

# Fighting Srikanth keeps India's flag flying, enters semis of Malaysia Masters

## Mixed doubles pair of Tanisha-Dhruv shown the door

**PTI, KUALA LUMPUR:** Seasoned Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth stormed into his first semi-final in over a year with a hard-fought three-game win over higher-ranked Toma Junior Popov of France at the Malaysia Masters badminton tournament here on Friday.

Ranked 65th in the world, Srikanth displayed remarkable resilience and tactical maturity to outwit World No.18 Popov 24-22, 17-21, 22-20 in a fiercely-contested quarter-final that lasted one hour and 14 minutes.

The 32-year-old from Guntur, a 2021 World Championships silver medalist, has endured a rough patch over the past few seasons, struggling with form and fitness.

However, he battled through the qualifiers and has now notched up five straight wins to reach the business end of a BWF World Tour event. "It's been a while since I've



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won this many matches in a tournament and I hope I can continue to do so," said Srikanth.

"I've always been trying to better myself and this win just proves that whatever I'm doing is working," added the former World

No.1, who had won four titles in a stellar 2017 season and was part of India's historic Thomas Cup triumph in 2022.

Srikanth will take on Yushi Tanaka of Japan in the last four match, which will be his first semi-final

appearance in over a year.

The Japanese, who has won two Super 300 titles -- the Orleans Masters and the U.S. Open -- beat France's Christo Popov, brother of Toma Junior, 21-18 16-21 21-6 in another men's singles quarter-final duel on

Saturday. The other men's singles semi-final will be played between fourth seed Kodai Naraoka of Japan and second seed Li Shi Feng of China. Srikanth is now the lone surviving Indian in the BWF World Tour Super 500 tournament after the exit of the mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto in the quarter-finals on Friday.

Kapila and Crasto gave top seed Jiang Zhen Bang and Wei Ya Xin of China a tough fight in the first game but lost steam in the next to bow out 22-24, 13-21 in a 35-minute affair.

Srikanth had reached the quarterfinals at the Thailand Open Super 300 this year, while his last semifinal appearances came at the Swiss and Macau events in 2023.

Next up is Tanaka, who ended fellow Indian HS Prannoy's campaign earlier in the tournament. Srikanth will be keen to settle that score.

# Gill front-runner as India decides on new Test captain

**PTI, MUMBAI:** India's cricket selectors will set the ball rolling for the team's long transition journey in the longest format when they pick a new Test captain and finalise the squad for what is expected to be a challenging five-match series in England, here on Saturday.

The 25-year-old **Shubman Gill** is a clear favourite to land the high-profile job as Indian embarks on a new World Test Championship cycle following the retirement of stalwarts Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in a span of one week.

By simple logic, Jasprit Bumrah was the vice-captain on the previous tour of Australia and he should be elevated to the leadership role but question marks over his long-term fitness and workload management are likely to go against him on the discussion table.

Rishabh Pant has had a forgettable IPL but he remains a vital part of India's transition phase in the Test format. The selectors are likely to make him



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vice-captain.

Barring the leadership conundrum, no major shake-up is expected.

Though Rohit and Kohli's exit leaves a massive void, the likes of K L Rahul can provide much-needed experience in the batting department.

Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal are expected to open in the first Test beginning in Leeds on June 20 but hot on their heels will be Sai Sudharsan, who is likely to be picked as a reserve opener.

It remains to be seen if one among Karun Nair, Sar-

faraz Khan or Shreyas Iyer make it as an additional specialist batter.

Following the retirement of another stalwart, R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja will be lead spinner in the squad and it would be interesting to see if the selectors go with two or three spinners in English conditions.

If the number is two, then Washington Sundar may get the nod ahead of Kuldeep Yadav, who is a proven match-winner across formats.

Pant is the leading wicket-keeper batter and the choice for a reserve too his rather straight forward with Dhruv Jurel set to be retained.

Chief selector Ajit Agarkar is expected to address the media after squad announcement and talk about the road ahead for the team undergoing a rebuilding process.

There is enough experience in the pace department led by Bumrah but will he last the rigours of a five-match series? There are also concerns over Mohammed Shami's fitness.

## Ishan, bowlers guide SRH to victory

**PTI, LUCKNOW:** Royal Challengers Bengaluru squandered a golden chance to finish inside the top two of the IPL points table, going down to Ishan Kishan-fuelled Sunrisers Hyderabad by 42 runs here on Friday.

As a result of this heavy defeat, Royal Challengers (17 points) have slid down to third on the table behind Gujarat Titans (18) and Punjab Kings (17). The Net Run Rate (NRR) also took a significant beating.

Once they were asked to chase an imposing 232, which the SRH set after Kishan made a stunning unbeaten 94 off 48 balls, RCB required some calculated assault on the target.

They mounted it through Phil Salt (62, 32b, 4xx, 5x6), Virat Kohli (43, 25b, 7x4, 1x6) and Jitesh Sharma (24, 15b), but could only amass 189 before getting bundled out, and it was RCB's first defeat away from home this season.

But the beginning of RCB's chase offered a different

tale, as Kohli and Salt sprinted to 80 runs in just 7 overs. Kohli, who had recently retired from Test cricket, was the chief aggressor, clattering pacers Harshal Patel for two fours and Eshan Malinga for a swatted six over mid-wicket.

But the veteran fell to

an old nemesis left-arm spin for the 22nd time in his storied T20 career; this time to 22-year-old Harsh Dubey, the highest wicket-taker in 2024-25 Ranji Trophy season for champions Vidarbha.

However, Salt, who made 14 off his first 12 balls,

found his depth at the right time, smashing 48 runs in the next 20 balls, and a tennis-style forehand six off Nitish Kumar Reddy was just stunning in its execution.

Salt raced to fifty in 27 balls but cramps curtailed his movements, and soon perished to Pat Cummins.

But on a rather smooth pitch, the RCB batters kept on finding regular boundaries to keep the asking rate from escalating. Skipper Rajat Patidar (18) and Jitesh Sharma (24) added 44 quick runs for the fourth wicket to take RCB to 173 for three in the 16th over.

But a horrible mid-pitch between them saw Patidar getting run out by a couple of miles, and in the same over Malinga jettisoned big-hitting Romario Shepherd for a first-ball duck.

Jitesh perished to Unadkat and Tim David, who appears to have suffered a hamstring injury, in the space of nine deliveries as the fight soon ebbed out of the Royal Challengers.

### SCOREBOARD

**Sunrisers Hyderabad:** Abhishek Sharma c Salt b Ngidi 34, Travis Head c Shepherd b Kumar 17, Ishan Kishan not out 94, Heinrich Klaasen c Shepherd b Sharma 24, Aniket Verma c Kumar b Pandya 26, Nitish Reddy c Pandya b Shepherd 4, Abhinav Manohar c Salt b Shepherd 12, \*Pat Cummins not out 13. **Extras:** 7. **Total:** 231-6. **Fall of wickets:** 54-1, 54-2, 102-3, 145-4, 164-5, 188-6. **Bowling:** Yash Dayal 3-0-36-0, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-43-1, Lungi Ngidi 4-0-51-1, Suyash Sharma 3-0-45-1, Krunal Pandya 4-0-38-1, Romario Shepherd 2-0-14-2.

**Royal Challengers Bengaluru:** Philip Salt c Patel b Cummins 62, Virat Kohli c Sharma b Dubey 43, Mayank Agarwal c Kishan b Reddy 11, Rajat Patidar run out (Malinga) 18, \*Jitesh Sharma c Manohar b Unadkat 25, Romario Shepherd c and b Malinga 0, Krunal Pandya hit wicket b Cummins 8, Tim David c Klaasen b Malinga 1, Bhuvneshwar Kumar b Cummins 3, Yash Dayal c Verma b Patel 3, Lungi Ngidi not out 0. **Extras:** 16. **Total:** 189-10. **Fall of wickets:** 79-1, 120-2, 129-3, 173-4, 174-5, 174-6, 179-7, 186-8, 187-9, 189-10.

**Bowling:** \*Pat Cummins 4-0-28-3, Jaydev Unadkat 4-0-41-1, Harshal Patel 3-5-0-39-1, Eshan Malinga 4-0-37-2, Harsh Dubey 2-0-20-0, Nitish Reddy 2-0-13-1.

**Man-of-the-Match:** Ishan Kishan

## Mathews to retire from Test cricket

**PTI, COLOMBO:** Veteran Sri Lankan all-rounder **Angelo Mathews** on Friday announced that the first Test against Bangladesh next month will be his last five-day game as he makes way for younger talent in the traditional format with a "grateful heart and unforgettable memories."

The 37-year-old will, however, continue to play white-ball cricket for his country. His final Test appearance will be in Galle from June 17 to 21.

"With a grateful heart and unforgettable memories. It is time for me to say goodbye to the most cherished format of the game, International Test Cricket...The first Test match against Bangladesh in June will be my last red-ball appearance for my country," he posted on X.

"Whilst I bid adieu to the

Test format, as discussed with selectors I will remain available for selection for the white ball format, if and when my country needs me."

"I believe this Test team is a talented side with many future and present greats playing the game. Now seems like the best time to make way for a younger player to

take the mantle to shine for our nation," he added.

Since making debut in 2009, Mathews has turned up in 118 Tests, scoring 8167 runs -- the third-highest tally in Sri Lanka's

history, behind Kumar Sangakkara (12,400) and Mahela Jayawardene (11,814).

He has a fairly good average of 44.62 and has so far smashed 16 hundreds and 45 centuries with a 200 not out being the best of his lengthy career. He also has 34 wickets to his credit.



## Eyeing first top-two finish in 11 years, Punjab face ousted DC

**PTI, JAIPUR:** Riding a wave of success after a decade of pain, a full-strength Punjab Kings will fancy their chances of securing their first top-two finish in 11 years, when they face Delhi Capitals in the Indian Premier League, here, on Saturday.

Apart from the 2014 season when they topped the league table and finished runners-up, PBKS have only made one other playoff appearance in a competition that has been in existence for the past 18 years.

Having ended an 11-year

drought, PBKS are now relishing the prospect of not just finishing in the top two, but also enter the summit clash and then make a dash for a maiden title.

A squad that is already brimming with confidence was shored up further when their overseas quartet of Marcus Stoinis, Josh Inglis, Aaron Hardie and Kyle Jamieson joined their extremely talented Indian teammates in the Pink City three days ago.

All four will be available for selection as PBKS look to book a top-two finish

with a win over their beleaguered opponents who were knocked out of the play-offs reckoning after a big defeat to Mumbai Indians on Wednesday.

These foreign players left the team after the BCCI had to suspend the tournament for a week due to the military conflict between India and Pakistan that led to the abandonment of the match between these two teams midway through the first innings in Dharamsala on May 8. The match was called off after

10.1 overs of play after a blackout in the picturesque hill town.

The PBKS think tank did well to promptly bring back their overseas contingent after the tournament's resumption, and the squad now resembles a band of

men determined to make up for the years of disappointment the franchise faced in the widely watched event.

PBKS skipper Shreyas Iyer, who has recently made history by becoming the

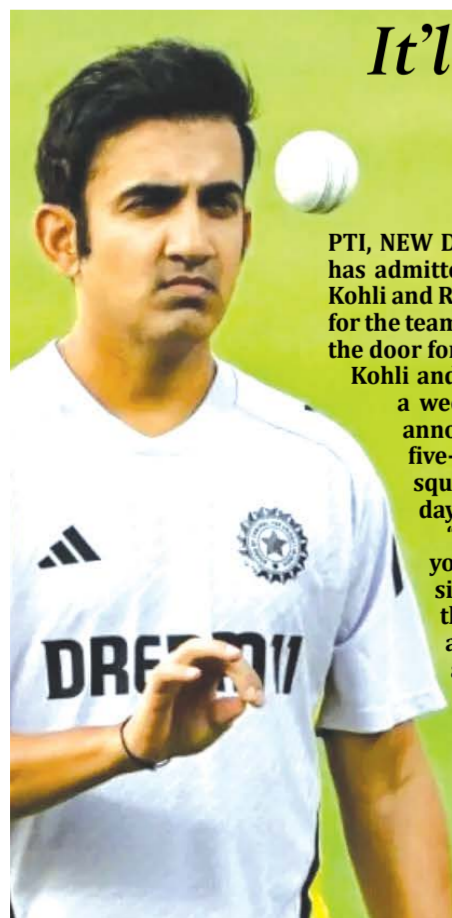
first captain to lead three franchises to IPL play-offs, has been the key to their success and for the side to go all the way, the stylish batter will need to continue in similar vein in the remaining matches.

Thanks to the performance of players such as Prabhsimran Singh (458 runs), Priyansh Arya (356 runs), Arshdeep Singh (11 wickets) and Yuzvendra Chahal (13 wickets), PBKS have emerged as the most consistent side this season, accumulating 17 points

from 12 matches to secure a playoff berth with two games to spare.

As far as Delhi Capitals are concerned, they have had their chances this season but the lack of big runs in the powerplay consistently and the absence of lead pacer Mitchell Starc towards the end has had an adverse impact on their prospects.

They will look to end to end their disappointing campaign on a high note, but up against an in-form opponents like PBKS, it is easier said than done.



## It'll be tough without RoKo but door open for others to step up and take responsibility: Gambhir

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** India head coach Gautam Gambhir has admitted that dealing with the absence of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be a significant challenge for the team but their Test retirement has also opened the door for others to step up and take responsibility.

Kohli and Rohit bid farewell to Test cricket within a week of each other earlier this month. The announcements came ahead of the marquee five-match series in England next month, the squad for which will be announced on Saturday in Mumbai.

"I think, when you start the game and when you want to finish, it's a very individual decision. No one has the right. Be it the coach, the selector, be it anyone in this country has any right to tell someone when to retire and when not to retire. So it comes from within," Gambhir told CNN-News18.

With their exit, India will not only need a new Test captain but will also be without two of its most seasoned players, a leadership and experience void, Gambhir admits, won't be easy to fill. "And yes, we've got to be without two senior players to really experience players.

And sometimes I believe that it's the opportunity for some other people to put their hand up and say, 'Okay, I am ready for it.' He drew a parallel with India's Champions Trophy triumph, which came despite the absence of pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah.

"So yes, it will be tough, but then there'll be people putting their hand up for sure because this question was asked to me before. Champions Trophy as well."

"When Jasprit Bumrah wasn't there and I said exactly the same thing, someone missing out might give another person an opportunity to do something special for the country, hopefully, there'll be other guys waiting for that opportunity," he said.

While Kohli and Rohit have bid adieu to the Test and T20 format, they will still be available for India in the 50-over game. Asked if the two can make the team for the 2027 ODI World Cup, Gambhir said "Look, it's still a long way away. We still have a T20 World Cup before that, and that is again a huge tournament that is going to happen in India, which is in February-March," he pointed out. "So the entire focus at the moment, after England, will be on the T20 World Cup, and November-December 2027 is still two-and-a-half years away. And I've always said one thing -- if you keep performing, age is just a number," he added.

## England set for big win

**AP, NOTTINGHAM (England):** England ousted Zimbabwe cricketers at a rate on Friday that suggested their four-day Test will be over with a day to spare at Trent Bridge.

Despite an acclaimed fightback by Zimbabwe for much of the second day, the visitor was forced to follow on and was 30-2 at stumps, still 270 runs away from making England bat again.

A magnificent maiden test century by opener Brian Bennett kept Zimbabwe's spirit aflame, but his exit for 139 after tea sparked a collapse of six wickets for 26 runs, including Bennett in the second innings for 1. Rain won't appear to save Zimbabwe on Saturday, when clouds will return, giving England's battery ideal conditions to wrap up a big win in the first test matchup between the teams in 22 years.

## Real Madrid makes Ancelotti's departure official, calling the coach a 'true legend'

**MADRID:** Real Madrid made it official on Friday that Carlo Ancelotti is leaving the club after the end of the Spanish league this weekend. Ancelotti had already been announced as the next Brazil coach but the Spanish club had yet to make any announcement about his departure. Ancelotti had another year left on his contract. "Real Madrid and Carlo Ancelotti have reached an agreement to bring an end to his time as Real Madrid coach," the club said in a statement. "Our club wishes to express its gratitude and appreciation for a man who is a true legend of both Real Madrid and world football." Madrid will pay tribute to Ancelotti on Saturday during the team's final match of the league season against Real Sociedad in the Spanish league at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. Also bidding farewell on Saturday will be veteran midfielder Luka Modric.

## Sudharsan currently focussed on IPL, not on England tour

**AHMEDABAD:** Gujarat Titans opener Sai Sudharsan is thrilled about his selection for the upcoming India A tour of England but for now his sights are firmly set on guiding the former champions to Qualifier 1 and final of IPL 2025. The 23-year-old, who has the experience of representing Surrey and scoring a century for the English county side, has been named in the India A squad and is also set to become the rookie face in the Test squad. "Mentally, we will have to be switched on for the IPL first. Once that story is over, then we can probably think about the India 'A' story. But definitely happy for that opportunity, and I think I would have a great time there," Sudharsan told reporters.