

# Australia face SA in World Test C'ship final today

Labuschagne to partner with Khawaja as Australia's openers

PTI, LONDON: Marnus Labuschagne has moved one place up the batting order to open with Usman Khawaja for Australia in the World Test Championship final against South Africa at Lord's from Wednesday.

Labuschagne's place in the team was in doubt after a lean 2023-25 WTC cycle — average 28.33 runs — but he was given another shot on Tuesday by Australia's failure to find a permanent replacement at opener for David Warner, who retired from tests in January 2024. Labuschagne will open in a test for only the second time in nine years.

"It's one spot up really. It's not too different to batting three," captain Pat Cummins said. "Marnus has done well here at Lord's (average 45.33) and in England in general (average 39.36).

"Opening the batting can be tough, but it can also be sometimes the best time to bat, before the Dukes ball actually starts swinging. There's an opportunity to score there, so just keeping that ball in tow I think is going to mean something."

The 19-year-old specialist opener Sam Konstas was left out and Travis Head, preferred in Sri Lanka in February, will drop back to No. 5 in the order. Konstas was disappointed, Cummins said. "Realistically, he's really young, he's got a long career ahead of him," he added.

Fit-again Josh Hazlewood was picked ahead of the unlucky Scott Boland in the pace attack. Boland replaced an injured Hazlewood for the 2023 final and



South Africa's David Bedingham (left) and head coach Shukri Conrad inspect the pitch at a nets session at the Lord's, London, on Tuesday

## SQUAD

**South Africa:** Aiden Markram, Ryan Rickelton, Wiaan Mulder, Temba Bavuma (captain), Tristan Stubbs, David Bedingham, Kyle Verryne, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi  
**Australia:** Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Cameron Green, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Beau Webster, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins (captain), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood

started as Australia beat India by 209 runs at the Oval.

Nine of that 11 will play consecutive WTC finals.

Cameron Green will bat at No. 3 in his first test since lower spine surgery in October sidelined him for six months, and at No. 6 the two-meter-tall allrounder Beau Webster, who debuted in January against India.

South Africa gave Lungi Ngidi's experience the edge over Dane Paterson as the third seamer. Ngidi hasn't

played a test since August but 19 tests and 55 wickets, including Joe Root's at Lord's in 2022, put him in the pace attack with Kagiso Rabada and Marco Jansen.

Paterson, more deceptive than fast, earned five-fors in his last two tests against Sri Lanka and Pakistan in December and played at Lord's three times in the last two months for Middlesex in the English County Championship second division

but that wasn't enough.

"Probably one of the tougher decisions that has been made. We see what Dane Paterson did for us to the end of last season," captain Temba Bavuma said.

"But it was more from a tactical point of view. Probably a little bit more pace from Lungi, guess he's a bit taller as well (1.93 meters to 1.75). Lungi also has a better record, not taking away anything from Patto. But I think he (Ngidi) will complement that bowling attack a little more. We have a guy like (Wiaan) Mulder, who can give us something similar like Patto."

Mulder was chosen to bat at No. 3 ahead of Tony de Zorzi, who has more runs but hasn't bowled in a test. Mulder's handy medium pace has taken 30 wickets in 18 matches.

## Winning title will be important step to current side becoming one of the great Australian teams: Lyon

PTI, LONDON: Winning the ICC World Test Championship title for the second consecutive time here will be an important step in establishing the current side as one of the greatest Australian teams of all times, feels star off-spinner Nathan Lyon.

The 37-year-old Nathan Lyon is part of Andrew McDonald's squad that will take on South Africa at Lord's in the final of the ICC World Test Championship 2023-25 cycle.

Australia will be looking to de-

pend the title they clinched in 2023 with a 209-run victory over India at The Oval, and Lyon is keen to build on the progress made since that triumph.

"It is important that we look at this week as a celebration piece. We've done incredibly well over the last couple of years, at home and away, and that is something that as a team, we should be really proud of," he was quoted as saying by the ICC.

"In my eyes, we're on a journey to

becoming a great Australian team. We're not there yet, I'm well aware of that, but that's our goal too.

"This game is another step up that ladder," said the spin ace who took the match-winning wicket of Mohammed Siraj in Australia's win against India in 2023.

Australia finished second in the league table during the 2023-25 WTC cycle, behind South Africa, having claimed 67.54 per cent of the points on offer to them.

# Windies star batter Pooran retires at 29

The swashbuckling southpaw finished as West Indies' most capped T20I player with 106 matches

PTI, PORT OF SPAIN: Star West Indies batter Nicholas Pooran on Tuesday stunningly announced his retirement from international cricket at the age of 29 without specifying any reasons but insisted that "much thought and reflection" had gone into taking the call.

His decision came days after he opted out of selection for the T20I series against England.

The swashbuckling left-handed batter finished as West Indies' most capped T20I player with 106 matches and also its highest run-getter, with a tally of 2275 at an average of 26.14 and strike rate of 136.39. In 61 ODI appearances, he scored 1983 runs at an average of 39.66 and strike rate of 99.15.

"After much thought and reflection, I've decided to announce my retirement from international cricket," Pooran, a former West Indies white-ball captain, wrote on his social media pages.

"This game we love has given and will continue to give so much - joy, purpose, unforgettable memories, and a chance to represent the people of the West Indies," said the Trinidadian who made his international debut in 2016 in a T20 International match.

He never played Test cricket for his country.

"Wearing that maroon, standing for the anthem, and giving everything I had each time I stepped on the field... it's hard to put into words what that truly means to me. To have led the team as captain is a privilege I will always hold close to my heart," he said.

Pooran had recently opted out of selection for West Indies' T20I series against England after playing the full Indian Premier League (IPL) season for Lucknow Super Giants (LSG).

He hasn't featured in ODIs since West Indies' exit in the 2023 World Cup Qualifiers. His last match for West Indies was against Bangladesh at Kingstown in December 2024.

"To the fans - thank you for your unwavering love. You lifted me in the tough moments and celebrated the good ones with unmatched passion. To my family, friends and teammates - thank you for walking the journey with me. Your belief and

support carried me through it all," he wrote.

"Though this international chapter of my career closes, my love for West Indies Cricket will never fade. I wish the team and the region nothing but success and strength for the road ahead."

A regular in the franchise circuit, Pooran is expected to feature in the Major League Cricket (MLC) and The Hundred this summer. Apart from the Caribbean Premier League and the IPL, he is also a regular in the ILT20 in the UAE.

He had a magnificent season in 2024, hitting the most sixes in a calendar year (170) before finishing IPL 2025 with 524 runs at a strike rate of 196.25 with five

half-centuries.

He was expected to be a key part of West Indies' plans for the T20 World Cup early next year, before Tuesday's shock announcement.

Cricket West Indies lauded Pooran for his outstanding contribution to Caribbean cricket.

"Nicholas officially informed the leadership of his decision to retire from international cricket, bringing to a close a significant chapter in his career," it said.

"A world-class player and a game changer, Nicholas leaves the game as the most capped West Indian... His performances on the field and influence within the team have made a lasting impact on West Indies cricket."

"We salute his achievements and thank him for the moments he has given fans across the region and beyond. We wish him all the very best in the next phase of his journey."

"After much thought and reflection, I've decided to announce my retirement from international cricket. This game we love has given and will continue to give so much - joy, purpose, unforgettable memories and a chance to represent the people of the West Indies. To the fans - thank you for your unwavering love. You lifted me in the tough moments and celebrated the good ones with unmatched passion. To my family, friends and teammates - thank you for walking the journey with me. Your belief and support carried me through it all

— Nicholas Pooran





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