

# Formidable Sunrisers Hyderabad to start favourite against Rajasthan Royals

**PTI, HYDERABAD:** Equipped with a balanced squad that features a formidable batting line-up and experienced bowlers, last edition's runners-up Sunrisers Hyderabad will start as favourites in their opening Indian Premier League (IPL) match against Rajasthan Royals here on Sunday.

## IPL PREVIEW

Sunrisers have some of the most explosive batters in their line-up in Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan and Heinrich Klaasen, and with a belter of a track likely to offer at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, they would fancy a massive total in the afternoon match of the

double-header day. In fact, if any team can get to the much talked about 300-run total after batting first, it is Sunrisers that is expected to achieve the feat with the firepower they have. The return of India all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy after an injury is also expected to add to the arsenal of the Sunrisers. With the kind of form Abhishek and Head have been having recently, the Sunrisers supporters can expect to see impressive strokes. With few established names in the bowling department of the Royals, except England pacer Jofra Archer, there is every possibility that the Sunrisers can eye another 250-plus total if they bat first on Sunday.

**TEAMS**  
**Sunrisers Hyderabad:** Pat Cummins (c), Travis Head, Ishan Kishan, Heinrich Klaasen, Abhishek Sharma, Sachin Baby, Mohammed Shami, Adam Zampa, Aniket Verma, Abhinav Manohar, Rahul Chahar, Eshan Malinga, Harshal Patel, Kamindu Mendis, Wiaan Mulder, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Atharva Taide, Brydon Carse, Simarjeet Singh, Jaydev Unadkat, Zeeshan Ansari.  
**Rajasthan Royals:** Riyan Parag (c), Sanju Samson, Shubham Dubey, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Nitish Rana, Kunal Singh Rathore, Vaibhav Suryavanshi, Wanindu Hasaranga, Jofra Archer, Ashok Sharma, Tushar Deshpande, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwen Maphaka, Sandeep Sharma, Maheesh Theekshana, Yuvraj Singh.

## TODAY'S IPL FIXTURES

**Sunrisers Hyderabad vs Rajasthan Royals, at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Hyderabad, at 3.30 pm**  
**Chennai Super Kings vs Mumbai Indians at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai, at 7.30 pm**

The experienced pace duo of captain Pat Cummins and Mohammed Shami will man the bowling department along with spinner Adam Zampa -- another



Sunrisers Hyderabad players during a practice session ahead of the IPL match against Rajasthan Royals, at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Hyderabad, on Saturday

seasoned campaigner. Sunrisers look far batter placed than Royals, who are will miss skipper Sanju Samson due to his finger injury. Samson cannot keep wickets and field and can only

bat with protection on his finger. It won't be a surprise if he comes as an Impact Player. Batter Riyan Parag will be the interim captain Royals in their first three IPL matches.

# CSK lean on spin strength against depleted MI



Mumbai Indians captain Suryakumar Yadav and teammates Rohit Sharma and Hardik Pandya during a training session ahead of the IPL against Chennai Super Kings, at MA Chidambaram Stadium, in Chennai, on Saturday

**PTI, CHENNAI:** Chennai Super Kings will lean on their formidable spin strength under favourable conditions at the Chepauk as well as recent record against Mumbai Indians when the two sides face each other in their Indian Premier League (IPL) campaign

opener here on Sunday. Five-time winners CSK augmented their spin attack in the IPL mega auction last year by including Ravichandran Ashwin, Noor Ahmad Shreyas Gopal and Deepak Hooda, with India veteran Ravindra Jadeja also in the mix.

**TEAMS**  
**Chennai Super Kings:** Ruturaj Gaikwad (c), MS Dhoni (wk), Devon Conway, Rahul Tripathi, Shaik Rasheed, Vansh Bedi (wk), C Andre Siddharth, Rachin Ravindra, Ravichandran Ashwin, Vijay Shankar, Sam Curran, Anshul Kamboj, Deepak Hooda, Jamie Overton, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Ramakrishna Ghosh, Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Khaleel Ahmed, Noor Ahmad, Mukesh Choudhary, Gurjapneet Singh, Nathan Ellis, Shreyas Gopal, Matheesha Pathirana.  
**Mumbai Indians:** Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Robin Minz, Ryan Rickelton (wk), Shrijith Krishnan (wk), Bevon Jacobs, Tilak Varma, Naman Dhir, Will Jacks, Mitchell Santner, Raj Angad Bawa, Vignesh Puthur, Corbin Bosch, Trent Boult, Karn Sharma, Deepak Chahar, Ashwani Kumar, Reece Topley, VS Penmetsa, Arjun Tendulkar, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Jasprit Bumrah.

CSK's pre-season moves indicate how the spin-friendly conditions at the MA Chidambaram Stadium here could be a major factor in their game plan. Starting their season against an equally formidable opponent in Mumbai Indians, this strategy could well deliver the goods right from the beginning. For CSK, MS Dhoni will be the cynosure of all eyes once again, having remained with the team since the inception of the IPL in 2008. On the other hand, the absence of India bowling spearhead Jasprit Bumrah

could be acutely felt in the MI ranks as the right-arm pacer remains on a comeback trail from a back-related issue which has kept him sidelined so far this year. Bumrah is expected to miss the initial stages of this IPL and his absence will leave MI without their lethal weapon in the death overs, presenting the management with a headache to work with other options and strategies. MI will also be without regular skipper Hardik Pandya for this clash as the India all-rounder serves a one-match ban for the side's slow over-rate in their final league match last year. But for a team which has no dearth of leadership options, MI will have India T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav leading them in their tournament opener and important away clash.

CSK face a healthy selection conundrum for the opening slot with one among the two Kiwis, Rachin Ravindra and Devon Conway, set to partner skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad at the top. The middle order is set to feature the likes of Rahul Tripathi, Shivam Dube, Hooda and Vijay Shankar, followed by Dhoni and Jadeja. Among the favourable factors is CSK's recent record of four wins in their last five matches over Mumbai Indians including three victories in last as many games. Pandya's appointment as MI skipper, replacing Rohit Sharma, heavily marred the five-time IPL winners' campaign last season where they had finished at the bottom. The squad looks well settled now after the turmoils of last season.

# Sawant, Dhond & Dr Manju storm into semi-finals

**Team Herald**  
sports@herald-go.com

**PANJIM:** As the tournament reached its penultimate day, Goa's veteran badminton players continued to make their mark securing spots in the semi-finals across multiple categories at the 47th Indian Masters (Veteran) National Badminton Championships 2024-25 underway at the Pedem multipurpose stadium, Mapusa, on Saturday. Dr Manju Khandeparker (WS 60+) put up a strong performance to outplay Alka Batra (Rajasthan) 21-14, 21-15, advancing to the final four. In WD 60+, Manju Khandeparker, partnering with Sukesh Saggi (Uttar Pradesh), battled past Surekha Satam and Jyothi Somaiah (Maharashtra/

Karnataka) 21-16, 16-21, 21-19 in a thrilling contest. Goa's Pradeep Dhond and Tanaji Sawant (MD 70+) also stormed into the semi-finals, registering a 21-14, 21-17 win over Arun Kakkar and Anil Mehrotra (Uttar Pradesh).

The XD 75+ pair of Dr Satish Kudchadkar and V Gudipudi (Goa/Maharashtra) however went down fighting in the quarter-final in a 16-21, 21-15, 23-21 lost to Muthuramalingam N and Shailla Sardesai (Tamil Nadu/Maharashtra).

In quarter-final matches featuring other prominent India ranked players, top seed Ram Lakhan (PNB) (1) remained dominant, cruising past Mukesh Kumar Singh

(Bihar) 21-13, 21-11 in MS 60+. In MS 55+, Rajeev Sharma (CAG) (1) maintained his strong form with a 21-12, 21-13 victory over Alok Kumar Joseph (Madhya Pradesh), while MS 75+ top seed Yogendra Kumar Jaiswal (Uttar Pradesh) (1) made light work of Rakesh Sharma (Rajasthan) 21-9, 21-4.

Second-seeded Anupam Kumaria (PNB) (2) secured a 21-12, 21-14 win against Pokkavil Gopinatha Mohan (Kerala) in MS 65+.

In the women's section quarters, top-seeded Manjusha Sahasrabudhe (Maharashtra) (1) displayed her class with a dominant 21-5, 21-10 victory over Elza Tomy (Karnataka) in WS 60+. The WD 60+

top-seeded duo of Manik Paranjpe and Manjusha Sahasrabudhe (Maharashtra) (1) also advanced comfortably, defeating Lali Joseph and Shirley Tharakan (Kerala) 21-15, 21-5. In doubles quarters, top-seeded Ram Lakhan and Harjit Singh (PNB/Delhi) (1) overcame Nimai Singh Toijam and Amusana (Manipur) 21-15, 21-18 in MD 60+, while Bijoy Barman and Rajeev Sharma (Assam/CAG) (2) secured a 21-17, 21-16 win in MD 55+ against Rajesh D'Souza and Balakrishna (Maharashtra). With the semi-finals scheduled for Sunday morning (March 23), and the finals set to take place from 1 pm, an exciting culmination awaits as India's best veteran shuttlers battle for glory in their respective categories.

# Betalbatim SC move ahead

**Team Herald**  
sports@herald-go.com

**RAIA:** Holders Betalbatim Sporting Club scored a hard-fought 2-1 win over last year's runners-up Don Bosco Oratory, Fatorda, in the inaugural match of 17th London Trophy inter-village football tournament 2025 organised by Goa Velha Sports Club at Goa Velha ground, on Saturday.

## 17TH LONDON TROPHY INTER-VILLAGE FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

Betalbatim Sporting Club started on an attacking note from kick off raiding the Don Bosco Oratory citadel time and again and keeping Glen Fernandes in the goal busy. Betalbatim Sporting Club surged ahead through a power-packed shot from outside the box which beat Glen in the Don Bosco Oratory goal in the 8th minute of play. Don Bosco Oratory

Alfred Noronha of Don Bosco Oratory was cautioned by the match referee Jan Rodrigues for reckless tackle in the 27th minute of play. Betalbatim Sporting Club led by a solitary goal at the break. In the second half, substitute Nayab Khan of Betalbatim Sporting Club shot tamely into the hands of Don Bosco Oratory goalkeeper Glen from

close range in the 45th minute of play. Nayab was wasteful in front of goal and once again shot tamely into the hands of Glen in the 59th minute of play. Don Bosco Oratory restored parity through the boots of veteran Roque whose hot-blooded shot landed into the Betalbatim net beating Joyrin Braganza in the 55th minute of play. Ashley Fernandes scored the match winner for Betalbatim Sporting Club of a brilliantly taken free-kick from just out-

side the 18-yard box in the 56th minute of play. Alfred Noronha of Don Bosco Oratory saw his header from a close in the dying minutes of the match hit the post and rebounded into play. Alfred, Roque and Ashley Araujo of Don Bosco Oratory and Nayab Khan of Betalbatim Sporting Club were cautioned by the match referee Jan Rodrigues. Gladson Braganza of Betalbatim Sporting Club was awarded the man-of-the-match by Adolfo Travasso, vice-president of Goa Velha Sports Club.

**I-League:** Churchill Brothers FC vs Sreenidi Deccan Football Club, at Raia panchayat ground, 4.30 pm  
**Goa Professional League: (Super League):** Clube de Salgaocar vs Cortalim Villagers SWSC, at Duler Stadium, Mapusa, 4 pm  
**GFA U-19 Division I League:** Sporting Clube de Goa vs Dempo SC, at Santa Cruz ground, 4 pm. Penha de France SC vs Sesa FA, Sirsaim ground, 4 pm  
**GFA Division I League (Group A):** Mando-

# Vasco SC collect full points

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sports@herald-go.com

**RAIA:** Vasco Sports Club easily outwitted Pax of Nagao SC 3-0 to collect full points in the Goa Professional League Relegation Zone match played at Tilak Maidan, Vasco, on Saturday. Ngulgoul Singit gave

## GPL RELEGATION ZONE

an early lead to Vasco SC in the 8th minute. Later, he doubled the lead in the 39th minute. In the 79th minute of the second session, Blasco Fernandes scored the third goal for Vasco SC.

## GOA DIARY

**5th edition of Ramakant Verlekar Champions Trophy T20 Cricket on March 29 at Margao**  
**PANJIM:** The Sunita Verlekar Foundation will be organise the 5th edition of Ramakant Verlekar Champions Trophy T20 Cricket on March 29, from 6 pm. The T20 match will be played at Dr Rajendra Prasad Ground, Margao Cricket Club under floodlights between MCL Superstars - Margao Cricket Club Members League Premium and PGML Kings - Panjim Gymkhana Members League Premium. Trustee of Sunita Verlekar Foundation, Gautam Verlekar said that the chief guest for the event will be Lalchand Rajput. He is a former India cricketer, ex-India coach of the T20 World Cup winning team in 2007, coach of UAE, and former opening batsman and coach - Mumbai Ranji Team.

**MCA's 33rd summer cricket coaching camp commences from April 1**  
**RAIA:** The 33rd consecutive summer cricket coaching camp will be held from April 1 to 30 at two venues. The morning batch will be conducted at Konkarn Railway ground, between 7 am and 9 am and the afternoon batch at Amrut Nagar, opp Chowgule College near Manovikas School from 4 pm to 6 pm. It is the first academy to start cricket coaching in Margao and is the only academy which has continuously coached the students without break. Hemant Angle, former vice captain of Goa Ranji team and now a qualified coach will teach the students the basics of cricket. He shall be assisted by Devashish Bagchi, Asish Patnekar, Digesh Angle and Nikhit Katkar. For more queries and forms, contact Angle's Sports, Gomant Vidya Niketan; Sunny Sports, near Vishant; KB Sports opp Konkarn Railway Office and Damodar Hotel, opp Multipurpose School. Parents can come directly to the venue with the form duly filled and can also avail the location of the new venue at Amrut Nagar on Whatsapp.

## TODAY'S SPORTS

pa SC vs Candolim SC, at Navelim ground, 4 pm. Nuvem SC vs Cuncoim Union, at Benaulim ground, 4 pm  
**17th London Trophy inter-village football:** Assonora United Football Club vs Guardian Angel Sports Club, at Goa Velha Sports Club ground, 4.30 pm  
**14th Wilred Leisure Cup 2025 (2nd semi-final):** Margao Sports Club vs Shiroda Youth Club, at DSYA ground, Curtorim, 4.45 pm

## sportspopup

**NorthEast Utd midfielder Nickson in India squad, Udanta replaces injured Brandon**  
**SHILLONG:** India head coach Manolo Marquez has called up NorthEast United midfielder Macarton Louis Nickson to the national squad ahead of the 2027 AFC Asian Cup qualifying round match against Bangladesh, here, on Tuesday. "Macarton Louis Nickson has joined the Indian camp in Shillong," said the All India Football Federation (AIFF) in a squad update. Marquez has already added winger Udanta Singh in place of key mid-fielder Brandon Fernandes who has been released after suffering an injury during India's 3-0 win over Maldives in the international friendly match here on March 19. He slipped on the turf late in the first half and was stretchered out of the field. "Brandon Fernandes has been released from the Indian squad due to an injury he picked up in the match against Maldives. Udanta Singh has joined the Indian camp in Shillong," the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said. Speaking after the Maldives game, head coach Manolo Marquez had confirmed that Fernandes would not be available for the Bangladesh match.

**Nayak wins bronze in vault final at FIG World Cup**  
**NEW DELHI:** Indian gymnast Pranati Nayak on Saturday secured a bronze medal in the Vault Final at the FIG Artistic Gymnastics Apparatus World Cup in Antalya, Turkey. The 29-year-old, who represented the country at the Tokyo Olympics, came up with a total score of 13.417 in the vault final to finish third, behind American duo of Jayla Hang (13.667) and Claire Pease (13.567). "It is a great feeling to start the year with a medal. It is a good confidence booster for me. I had won last year as well, so I'm feeling really happy," Nayak, who had scored 13.317 in the vault qualification, told PTI from Antalya. "My eyes are now on winning medals at Asia Championships and World championships, that's the target for the year," she added. Pranati had clinched the bronze medal in the women's vault event of the FIG Apparatus World Cup in Cairo before the Paris Olympics last year. She also won vault bronze medals at the Asian Championships in 2019 (Ulaanbaatar) and 2022 (Doha).

**Treesa-Gayatri's run ends in semi-finals of Swiss Open**  
**BASEL:** India's women's badminton pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand saw their impressive run come to an end with a narrow three-game loss to the world number one Chinese duo of Liu Sheng Shu and Tan Ning in the semifinals of the Swiss Open here on Saturday. The World No. 9 Indian pair squandered an opening-game advantage, going down 21-15, 15-21, 12-21 to the top seeds Liu and Tan in a match that lasted an hour and 32 minutes. This defeat marked the end of India's campaign at the BWF Super 300 tournament, as Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian, the only Indian left in the singles draw, lost 10-21, 14-21 to world number 31 Christo Popov of France, a 2019 World Junior Championships silver medalist, on Friday night.

**India to host WI for Tests in October, SA home series in Nov; Guwahati to host maiden Test**  
**KOLKATA:** India will host the West Indies after 12 years in a two-match Test series in October while South Africa will arrive in the country for an all-format tour in November. India will take on the Windies in the first Test at Mohali from October 2, while the second Test will be held at Eden Gardens in Kolkata from October 10, the BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla informed PTI. The West Indies' previous Test tour to India was in 2013-14, which was also the final international outing for batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar. The Caribbean's last visit to India was in 2022 for three ODIs and as many T20Is. The South Africans will be in India soon after for a series comprising two Tests, three ODIs and five T20Is, which will work as a precursor to next the year's T20 World Cup on these shores. "The first Test will be in Delhi, while the second Test will be in Guwahati," said Shukla here. This will be the maiden Test in Guwahati, which often hosts white ball matches, and has also been hosting IPL matches for the last two seasons. Following the Test matches, the first ODI will be held in Ranchi on November 30, while Raipur will play host to the second ODI on December 5. The final one-dayer will be in Visakhapatnam on December 6. The first T20I will be played on December 9, followed by matches on December 11, 14, 17 and 19. India will host the ICC Women's ODI World Cup this year tentatively in September. "The dates are yet to be decided. But Vizag is set to host the opening match and the other venues are Guwahati, Mullanpur (Punjab), Thiruvananthapuram and Indore. The venue for the final is yet to be finalised," added Shukla.

**ICC cricket committee to decide on World Test Championship revamp in April meeting**  
**KOLKATA:** ICC chairman Jay Shah on Saturday confirmed that the Sourav Ganguly-led Cricket Committee will take a final call on the proposed revamp of the World Test Championship for the 2025-27 cycle next month. The 16-member Cricket Committee is headed by former Indian captain Sourav Ganguly and includes former cricketers VVS Laxman, Daniel Vettori, Mahela Jayawardene, and Shaun Pollock, among others. "Proposals have come in, but I am not fully aware of them. The Cricket Committee will make the decision," Shah, who is here for the IPL 2025 opener, told PTI. The ICC is reportedly considering a significant overhaul of the WTC points system after receiving feedback on two completed cycles. Among the proposals is to create a bonus points system to reward dominant victories and additional incentives for away wins. The ICC Board will deliberate on these modifications in its April meeting. Under the current system, teams earn 12 points for a win (regardless of margin), 6 points for a tie, and 4 points for a draw.

**George Foreman, fearsome heavyweight who became a beloved champion, dies at 76**  
**AUSTIN (USA):** George Foreman, the fearsome heavyweight who lost the "Rumble in the Jungle" to Muhammad Ali before his inspiring second act as a 45-year-old champion and a successful businessman, died Friday night. He was 76. Foreman's family announced his death on social media, not saying how or where he died. "A devout preacher, a devoted husband, a loving father, and a proud grand- and great-grandfather, he lived a life marked by unwavering faith, humility and purpose," his family wrote. "A humanitarian, an Olympian and two-time heavyweight champion of the world, he was deeply respected. A force for good, a man of discipline, conviction, and a protector of his legacy, fighting tirelessly to preserve his good name— for his family." A native Texan, Foreman began his boxing career as an Olympic gold medalist who inspired fear as he climbed to the peak of the heavyweight division by stopping Joe Frazier in 1973. His formidable aura evaporated only a year later when Ali pulled off one of the most audacious victories in boxing history in Zaire, baiting and taunting Foreman into losing his belt in one of the greatest fights ever staged.