

Bengaluru FC face Mumbai City in Indian Super League play-offs

PTI, MUMBAI: The Indian Super League (ISL) on Saturday announced the dates for the 2024-25 play-offs with two-legged semi-finals scheduled between April 2-7 and the final to be played on April 12.

The league stage concluded on March 12. The knockouts will be played on March 29 and 30, and the semi-finals will be held on April 2, 3, 6 and 7.

Mohun Bagan Super Giant created history by clinching the League Shield for the second season in a row, becoming the first team in the competition to do so. Along with Mohun Bagan

SCHEDULE
March 29: Knockout 1 Bengaluru FC (home) vs Mumbai City FC
March 30: Knockout 2 NorthEast United FC (home) vs Jamshedpur FC
April 2: Semi-final 1 (First leg) Winner of Knockout 1 (home) vs FC Goa
April 3: Semi-final 2 (First leg) Winner of Knockout 2 (home) vs Mohun Bagan SG
April 6: Semi-final 1 (Second leg) FC Goa (home) vs Winner of Knockout 1
April 7: Semi-final 2 (Second leg) Mohun Bagan SG (home) vs Winner of Knockout 2
April 12: Final Winner of Semi-final 1 vs Winner of Semi-final 2

SG, FC Goa (second), Bengaluru FC (third), NorthEast United FC (fourth), Jamshedpur FC (fifth) and Mumbai City FC (sixth) all confirmed their



spots in the play-offs. In the play-offs, the teams ranked third to sixth will battle it out in two single-legged knockout matches to determine the opponents

for Mohun Bagan SG and FC Goa, who made it directly to the semi-finals.

The semi-finals will be played in a home and away format with the winners over the two legs playing the final on April 12 at the home of the higher-ranked team in the league table.

Rohit likely to continue as Test captain, selectors yet decide

PTI, NEW DELHI: The Champions Trophy triumph has added to the aura of Rohit Sharma and it won't be a surprise if he travels to England as the leader of the pack even though the selectors are yet to make a decision on the Test tour starting June 20.

It is understood that a consensus has not been reached on Rohit as an automatic choice for captaincy. Jasprit Bumrah's fitness status is an issue and so does the lack of a distinct leadership prospect in the next line of young Indian players.

Rohit was under pressure to perform in Dubai, as a 1-3 series defeat in Australia accentuated his own poor form. But the triumphant run in the UAE has certainly given the skipper breathing space and elbow room.

But the question remains if the national selection committee will consider success in ODI format while deciding on the more challenging Test format, where the returns have been modest of late.

The team suffered six hard-to-digest defeats in the last World Test Championship cycle.

The new cycle for India will begin with the England series, where the first Test will be played at the Leeds.

"Technically, Rohit remains the Test captain. He



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voluntarily benched himself from the last Test in Sydney where he explained that a team can't carry on with multiple out of form batters."

"After Australia Tests, India haven't played any Tests and hence there has been no change in Test captaincy. Also Rohit never said he doesn't want to play Tests," a BCCI source told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

However, he added that the national selection committee hasn't yet decided

on the England series.

"The selection committee gets a break during IPL. Obviously with all matches televised, they always don't need to travel unless they have some specific strategy or they want to watch a particular player from up close," the source added.

"So once IPL starts, the blueprint for England series will be drawn at some point. But (coach) Gautam Gambhir's view point will have a lot of weightage," he added.

Gambhir has always propagated the "team-first" policy and everyone associated with Indian cricket knows that he believes in looking at the bigger picture, which is to prepare the core of the Test team for the next three to four years

It is an open secret that Gambhir is a firm believer in current form and if one takes that parameter into account, it would be interesting if the Indian captain enjoys the vote of confidence of the head coach.

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But for any decision to reach its logical conclusion, the head coach and chairman of selection committee Ajit Agarkar need to be on the same page.

India aim to beat Maldives, Bangladesh with clean sheets

PTI, SHILLONG: It is easier said than done but senior defender Sandesh Jhingian on Saturday said that the Indian football team's target is to beat Maldives and Bangladesh without conceding any goal in the upcoming international matches here.

India host Maldives in an international friendly on March 19, before taking on a tricky Bangladesh on March 25 in their opening match of the 2027 AFC Asian Cup qualifying third round match.

Both the matches will be held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here as the Meghalaya capital is hosting its first international games. The match against Maldives will also mark the return of talismanic Sunil Chhetri from international retirement.

"Our main aim is to get the result in the Bangladesh match, as that would give us a good start in the Asian Cup Qualifiers, and I think the 10-day training ahead of that, along with the friendly against Maldives will greatly help us prepare for it," Jhingian said.

"Our target is two clean sheet victories," the 31-year-old was quoted as saying in an AIFF release.

The 40-year-old Chhetri had earlier hung his boots in June 2024 after a glorious international career after making his India debut in 2005.

But he showed he is still a force to reckon with as has been seen in the 2024-25 ISL which has turned out to be Chhetri's most prolific season.

He has scored 12 goals from 24 matches to be the second highest scorer overall and highest among Indians. Head coach Manolo Marquez

re-iterated the reasons behind why he coaxed Chhetri to return to wearing India jersey once again.

"Because it was a special situation, I spoke with the AIFF and Bengaluru FC before I called him. I spoke with Sunil and explained to him what I wanted from him," Marquez said.

"It doesn't matter if he's 40. The national team needs players who are in good form," the Spaniard said.

India are placed in Group C of the 2027 Asian Cup qualifying third round along with Bangladesh, Hong

Kong and Singapore, and only the top team qualifies for the continental showpiece.

It's not going to be easy to top the group, and Marquez must be referring to that when he said "special situation".

"Sunil is the Indian top-scorer in the ISL, with practically double goals than the next player, who is Brison. After that are Subhasish, Irfan, Manvir... all of them are here with us in the national team.

"We need players who score goals. In my four matches so far, we have only scored two goals - one of them from a set-piece. At this moment, the most important thing is to get results. Nothing else matters."

The Indian squad held a 45-minute gym session on Saturday morning and had their first on-pitch training at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, the match venue, later in the evening.

Meanwhile, key winger Lallianzuala Chhangte will not report to the national camp here after suffering an injury while with his Indian Super League club Mumbai City FC, the AIFF said.

AFC ASIAN CUP QUALIFYING

State gears up for 47th Indian Masters National Badminton Championship

The selection tournament for the BWF World Seniors Championship will witness over 2,200 players and 2,600 entries competing across 45 events in age categories ranging from 35+ to 75+

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PANJIM: Goa is all set to host the Yonex Sunrise 47th Indian Masters National Badminton Championship 2025 from March 16, at the Multipurpose Stadium, Peddem, Mapusa.

The prestigious event, serving as the selection tournament for the BWF World Seniors Championship, will witness over 2,200 players and 2,600 entries competing across 45 events in age categories ranging from 35+ to 75+. As the final preparations are underway, the atmosphere at the Peddem indoor stadium is electric, with players fine-tuning their game ahead of the much-anticipated competition.

The Goa Badminton Association (GBA) President Manoj Patil encouraged young badminton trainees to witness the event, stating, "This championship is a fantastic opportunity for aspiring shuttlers to watch



The players practicing at the multipurpose stadium, Peddem, Mapusa, recently

some of India's finest Masters players, many of whom have represented the country at the highest levels, including the Olympics. I urge all young players in Goa to come and experience top-level badminton firsthand from March 16 to 23. Watching these legends in action will be an inspiration for the next generation."

GBA Secretary Praveen

Shenoy highlighted the efforts taken to ensure world-class playing conditions, saying, "The GBA has made every effort to provide top-quality synthetic courts, ensuring a professional playing experience for all participants. The Government of Goa has built excellent sports facilities which has made Goa an important hub for sports

tourism and Associations must make good use of it by bringing National and even International events which can inspire the younger generation from our State. Players from all over India are appreciating Goa's fantastic badminton infrastructure, and we are proud to deliver a tournament of this magnitude in such a well-equipped venue."

Goan footballers lack passion for the game: GFA president

AJIT JOHN

PANJIM: The Goa Football Association (GFA) President Caitano Fernandes has bemoaned the lack of passion among Goan footballers and hoped that the State would be able to get back to its past glory.

Fernandes said, "The Association would focus on sending young players to the national championship and that half the squad would comprise players in the 19 or 20 age group and the rest would comprise senior players."

Speaking to O Herald, the GFA president stat-

ed that there is a Content Management System (CMS) in place for all the age category football leagues. This system is for players' registration with the Association, which reflects on the football federation and all records are sent to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

Further, Caitano mentioned that earlier such a system was not present. Now, every U-13, U-15 and U-17 leagues players, which are going on, are part of this system.

He claimed that even though the CMS was in place for the last few years,

it was not implemented properly.

He said, "When I stepped in, there was the issue of pending prize money for four years, leagues had stopped and only the Goa Professional League was taking place and since those days a lot had changed. The association laid a strong foundation for the U-13 and U-15 and the results will show in the next four to five years."

Goa won the U-17 women's championship after 22 years in tier 2. In the

Santosh Trophy the State reached the final.

When pointed out that Goa had lost to Gujarat in the past, now Uttarakhand and the fans were wondering what was going on, the GFA president said, "One had to accept the fact that the other States are investing in training and their players are getting better facilities."

The infrastructure is very good and their government is supporting them and all these factors are yielding results."



Vasco SC hold Guardian Agnel SC

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RAIA: Vasco Sports Club rallied to hold Guardian Angel Sports Club to a 2-2 draw in the Goa Professional League (Relegation Zone) match played at Tilak Maidan, here, on Saturday.

Ronald Singh Shaikhom gave the lead to Guardian Angel Sports Club in the 38th minute of the match through a penalty shot-out.

Down with a goal, Vasco Sports Club increased the

GOA PRO LEAGUE

pace of the match to find the equaliser.

In the bargain, Preston Castano doubled the lead in the 50th minute for Guardian Angel Sports Club with a solo effort.

Later on, Vasco Sports Club fought brilliantly and scored two quick goals through Ngulgoul Singst in the 54th and 59th minute, to complete his brace.

TODAY'S SPORTS

Goa Professional League (Super League): FC Goa vs Goa Police SC, at Duler Stadium, Mapusa, 4 pm. Dempo SC vs Geno FC, at Dempo Sports Academy ground, Ella-Old Goa, 4 pm

GFA Futsal League (semi-finals): Ponda Footballers vs United Club of Verna, at the Manohar Parrikar indoor stadium, Navelim, 6 pm. Ambelim Sports Club vs Verna Cultural and Sports Association, 7 pm

14th Wilred Leisure Cup: Margao Sports Club vs United Boys of Ambaulim, at DSYA ground, Curtorim, 4.45 pm

Vaidya Family Memorial Cup (final): United Sports Club, Seraluim, vs Sporting Club Davorlim, at government school playground, Cuncolim, 4.45 pm

Inter-Seraluim Badminton tournament organised by USC Seraluim, at Seraluim Church Court, 7 pm

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Chief Guest: SHRI. YURI ALEMAO, Hon'ble Leader of Opposition & MLA Cuncolim Constituency.
Guests of Honour: HITESH PATIL, DM, South Goa, New India Assurance Co. Ltd., HARSHIT SENGAR, DM, North Goa, New India Assurance Co Ltd., FR. ERMITO COUTINHO, Carmona Church.
Special Invitees: Landry Mascarenhas, Chairperson CMC, Rohidas Dadd Dessai, President, Goa Freedom Fighters Association, Sanjay Shetkar, APEO Salcete DSYA, Santosh Fal Dessai, Social worker, Sandeep Dessai, Rtd. Asst. Director of Transport, Harish Madkaikar, S.P. Santosh Dessai, S.P., Prashal Dessai, PI, Navesh Dessai PI, Filomeno Costa PI, Diago Gracias, PI, Dr. Vishnu Vaidya, Sailesh Vaidya, Ashwin Vaidya, Subhash Dessai, Dalton Almeida, Filon Vaz, Ramesh Dessai, Lavita Mascarenhas, Siddesh Kurade, Anju Dias.

Organising Chairman Dinesh Naik	President Vishal Shabu Dessai	Vice President Savio Gomes
Secretary Vijay Kumar Kopre Dessai	Treasurer Siano Fernandes	Coordinator Sammy Tavares

Org Committee: Oscar Martins, Leo Moraes, Nilesh Kunde, Rupak Naik, Shrikant Dessai, Elton Cardozo, Johnson Fernandes, Jerson Moraes.

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