time to end their home leg of the FIH Pro League on a winning note here. Pien Sanders (17th minute) and Fay van der Elst (28th) had given the Netherlands a 2-0 lead at half time but India made a strong comeback to restore parity through stunning goals from Deepika (35th) and Baljeet Kaur (43rd). In the shootout, Deepika and Mumtaz Khan found the target for India while Marijn Veen was the lone scorer for the Netherlands, who are also the defending champions. Veteran India goalkeeper Savita Punia made four crucial saves to play a major role in the team's victory. The home team had lost to the same opponents 2-4 in the first leg on Monday. In the eight matches played in the home leg from February 15, India won three, including Tuesday's, and lost five, including one in shootout. With a bonus point from the shootout win, the Indian team is currently at the fifth spot.

India beat England 2-1 in FIH Pro League to conclude home leg on a high

BHUBANESWAR: Skipper Harmanpreet Singh led from the front with two goals as India bounced back in style to beat England 2-1 and end the home leg of the FIH Pro League on a positive note, here on Tuesday. In the first leg on Monday, the Indian team went down 2-3 to England in a thriller. However, the hosts made a strong comeback to emerge victorious in the concluding home leg game at the Kalinga Stadium. Harmanpreet scored in the 26th and 32nd minutes, while Conor Williamson was on target for England in the 30th minute.

WPL: All-round Delhi Capitals thrash Gujarat Giants by six wickets

BENGALURU: Shafali Verma (44) and Jess Jonassen's (61 not out) fireworks underlined Delhi Capitals' complete domination as they crushed Gujarat Giants by six wickets in a one-sided Women's Premier League match here on Tuesday. After Gujarat Giants limped to 127 for nine in the first half, Delhi knocked off the target in 15.1 overs with opener Shafali smashing a 27-ball 44 for her highest score of the season. Delhi Capitals thus moved to the top spot in the points table with their third win in five matches but their net run rate remained in negative (-0.223) in the five-team competition. It was a brisk 37-ball stand for the second wicket between Verma and Jonassen for 74 runs which provided Delhi Capitals the platform for the huge win, denting the Giants' hopes of a fightback with the ball after they had removed Meg Lanning (3) early on in the chase. Verma looked in her elements as she hammered three sixes and five fours before her charge was ended by Giants skipper Ashleigh Gardner who trapped her in front of the wickets. Jonassen, however, remained unbeaten on 61 off 32 balls (9x4s, 2x6s) for her first half-century of the season. Earlier, Bharti Fulmali struck a vital 40 not out to drag Gujarat Giants past 125 after a disastrous start. Fulmali, batting at No. 8, counter-attacked with two sixes and four fours to make her runs in 29 balls after Gujarat Giants were reduced to 60/6 halfway through their innings. Delhi pace duo of Marizanne Kapp (2/17) and Shikha Pandey (2/18) ran through the Giants top order, reducing them to 20/4 inside the power play.

Australia star Smith signs up for Hundred

LONDON: Australia's batting superstar Steve Smith will play in English cricket's Hundred competition for the first time in 2025, it was announced on Tuesday. Smith, who recently captained Australia to victory over England in the ongoing Champions Trophy, has signed to play for Welsh Fire, coached by former Australia batsman Mike Hussey. "I've watched the Hundred from afar and I can't wait to be involved," Smith said in an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) statement.

I am ready to lead KKR if captaincy comes my way: Venkatesh Iyer

NEW DELHI: All-rounder Venkatesh Iyer says he is prepared to lead Kolkata Knight Riders if given the opportunity in the IPL 2025 despite having no captaincy experience at any levels in competitive cricket. The reigning champions, who will take on Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the opening game this season at the Eden Gardens, are yet to announce their captain. Shreyas Iyer had led them to the title win in IPL 2024, but he was acquired by Punjab Kings in the mega auction and later named him as their skipper.

Sreenidi Deccan stun Dempo with second-half comeback

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MARGAO: A spirited display from David Castañeda Muñoz inspired Sreenidi Deccan FC to a thrilling 3-2 comeback victory over hosts Dempo Sports Club in an I-League clash, at Nehru stadium, Fatorda, on Tuesday.

The Colombian forward turned the match around in the second half, scoring twice (53', 59') before setting up the winner for Brandon Vanlalremdika (69'). His brace also saw him become the league's top scorer with 12 goals.

Dempo had earlier taken control with Marcus Joseph

(8') heading in a Juan Mera cross, before Mera (45+3') doubled the advantage just before the break, capitalising on a rebound after Sreenidi Deccan goalkeeper Aryan Lamba parried Joseph's shot.

Trailing 2-0 at half-time, Sreenidi Deccan mounted a remarkable fightback. Castañeda ignited the resurgence with a well-placed header from a deep free-kick in the 53rd minute. Six minutes later, he capitalised on a fumble from Dempo goalkeeper Ashish Sibi to equalise.

The decisive moment arrived in the 69th minute when Castañeda delivered a precise cross to Van-

lalremdika, who slotted home to seal the stunning comeback.

With this victory, Sreenidi Deccan leapfrogged Dempo to eighth place with 22 points from 16 matches (six wins, four draws, six losses), while Dempo dropped to ninth with 19 points from as many games.

This was not the first time Castañeda orchestrated a second-half turnaround. On January 9, against Aizawl FC, he netted a hat-trick in the final 30 minutes to lead his side to a 4-3 victory after trailing 2-0 at half-time.

The dramatic turnaround in Margao showcased Sreenidi Deccan's resilience, with Castañeda once again proving to be the difference-maker.

USC Seraulim enter semis

RAIA: United SC Seraulim defeated Navelim Sporting Club, 3-1, on penalties to advance to the semi-finals of the Vaidya Family Memorial Cup, at Cuncolim ground, on Tuesday, after a goalless draw. United SC converted penalties through Ashley Fernandes, Floscio Fernandes, and Gladston Braganza, while Noah Luis netted the lone goal for Navelim. Sakshan Shanky of United SC was named man-of-the-match.

Benaulim B win

RAIA: Benaulim B edged Orlim Veterans, 5-4, on penalties in the Benaulim Constituency Veterans football tournament, at Varca ground, on Tuesday. Benaulim B took an early lead through Jose (6'), but Alex equalised for Orlim Veterans (10').

Sporting cruise to victory over Neroca

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OLD GOA: Sporting Clube de Goa maintained their perfect home record with a commanding 3-0 victory over Neroca FC in an I-League 2 clash, at Ella Academy ground, on Tuesday.

I-LEAGUE 2

The Flaming Oranje, returning home after three away matches, continued their strong form, securing their third consecutive home win. The result takes them to 10 points from six games, while Neroca FC suffered their third defeat of the season, leaving them with seven points.

Sporting's starting XI featured Abhimanyu Singh in goal, with defenders Joel Colaco, Joyner Louren-

co, Myron Fernandes, and Kunal Kundaikar. The midfield was marshalled by Samuel Costa, Sushil Meitei, Dattaraj Gaonkar, and Naocha Singh, while Doyal Alves and Ronaldo Oliveira led the attack.

The hosts took control early, opening the scoring in the 15th minute when Doyal Alves capitalised on a well-worked move involving Kunal and Joel. Seven minutes later, Joel doubled the lead, finishing off a precise pass from Sushil Meitei. The second half saw Sporting seal the result within a minute of the restart, as Naocha Singh fired home to make it 3-0.

Sporting's disciplined defence and clinical finishing ensured a dominant performance. They now turn their focus to their next fixture against SAT, on March 2.

Dunes SC clinch GFA U-15 title in penalty shootout



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MAPUSA: Dunes SC emerged victorious in the GFA Boys U-15 final, defeating Super Goans FC, 3-1, on penalties, at Duler stadium, on Tuesday, after a 1-1 draw in regulation time.

A goalless first half saw both teams creat-

ing chances, with goalkeepers Mohan Gudimani (Dunes) and Brian Chacko (Super Goans) pulling off crucial saves.

Dunes took the lead in the 34th minute when Elroy Fernandes set up Fabregas Fernandes for the opener. Super Goans equalised through Joel Passoni's penalty after

he was fouled in the box. The match saw a red card for Ritvik Salunke (Super Goans) in the 55th minute for a rough challenge.

Dunes SC held their nerve in the shootout to claim the title. Trophies were presented to winners Dunes SC and runners-up Super Goans. The final was compered by Anthony Lobo.

Bengaluru FC in playoffs, Chennaiyin's hopes dashed

AGENCIES, BENGALURU: Bengaluru FC secured their place in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 playoffs with a 1-0 victory over Chennaiyin FC at the Sree

ISL Kanteerava Stadium. The result ends Chennaiyin FC's hopes of making the top six, as they remain on 24 points from 22 games, while Bengaluru FC climb to third with 30 points.

Gerard Zaragoza's side dominated possession with 57.1%, constantly pressing for goals. Their breakthrough came in the 37th minute when Rahul Bheke capitalised on a well-executed set-piece. Alberto Nogueira's precise free-kick from the right flank found Bheke making a sharp run into the six-yard box, where he slotted the ball into the top right corner.

East Bengal FC vs Hyderabad FC, at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (VYBK), Kolkata, at 7.30 pm

TODAY'S SPORTS

GFA U-13 Division I League: Sporting Clube de Goa vs Salgaocar FC, at DBO Panjim ground, at 4.15 pm

Benaulim Constituency Veterans football tournament: Seraulim Veterans vs Benaulim A, at Varca ground, at 4.30 pm

Vaidya Family Memorial Cup (quarters): Fr Agnelo YSC, Paroda vs Parish You Nuvem, Cuncolim ground, at 4.45 pm

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Dakota Apleo Tshottachoo Panteo

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9.00pm Sirvodem ground Navelim

28TH FEB
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8.30pm Pirne Nagoa Verna

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