

# Captain Shreyas sizzles as Kings rule Giants

Iyer began his stint as Punjab Kings captain with a blistering 42-ball 97 not out as his team humbled Gujarat Titans by 11 runs

PTI, AHMEDABAD: Shreyas Iyer began his stint as Punjab Kings captain with a blistering 42-ball 97 not out as his team humbled Gujarat Titans by 11 runs in their Indian Premier League match, here, on Tuesday.

Shashank Singh bludgeoned 44 off 16 balls after Iyer's brilliant display with the bat as Punjab Kings posted an imposing 243 for five. In reply, Gujarat Titans were stopped at 232 for five with Sai Sudharsan and Jos Buttler making a 41-ball 74 and 33-ball 54 respectively.

Iyer struck as many as nine sixes and five fours but he could not get to his maiden IPL hundred, as Shashank took 23 runs off the final over to end the PBKS innings on a high note. Shashank hit six fours and two sixes during his brilliant cameo.

The GT bowling at the death left a lot to be desired as PBKS amassed 135 runs in the last eight overs. GT's fielding was also not up to the mark on the night.

In pursuit of 244, GT too got off to a flyer with Shubman Gill and Sudharsan putting in 61 runs in just under six overs before the home team captain got a leading edge off a Glenn Maxwell delivery to fall for a 14-ball 33.

Jos Buttler joined Sudharsan in the middle and the two scored runs at a fast clip to keep GT in the hunt. However, having added 84 runs for the second wicket with Buttler, Sudharsan looked to whip an ordinary Arshdeep Singh off his pads and while he timed it superbly, the opener did not get the desired elevation and was caught in the deep.

With dew coming into the picture and Buttler still at the crease, GT knew they remained very much in the game despite losing Sudharsan, and Sherfane Rutherford's two sixes and a four off Marcus Stoinis acted as stimulus for the home team. But with his smart medium



**TODAY'S IPL FIXTURE**  
Kolkata Knight Riders vs Rajasthan Royals, ACA Stadium, Guwahati, Assam, 7.30 pm

Punjab Kings captain Shreyas Iyer plays a shot during the Indian Premier League match against Gujarat Titans, at Narendra Modi Stadium, in Ahmedabad, on Tuesday

## TWISTS & TURNS

- Iyer reached his fifty in just 27 balls
- Gujarat Titans' fielding was not up to the mark
- With his smart medium pace bowling, impact sub Vijaykumar Vyshak ensured Punjab Kings had their nose ahead by conceding just five runs in the 15th over

pace bowling, impact sub Vijaykumar Vyshak ensured PBKS had their nose ahead by conceding just five runs in the 15th over.

Marco Jansen was brought back into the attack with GT requiring 70 runs in the last 30 balls, and the tall South African left-arm pacer gave away only eight runs to compound the batting team's problems.

## SCOREBOARD

**Punjab Kings:** Priyansh Arya c Sudharsan b Khan 47, Prabhsimran Singh c Khan b Rabada 5, \*Shreyas Iyer not out 97, Azmatullah Omarzai c Khan b Kishore 16, Glenn Maxwell lbw b Kishore 0, Marcus Stoinis c Khan b Kishore 20, Shashank Singh not out 44. Extras: 14. Total: 243-5. Fall of wickets: 28-1, 79-2, 105-3, 105-4, 162-5. **Bowling:** Mohammed Siraj 4-0-54-0, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-41-1, Arshad Khan 1-0-21-0, Rashid Khan 4-0-48-1, Prasad Krishna 3-0-41-0, Sai Kishore 4-0-30-3. **Gujarat Titans:** Sai Sudharsan c Singh b Arshdeep 74, \*Shubman Gill c Arya b Maxwell 33, Jos Buttler b Jansen 54, Sherfane Rutherford b Arshdeep 46, Rahul Tewatia run out (Singh) 6, Shahrux Khan not out 6, Arshad Khan not out 1. Extras: 12. Total: 232-5. Fall of wickets: 61-1, 145-2, 199-3, 217-4, 225-5. **Bowling:** Arshdeep Singh 4-0-36-2, Azmatullah Omarzai 2-0-29-0, Marco Jansen 4-0-44-1, Glenn Maxwell 2-0-26-1, Marcus Stoinis 2-0-31-0, Yuzvendra Chahal 3-0-34-0, Vijaykumar Vyshak 3-0-28-0.

**Man-of-the-Match:** Shreyas Iyer

# India, Bangladesh play out goalless draw

PTI, SHILLONG: India did not get the start they were looking for in their 2027 AFC Asian Cup third round qualifying match as they played out a goalless draw against familiar rivals Bangladesh here on Tuesday.

Bangladesh were slightly the better side in the first half with more attacking moves and corner kicks but without any clear-cut chances.

range effort which beat the Bangladesh goalkeeper all the way but missed the left corner of the net by inches in the 68th minute.

Five minutes later, Farukh Choudhary's right footer went just wide after a deflection from a Bangladeshi defender.

The 84th minute saw star striker Sunil Chhetri getting a free header inside the Bangladesh box but his

## 2027 AFC ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

India put up a much better performance in the next 45 minutes, putting Bangladesh under a lot of pressure but the chances were few and far between.

In the 12th minute, India goalkeeper Vishal Kaith committed a mistake as he kicked the ball into an opposition player. Mohammed Ridoy pounced on the deflection and sent a left footer from an angular position into the open net but Subhasish Bose produced a goal-line clearance.

India's best chance came in the 31st minute but Udanta Singh's header off a Liston Colaco cross from left failed to beat Bangladesh goalie Mitul Marma.

In a dominant second half display for India, Bose made an audacious long

effort lacked direction and power.

Bangladesh midfielder Hamza Choudhury, who is currently playing for Sheffield United on loan from English Premier League side Leicester City, could not do much for most part of the match.

The two sides face each other again on November 18 in Bangladesh.

India's next qualifying round match, though, will be against Hong Kong on June 10 in Kowloon.

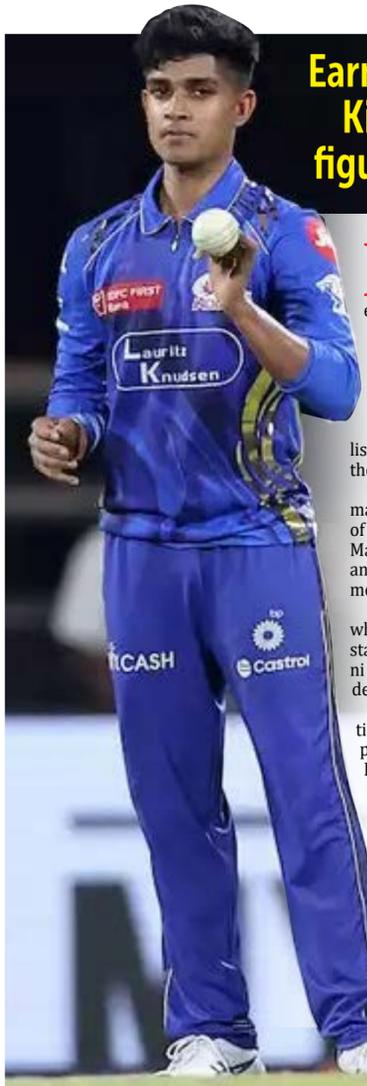
India are placed in Group C of the 2027 Asian Cup qualifying third round along with Bangladesh, Hong Kong and Singapore, and only the top team after six home and away matches qualifies for the continental showpiece.



India's Boris Singh and Bangladesh's Shariar Emon vie for the ball during the AFC Asian Cup qualifier football match, in Shillong, Meghalaya, on Tuesday

# MI's unheralded spinner Vignesh makes impact on debut

Earns appreciation for dismissing Chennai Super Kings skipper Gaikwad, Dube and Hooda for figures of 3/32 in four overs as an impact player



Plucked out of a State league with no experience of first-class cricket, 24-year-old spinner Vignesh Puthur lived a dream as he snared three wickets on debut for the Mumbai Indians and even though it wasn't enough to ensure victory, the student of English literature seems ready for the big stage.

It wasn't just his skills that made everyone take notice of the bowler from Kerala's Malappuram, whose father is an auto-rickshaw driver and mother a home-maker.

He had quite a moment when Chennai Super Kings stalwart Mahendra Singh Dhoni put his hand on his shoulders to laud his performance.

He earned that appreciation for dismissing CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shivam Dube, and Deepak Hooda for figures of 3/32 in four overs as an impact player.

"I never thought in my life that I would play with all these players," a smiling Puthur said addressing his star-studded dressing room after being presented the best bowler's badge in the team's in-house post-

**“We never expected him to play in the first match itself. We are so happy. We never even thought he will get an IPL contract. Now, a lot of people are calling us to congratulate, and hopefully he will live up to everybody's expectations”**

— Sunil Kumar, Vignesh's father

match honours.

With him, MI seem to have unheralded talent like Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya, also discovered from the far-reaches, thanks to a robust scouting system.

The team, however, began yet another IPL with a defeat even though the loss on Sunday had a silver lining with Puthur making his presence felt against a storied side like the CSK.

Puthur is currently pursuing MA in English Literature from PTM Govt College Perinthalmanna in the Calicut University.

He hasn't yet played first-class cricket apart from a brief

stint in the Kerala Cricket League and in the Tamil Nadu Premier League, but his talent was enough for MI to bring him on board.

The nurturing began immediately after Puthur joined the camp a few months ago. From interacting with the coaches to accessing the training facilities as well as working with analytics and data, his cricket journey took flight and Puthur soaked it all in.

"We never expected him to play in the first match itself. We are so happy. We never even thought he will get an IPL contract. Now, a lot of people are calling us to congratulate, and hopefully he will live up to everybody's expectations," said Sunil Kumar, his father.

Puthur's mother Bindu was equally delighted.

"He had called up last evening saying there was a chance for me to play tonight. We were watching every ball last night, and this was his performance. He called us around 12.30 am last night after the match and then again he called after an hour.

"He was so happy. I have never seen him so happy. We also could not sleep because of happiness." PTI

## England sink Latvia

AFP, LONDON: England extended Thomas Tuchel's 100 percent start to his reign as Reece James' first international goal inspired a 3-0 win against Latvia in World Cup qualifier.

Tuchel's side once again laboured to break down defensive opposition for long periods at Wembley.

But three days after struggling to beat Albania 2-0 in Tuchel's first game in charge, England eventually mustered enough composure and quality to kill off 140th-ranked Latvia.

James broke the deadlock with a superb free-kick late in the first half as the Chelsea right-back made an impressive first England start since September 2022.

Hamstring injuries had sidelined James for most of last season, as well as several months in the current campaign.

But James was a key figure when Tuchel's Chelsea won the 2021 Champions League and the 25-year-old could emerge as a significant weapon if he can stay fit.

England captain Harry Kane put the result beyond doubt in the second half with his 71st international goal, before Eberechi Eze came off the bench to bag his maiden goal for the Three Lions. The German now has 75 days to prepare for England's next qualifier in Andorra on June 7.

## RESULTS

**Lithuania 2 (Kucys 39, Gineitis 69) Finland 2 (Kairinen 3, Pohjanpalo 17-pen), Poland 2 (Swiderski 27, 51) Malta 0, Bosnia-Herzegovina 2 (Demirovic 22, Hajradinovic 56) Cyprus 1 (Pittas 45+2), San Marino 1 (Zannoni 67) Romania 5 (Cevoli 6-og, Popescu 44, R. Marin 55-pen, Hagi 75-pen, Alibec 90+4), Albania 3 (Manaj 9, 19, Uzuni 90+2) Andorra 0, England 3 (James 38, Kane 68, Eze 76) Latvia 0.**

## sportspopup

### Leading India players likely in 'A' squad for England Lions 4-day matches

NEW DELHI: Some of India's frontline players are likely to be part of the 'A' squad which will face the Lions in two four-day matches during the May-June window in preparation for the five-match Test series against England. India will begin their 45-day trip to England with their first Test at Headingley on June 20, as they will attempt to win the first away series at the Old Blighty since 2007. "The first four-day match will be hosted at The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence in Canterbury from May 30. The second match is scheduled to begin a week later on June 6 at the County Ground in Northampton," the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement. All the prominent Indian cricketers are contracted with their respective IPL franchises at the moment as the league's knockouts will be played on May 20, 21, 23 before the final on May 25.

### Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma retain spots in ICC rankings

DUBAI: India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana and all-rounder Deepti Sharma held on to their third positions respectively in the latest ICC Women's T20I batter and bowlers' rankings issued, here, on Tuesday. Besides Mandhana, no other Indian is in the top-10 with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur placed 11th position, Jemimah Rodrigues ranked 15th and Shafali Verma a rung below. The batters' list is led by Australia's Beth Mooney, followed by teammate Tahlia McGrath. Star all-rounder Melie Kerr gained two places on the list for T20I batters following her innings of 40 in the second match of the series against Australia, while fellow New Zealander Georgia Plimmer improved 20 spots to move to 50th on the back of some consistent innings at the top of the order over the last month. Deepti continued to occupy her third spot among bowlers behind England's Sophie Ecclestone and Sadia Iqbal of Pakistan. Darcie Brown, meanwhile, moved 12 spots to reach 18th overall following figures of 2/23 against New Zealand in the second game of their series. Kerr remains in second place behind West Indies' Hayley Matthews in the rankings for T20I all-rounders, with McGrath (up three rungs to 18th) and Sutherland (up one spot to 21st) among the biggest movers this week.

### Dhoni on Impact Player rule: It's how T20 cricket has evolved

NEW DELHI: Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni was not quite convinced about the need for the Impact Player rule when it was first introduced in the IPL but now sees it as a part of T20 cricket's evolution. The 43-year-old, who remains a talismanic figure for the Chennai Super Kings despite relinquishing captaincy last year, said he does not consider himself an Impact Player as he remains the first-choice wicketkeeper of his side. "When this rule was implemented, I felt it wasn't really needed at that time. In a way, it helps me, but at the same time, it doesn't. I still do my wicket-keeping, so I am not an impact player," Dhoni told 'JioStar'. "I have to be involved in the game. A lot of people say the rule has led to more high-scoring games. I believe it's more due to the conditions and the comfort level of players," he added. The rule has been criticised by the likes of India's Test and ODI skipper Rohit Sharma and star all-rounder Hardik Pandya, both of whom believe that it can affect the growth of all-rounders as teams tend to choose big-hitting batters for this role. Dhoni said the rule does give teams the comfort of an extra batter for crunch situations.

### World Athletics approves swab test to determine female gender

PARIS: World Athletics said on Tuesday it had approved the introduction of a cheek swab test to determine if an athlete is biologically female. Sebastian Coe, the president of the international track and field federation, said the test, whose introduction was given the green light by the World Athletics Council, was a "really important" way of protecting the female category. "It's important to do it because it maintains everything that we've been talking about, and particularly recently, about not just talking about the integrity of female women's sport, but actually guaranteeing it," Coe said in a press conference after the Council met over two days in Nanjing, China following the World Indoor Championships. "We feel this is a really important way of providing confidence and maintaining that absolute focus on the integrity of competition," he added. World Athletics has not fixed a date for the introduction of the test, but it is expected to be in place for the outdoor World Championships in Tokyo this September.

### Iran qualifies for the 2026 World Cup after a 2-2 draw with Uzbekistan

TEHRAN: Iran qualified for the 2026 World Cup after Mehdi Taremi scored twice in a 2-2 draw with Uzbekistan on Tuesday. The Inter Milan striker scored his second goal in the 83rd minute in Tehran, giving Iran the point it needed to qualify to a fourth straight appearance at the World Cup and a seventh overall. The 48-team tournament will be hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. Earlier, Australia took a big step toward securing a spot at tournament with a 2-0 win over China in Hangzhou on Tuesday that also ended the hosts' hopes of automatic qualification. First-half goals from Jackson Irvine and Nishan Velupillay were enough for the Socceroos. With two games in Group C remaining in the third round, Australia is three points clear of third-placed Saudi Arabia, which drew 0-0 at already-qualified Japan. The top two from each of the three groups of six in Asia are guaranteed a place, while the teams that finish third and fourth will advance to a further stage to compete for two more places. In Group B, South Korea stayed top but dropped two points for the second time inside a week, drawing 1-1 at home to Jordan.

### Blatter, Platini acquitted again at second trial of financial wrongdoing at FIFA

MUTTENZ (Switzerland): Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini won again in court Tuesday and now lead 2-0 in trial verdicts against Swiss federal prosecutors. The former FIFA president and former UEFA president were acquitted for a second time on charges of fraud, forgery, mismanagement and misappropriation of more than \$2 million of FIFA money in 2011. Blatter, now aged 89, gave little reaction listening to the verdict of three cantonal (state) judges acting as a federal criminal appeals court. The attorney general's office in Switzerland had challenged a first acquittal in July 2022 and asked for sentences of 20 months, suspended for two years.

### ICC retains Menon in Elite Panel of Umpires, Jayaraman promoted to Emerging Panel

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday included Allahudien Paleker of South Africa and England's Alex Wharf in the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires which features Nitin Menon as the only Indian, while Jayaraman Madan-gopal has been promoted to the Emerging Panel. Michael Gough and Joel Wilson will make way for the two new entrants in Palekar and Wharf.