

# Bumrah uncertain, two spinners in mix: India face selection conundrum in bid for comeback

England seem to have added a method to their madness with a refined 'Bazball' approach that gives due respect to the conditions and the bowler

**PTI, BIRMINGHAM:** India will need to shed their conservative selection approach and give themselves the best chance to take 20 wickets on what is expected to be another batting surface in the second Test against England, beginning, here, on Wednesday.

By the team management's own admission, India missed a specialist bowler at Leeds, Kuldeep Yadav to be specific, as England comfortably chased down a record 371 on day five of a game that the visitors should have won.

In the words of assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate, India are grappling to find a team combination that doesn't compromise on batting depth and yet has the bowlers to take 20 wickets.

## 2ND TEST: ENGLAND VS INDIA

"In terms of managing the strategy there, we're looking at each bowler individually, feeling what we feel they can get wickets-wise. And then it's just trying to balance up and trying to calculate as best you can what the best chance of getting into the Test match."

"But you need 20 wickets. So the attacking party is obviously finding someone who can get wickets as well. And we are grappling with that. We don't stop talking about that. We're trying to figure it out," Doeschate admitted.

The weather has been rather hot in Birmingham and the surface, bound by a decent covering of grass, is dry underneath.

On this very ground three years ago, England had gunned down a daunting 378 with ridiculous ease to draw the series. Of late,



From left, England Head Coach Brendon McCullum, Captain Ben Stokes, Coach Tim Southee and Ollie Pope during a nets session at Edgbaston, Birmingham, England, on Tuesday

the same 22 yards have offered plenty of runs to the batters in county cricket.

The spinners will eventually come into the game and India need to decide whether they want someone like Washington Sundar who can assist Ravindra Jadeja or get Kuldeep, who is a much better wicket-taking option. But what is confirmed is that India will go in with two spinners.

Shardul Thakur was the fast bowling all-rounder at Leeds but there is a strong possibility that batting all-rounder Nitish Reddy starts on Wednesday.

Thakur did not have the best of outings but dropping him after one opportunity would be borderline harsh on him. The question mark ahead of the game is over Jasprit Bumrah's availability.

Skipper Shubman Gill said a decision on his lead pacer will be taken only after taking a look at the pitch. However, Gill said Bumrah is

**SQUADS**  
**England:** Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ben Stokes (captain), Jamie Smith (WK), Chris Woakes, Brydon Carse, Josh Tongue, Shoaib Bashir  
**India:** Shubman Gill (captain), Rishabh Pant (VC & WK), Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Sai Sudharsan, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Karun Nair, Nitish Reddy, Ravindra Jadeja, Dhruv Jurel (WK), Washington Sundar, Shardul Thakur, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd. Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Akash Deep, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav

available for selection.

"Bumrah is definitely available. We are just going to see how to manage his workload in the upcoming Test matches. We are trying to find the right combination where we can take 20 wickets and score runs as well on these kind of wickets. We just thought we are going to have a final look once we come to the ground and see what kind of combination that we want to go with tomorrow," said Gill in the pre-match press conference.

If Bumrah indeed doesn't play the second of his decid-

ed quota of three Tests, the pace line-up is expected to be Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep and Prasidh Krishna.

With Bumrah hard to handle at the other end, the other pacers did not have the required consistency in their lengths to test England batters.

They would be wiser after that experience and if Bumrah doesn't play, will have a lot to prove.

Jadeja, who could not get much out of a turning pitch on day five at Headingley, would be eager to make an impact too. India's catching would have to be a lot better after

## Stokes relishing Pant battle

**AFP, BIRMINGHAM:** England captain Ben Stokes said Tuesday he "absolutely loves" watching Rishabh Pant play cricket even when he's on the receiving end of the India star's outrageous stroke-play.

Pant became only the second wicketkeeper in Test history to score hundreds in both innings of a match against England at Headingley, although his heroics were unable to prevent a five-wicket defeat last week that left the hosts 1-0 up in a five-match contest.

Pant went on to produce an array of extraordinary strokes, including over the shoulder ramp shots off fast bowlers.

Stokes, well capable of aggressive batting himself,

expects more fireworks from Pant, even if he hopes to limit the Indian's runs after scores of 134 and 118.

"Even though he's my opposition, I absolutely love watching Rishabh play cricket," said Stokes during a press conference on the eve of the second Test at Edgbaston starting Wednesday.

"Credit to him, two hundreds in the game, (but) we know we're going to get our chances with the way Rishabh plays. On a different day, it could have looked a little bit different if one of those had gone straight to hand."

"He's a very dangerous player. We know what he brings to the Indian team, but I really enjoy watching Rishabh play cricket."

the horror show at Leeds, costing Yashasvi Jaiswal his spot in the slip cordon.

The batting department has a settled look though India would be desperate to add runs late in the innings after two lower-order collapses that cost them dearly.

The likes of K L Rahul, Jaiswal, Rishabh Pant and captain Shubman Gill would be aiming to build on the gains made in the series opener. Rookie Sai Sudharsan and comeback man Karun Nair are certain to get another opportunity after an underwhelming start to the series.

England, on the other hand, seem to have added a method to their madness with a refined 'Bazball' approach that gives due respect to the conditions and the bowler.

Expected to make a comeback, Jofra Archer has pulled out of the match due to a family emergency but the Chris Woakes-led pace attack would be high on confidence, having cleaned up India's tail twice and allowing the hosts to make a comeback in the contest.

Being a home hero, Woakes would be expected to provide the breakthroughs with the new ball after low returns in Leeds. Josh Tongue would be sniffing blood against India's fragile lower-order.

Brydon Carse also improved as the game progressed while skipper Ben Stokes, by far, got the most out of the conditions.

Sporting wickets have also aided England's aggressive style of batting and that trend is set to continue.

# Krejciakova battles it out in opener, Sinner cruises

AFP PICS



Czech Republic's Barbora Krejciakova celebrates after winning against Philippines' Alexandra Eala in the women's singles first round tennis match on the second day of 2025 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon, London. (Right) Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates after winning against Italy's Luca Nardi during their men's singles first round match



**AFP, LONDON:** Defending champion Barbora Krejciakova battled back from a set down to win her Wimbledon opener on Tuesday as men's top seed Jannik Sinner barely broke sweat in the searing London heat.

Seven-time Novak Djokovic prepared to launch his bid for a record 25th Grand Slam crown on the second day of action at the All England Club. Krejciakova came to Wimbledon with just six matches under her belt this year and was in grave danger after being outplayed by Philippines star Alexandra Eala in the first set.

But the Czech regrouped, cut her error count drastically and lost just three more games as she completed a 3-6, 6-2, 6-1 win.

Two-time Grand Slam champion Krejciakova has endured a difficult time since defeating Italy's Jasmine Paolini in the final last

year. The 29-year-old was out of action this season until May after suffering a back injury and lost in the second round of the recent French Open.

Krejciakova pulled out of last week's Eastbourne Open before the quarter-finals with a thigh problem. World number one Sinner brushed aside fellow Italian Luca Nardi on Court One with the minimum of fuss. Unfazed by the scorching conditions, the three-time Grand Slam champion sealed a 6-4, 6-3, 6-0 win in just one hour and 48 minutes.

Sinner has won three of the past six majors but the 23-year-old blew a two-set lead and wasted three match points against Carlos Alcaraz at last month's French Open final.

Djokovic starts his Wim-

bledon campaign against France's Alexandre Muller, ranked 41st in the world.

The sixth-seeded Serb, who has been in every Wimbledon final since 2018, has only played Muller once, dropping just five games during his march to the 2023 US Open title. But at 38 he knows time is running out as Alcaraz and Sinner establish a stranglehold at the top of the men's game.

Djokovic has been tied with long-retired Margaret Court on 24 Grand Slam singles titles since 2023 but he believes his most realistic hope of a historic 25th win lies at the All England Club.

The veteran, who has lost the past two Wimbledon finals to Alcaraz, has the added incentive of pulling level with the retired Roger Federer, who won a record

eight men's titles at the All England Club. In early action on Tuesday, US third seed Jessica Pegula suffered a shock defeat against Italy's Elisabetta Cocciaretto, losing 6-2, 6-3 in just 58 minutes.

Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen admitted she was not focused after she slipped to a 7-5, 4-6, 6-1 defeat against world number 81 Katerina Siniakova.

Five-time major winner Iga Swiatek swatted aside Russia's Polina Kudermeto-va 7-5, 6-1 and second seed Coco Gauff, fresh from her French Open triumph, prepared to take on Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska.

Men's fifth seed Taylor Fritz completed a gruelling five-set win against France's Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard after losing the first two sets on tie-breaks.

The match was suspended late Monday due to curfew rules.

## Man City, Inter crash out of last 16

**AFP, ORLANDO:** Manchester City crashed out of the Club World Cup with a 4-3 defeat in extra-time by Saudi Arabian side Al Hilal on Monday in the last 16, hours after Inter Milan were eliminated by Fluminense on a day of shock results.

Champions League runners-up Inter were dumped out 2-0 by the Brazilian side in Charlotte and Pep Guardiola's City joined them after Marcos Leonardo's brace left the Premier League giants on the wrong end of a seven-goal thriller.

### CLUB WORLD CUP

Al Hilal, who recorded one of the greatest results in Middle Eastern football history, will face Fluminense in Orlando on Friday in the quarter-finals.

City were the only side to win all three group matches, including a thrashing of Juventus, but came undone in Florida against an Al Hilal side filled with players who once starred for European teams.

Guardiola's team were the defending champions, having won the trophy in 2024 in its previous format, but were matched blow-for-blow by Al Hilal at the Camping World Stadium.

Former Inter coach

Simone Inzaghi's side showed their quality in the group stage as they held Spanish giants Real Madrid to a draw, but few expected they could derail City's charge towards the trophy.

Bernardo Silva turned home from close range to put City ahead after nine minutes on a muggy night on the east coast, but Leonardo levelled early in the second half. Former Barcelona winger Malcom fired the Saudi side ahead after Joao Cancelo threaded him through on goal. Erling Haaland levelled for City and had an effort cleared off the line late on before the game went to extra-time.

Koulibaly nodded home from a corner after 94 minutes but Phil Foden finished well to level 10 minutes later. The match was decided by Leonardo reacting well to prod home when Ederson saved Sergej Milinkovic-Savic's header after 112 minutes, with City unable to battle back a third time.

### RESULTS

**Inter Milan 0 Fluminense 2** (Cano 3, Hercules 90+3), **Manchester City 3** (Silva 9, Haaland 55, Foden 104) **Al Hilal 4** (Leonardo 46, 113, Malcom 52, Koulibaly 94) - after extra time



Al Hilal's Senegalese defender #03 Kalidou Koulibaly (centre) celebrates with teammates Saudi defender #78 Ali Lajami and Serbian midfielder #22 Sergej Milinkovic-Savic after scoring his team's third goal during the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 round of 16 football match between England's Manchester City and Saudi's Al-Hilal at the Camping World stadium in Orlando

## shorttakes

### Divyanshi wins gold at Asian Youth Table Tennis Championships

**TASHKENT (Uzbekistan):** Young Divyanshi Bhowmick made history by becoming the first Indian in 36 years to win the U-15 girls' singles title at the Asian Youth Table Tennis Championships here. The 14-year-old defeated China's Zhu Qihui 4-2 in a high-pressure final, capping a sensational run that included victories over three Chinese players — an unprecedented feat in Indian youth table tennis. With this win, Divyanshi, who was seeded second, also sealed a berth in the World Youth Championships. India wrapped up its campaign in Tashkent with one gold, one silver, and two bronze medals.

### Sharma enter main draw at Canada Open

**CALGARY:** Indian shuttler Ira Sharma entered the women's singles main draw but it was curtains for Chirag Sen in men's singles qualifiers at the USD 240,000 Canada Open Super 300 tournament, here, on Tuesday. Sharma beat Miranda Wilson of Germany 21-9 21-13 in the women's singles qualifiers at the Markham Pan Am Centre here. She will now face Bulgaria's Kaloyana Nalbantova in the main draw. In women's singles main draw, Shriyanshi Valishetty and Tanya Hemanth will represent the country. Star shuttler Kidambi Srikanth, US Open winner Ayush Shetty, Priyanshu Rajawat and S Sankar Subramanian are in fray in men's singles main draw.

### Sakshi, Jaismine, Lakshya Chahar advance at World Boxing Cup

**ASTANA:** Indian pugilists Sakshi, Lakshya Chahar, and Jaismine advanced to the quarterfinals of the World Boxing Cup after registering preliminary victories at the Beeline Arena, here, on Tuesday. In the women's 54kg category, Sakshi put on a composed display to defeat England's Charley Davison with a unanimous 5:0 decision in her pre-quarterfinal bout. Sakshi, Lakshya, and Jaismine now join Sachin Siwach, Hitesh Gulia, Muskan, Minakshi, and Sanju in the next round, underlining India's strong start to the tournament in Astana.

### Indian cricketers asked to stay indoors after suspicious packet found in Birmingham

**BIRMINGHAM:** The Indian cricket team, staying in the heart of Birmingham, was asked to stay indoors after a suspicious package was found at the nearby Centenary Square. A BCCI source confirmed to PTI that players were asked not to venture out following a social media post from the Birmingham City Centre Police. Usually the Indian cricketers explore the areas close to the team hotel and ahead of the second Test, they were frequenting the bustling Broad Street. A total of eight players including captain Shubman Gill turned up for training at Edgbaston while the other 10 members had an off day. "We've currently got a cordon in place around Centenary Square, Birmingham city centre, while we investigate a suspicious package," read a post from Birmingham City Centre Police on X.

### Sri Lanka eye top-three spot in ODI rankings

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka are on a redemption trail in ODI cricket after a disastrous World Cup and will look to tighten the screws further when they host Bangladesh in a three-match series starting Wednesday. After finishing ninth in the 2023 World Cup and missing out on a Champions Trophy berth, the islanders have staged a commendable turnaround, notching up series wins against heavyweights India and Australia. That purple patch has propelled them to fourth in the ICC ODI rankings, but skipper Charith Asalanka insists they are not resting on their laurels. "We are happy with our progress, but we're not reading too much into rankings just yet," Asalanka told reporters on the eve of the series opener at the R. Premadasa Stadium. "Our goal is to break into the top three. There's still plenty of room for improvement, and this series is another step towards that." The second ODI will also take place in Colombo on Saturday, before the action shifts to the hill capital of Kandy for the final game at Pallekelle on Tuesday. The tour will conclude with a three-match T20I series.

### Maharaj hails young talent after big South African win

**BULAWAYO:** South African captain Keshav Maharaj said his team's 328-win in the first Test against Zimbabwe on Tuesday showed the amount of talent there was in the South African cricket system. Fast bowler Corbin Bosch took five for 43 as South Africa wrapped up the win on the fourth afternoon at Queens Sports Club, bowling out Zimbabwe for 208 after setting them 537 to win. Playing in his second Test, Bosch became the fourth South African to score a century and take five wickets in an innings in a Test. Bosch was one of seven changes from the team that won the World Test Championship final against Australia at Lord's in London last month. "We've been a team that has just won something major and we had a lot of youngsters coming in," said Maharaj. Brief scores: South Africa 418-9 declared and 369. Zimbabwe 251 and 208 (C. Ervine 49, W. Masakadza 57; C. Yusuf 3-22, C. Bosch 5-43).

### Flintoff rules himself out of top England coaching job

**LONDON:** Andrew Flintoff said he has no desire to succeed Brendon McCullum as England head coach despite cutting his teeth with the second-string England Lions. The former England captain has returned to cricket, coaching the Lions as well as the Northern Superchargers in The Hundred, after a car crash while filming for the BBC Top Gear television programme that left him with severe facial and leg injuries. Flintoff has rejected the suggestion, instead highlighting his admiration for McCullum. Asked about the prospect of taking over from McCullum, 2005 Ashes hero Flintoff told the Stick to Cricket podcast: "It's not something I'm looking at, Baz McCullum is incredible — the best England coach."

### Arsenal signs former Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa

**LONDON:** Arsenal completed the signing of Kepa Arrizabalaga as a free agent on Tuesday after the goalkeeper's contract at Chelsea expired. Kepa was a \$92.6 million world record signing for a goalkeeper when joining Chelsea from Athletic Bilbao in 2018 and went on to win the Champions League, Europa League and Club World Cup during his seven years at the club. "He brings a wealth of experience, which his teammates will benefit from, and he has a real hunger to win," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "Kepa works hard and will elevate our levels."

### Saudi Arabia to host Italian Super Cup

**ROME:** Next season's Italian Super Cup will be played for the fourth time in Saudi Arabia but in December instead of January, the president of the Italian League announced on Tuesday. "The dates for the Super Cup are December 18 and 19 for the semi-finals, and the 22 for the final," said Lega Serie A boss Ezio Simonelli after the governing body's general meeting. "We don't yet know where these matches will be played, either in Riyadh or Jeddah. The choice will be made by the Saudis. I would be more in favour of Jeddah, but we don't have the option to choose."