

Fernandes sends Manchester Utd into Europa League quarters, Spurs advance

Rangers down angry Mourinho's Fenerbahce to reach last eight

AFP, PARIS: Bruno Fernandes netted a hat-trick as Manchester United beat Real Sociedad 4-1 in their Europa League last-16 second leg on Thursday, while Tottenham bounced back to edge AZ Alkmaar 3-2 on aggregate.

Rangers knocked out Jose Mourinho's Fenerbahce 3-2 on penalties as Chelsea saw out a 1-0 home win against Copenhagen to ensure their place in the last eight of the Europa Conference League.

Two spot-kicks and a late arrowed finish from Fernandes sent Manchester United into the quarter-finals by a 5-2 aggregate margin against 10-man Sociedad.

A 10th-minute penalty gave the visitors the lead at Old Trafford before Fernandes converted from 12 yards in the 16th and 50th minutes.

Jon Aramburu saw red shortly after the hour and Man Utd took full advantage with Fernandes rifling in a third three minutes from time and Diogo Dalot rubber-stamping an emphatic victory in injury-time.

Amorim's side will meet Lyon in the next round.

Goals in either half from Wilsson Odobert and James Maddison in London earned Spurs a 3-1 win against AZ Alkmaar.

Odobert powered home following sloppy AZ defending to get Spurs level on aggregate in the 26th minute, after the first leg finished



Manchester United's Portuguese midfielder Bruno Fernandes (left) celebrates scoring the team's second goal from the penalty spot during the UEFA Europa League Last 16 Second Leg match against Real Sociedad at Old Trafford Stadium in Manchester, England

1-0 to the Dutch side.

Maddison put the hosts 2-0 up three minutes into the second period with an arrowed finish before Peer Koopmeiners responded after the hour to level the tie again.

Odobert grabbed his second and Spurs' third on the night in the 74th minute to set up a quarter-final meeting with Eintracht Frankfurt.

After losing the first leg in Istanbul 3-1, Fenerbahce fought back at Rangers to win 2-0. Polish winger Sebastian Szymanski pro-

duced two cute finishes in the 45th and 73rd minutes to force extra-time with the aggregate score locked at three-apiece. But three missed spot-kicks by the Turkish side handed Rangers a 3-2 win in the shoot-out and a last-eight clash with Athletic Bilbao.

Euro 2024 winner Nico Williams grabbed a vital brace as Athletic Bilbao overturned a one-goal first-leg deficit to progress 4-3 on aggregate against Roma, who lost centre-half Mats Hummels to an early red card.

But it was a better evening for fellow Italian capital club Lazio, who

progressed 3-2 on aggregate against Viktoria Plzen after a 1-1 draw in the Sta-

dio Olimpico. Mario Goetze netted a brace as Eintracht Frankfurt won 4-1 at home

EUROPA LEAGUE RESULTS

Last 16, second legs

Lazio 1 (Romagnoli 77) Viktoria Plzen 1 (Sulc 52). Lazio win 3-2 on aggregate. **Olympiakos 2 (Yaremchuk 53, 65) Bodo/Glimt 1 (Hogh 36).** Bodo/Glimt win 4-2 on aggregate. **Eintracht Frankfurt 4 (Bahoya 7, Goetze 25, 82, Ekitike 67) Ajax 1 (Taylor 78).** Eintracht Frankfurt win 6-2 on aggregate. **Athletic Bilbao 3 (Williams 45+3, 82, Berchiche 68) Roma 1 (Paredes 90+3-pen).** Athletic Bilbao win 4-3 on aggregate. **Tottenham 3 (Odobert 26, 74, Maddison 48) AZ Alkmaar 1 (Koopmeiners 63).** Tottenham win 3-2 on aggregate. **Manchester**

United 4 (Fernandes 16-pen, 50-pen, 87, Dalot 90+1) Real Sociedad 1 (Oyarzabal 10-pen). Manchester United win 5-2 on aggregate. **Lyon 4 (Mikautadze 14, 47, Nuamah 37, 88) FCSB 0.** Lyon win 7-1 on aggregate. **Rangers 0 Fenerbahce 2 (Szymanski 45, 73) aet.** 3-3 on aggregate; Rangers win 3-2 on penalties

QUARTER-FINAL LINE-UP

Tottenham vs Eintracht Frankfurt

Bodo/Glimt vs Lazio

Rangers vs Athletic Bilbao

Lyon vs Manchester United

Note: First legs to be played April 10; Second legs to be played April 17

Bumrah may miss initial IPL matches

Sanju set to get clearance, wait on for Mayank; Mumbai Indians will begin campaign against Chennai Super Kings on March 23 at Chennai

PTI, NEW DELHI: Jasprit Bumrah is likely to miss the initial rounds of the IPL 2025 matches for Mumbai Indians as the star pacer is still recovering from the lower back injury that rendered him out of action since January.

Bumrah suffered the injury during the second day of the fifth Test against Australia at Sydney and did not bowl in Australia's second innings where they chased 162 successfully to emerge a six-wicket winner.

Bumrah, who had taken 32 wickets from five matches in that series, has been sidelined ever since, and has also missed India's victorious Champions Trophy campaign. He was named in India's provisional squad for the ICC showpiece, but could not attain the optimum fitness level in time, as mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy was drafted into the side.

"His recuperation is going well. But at this stage it is better to give him some more time to return to peak fitness, considering India's Test series against England in June," a source close to the development told PTI. The IPL 2025 is scheduled to end on May 25.

It has also been learned that the physios at the BCCI Centre of Excellence has not set a specific time frame



for him to return to action, even though Bumrah has been steadily increasing his workload at nets and match simulations.

Earlier, chief selector Ajit Agarkar said that Bumrah had been advised five weeks of complete "off-loading" until the last week of January to reduce the stress on his injured back.

It was a mandatory step because Bumrah had suffered a similar injury in 2023, and had undergone surgery in March that year, which cost him considerable match time.

Meanwhile, Sanju Samson has completed his re-

covery process after undergoing a surgery on his right index finger recently.

The Rajasthan Royals skipper had suffered the injury during the home T20I series against England.

While the Centre of Excellence physios have been satisfied with Samson's ability to bat without any struggle, they would want to take a closer look at his comfort levels while wicketkeeping. If Samson was not allowed to keep wickets then Dhruv Jurel can take up that role during the IPL.

Express pacer Mayank Yadav's last competitive match was for Madhya

Pradesh against Kerala in January, where he felt discomfort on his back.

He has been recovering at the NCA ever since along with fellow Lucknow Super Giants pacers Avesh Khan and Mohsin Khan.

The possible unavailability of Bumrah is a huge blow to Mumbai Indians in their quest to regain the IPL title after finishing 10th on the points table last year.

In Bumrah's absence the Hardik Pandya-led side will have to rely massively on pacers Trent Boult, Corbin Bosch and Deepak Chahar to deliver till he returns.

Hardik will also have to shoulder more bowling responsibilities in the absence of the 30-year-old.

The Mumbai outfit will begin their campaign against Chennai Super Kings on March 23 at Chennai before travelling to Ahmedabad to face Gujarat Titans on March 29.

Then the five-time champions will return home for the match against Kolkata Knight Riders on March 31.

They will take on Lucknow Super Giants on April 4 and Royal Challengers Bengaluru on April 7, and as things stand at present, Bumrah is unlikely to feature in any of them though he might link up with the squad in the first week of April.

Axar named Delhi Capitals captain

PTI, NEW DELHI: India all-rounder Axar Patel was on Friday appointed captain of Delhi Capitals for upcoming IPL on expected lines pipping another senior player KL Rahul, who has joined the team this season.

Currently team's longest serving player, having played six seasons for Delhi since 2019, the 31-year-old was Delhi Capitals' top retention for Rs 16.50 crore ahead of the mega auction last November. In 82 games for Delhi, he has scored 967 runs and picked up 62 wickets at a fantastic economy rate of shade over 7.

While his IPL captaincy experience is limited, he led Gujarat in domestic cricket including the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy in 2024-25.

He also served as India's T20I vice-captain earlier this year and in their recent triumph in Champions Trophy Axar played a key role, taking five wickets at an economy of 4.35. He also played a key role at No 5 and scored 109 runs at 27.25.

"It is my absolute honour to captain the Delhi Capitals, and I'm deeply grateful to our owners and support staff for placing their faith in me," stated Axar in a media release. Axar will replace Rish-



abh Pant at the helm with the flamboyant keeper-batter exiting the franchise before the mega auction, and will now lead Lucknow Super Giants.

The team has seasoned players like Rahul, Kuldeep Yadav, Faf du Plessis, and Mitchell Starc in the leadership group, and it remains to be seen how Axar brings out the best in them to drive Delhi Capitals forward.

"I've grown as a cricketer and a human being during my time here at the Capitals, and I feel ready and confident to lead this side going forward."

The support staff is headed by Kevin Pietersen along with head coach Hemang Badani and others.

sportspopup

Lakshya falls to Li Shi Feng in All England quarter-finals

BIRMINGHAM: India's Lakshya Sen bowed out of the All England Badminton Championships and so did the women's doubles pair of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand after losing their respective quarterfinal matches, here, on Friday. Sen exited after a straight-game loss to Chinese world No. 6 Li Shi Feng in the men's singles quarterfinal. The 2022 finalist, who had narrowly lost a Paris Olympic medal last year, was outplayed 10-21, 16-21 in a 45-minute contest. Then, the duo of Treasa and Gayatri went down to Chinese second seeds Liu Shengshu and Tan Ning 14-21 10-21 in a match lasting 46 minutes. Treasa and Gayatri failed to recreate their outstanding performance in their round-of-16 victory against South Korea's Kim Hye Jeong and Kong Hee Yong. With this result, India's challenge at the prestigious tournament has also come to an end. Feng advanced to the semi-finals, where he will face the winner of the match between top seed Shi Yu Qi and Singapore's Loh Kean Yew.

Samson reflects on David's influence on his captaincy

JAIPUR: Sanju Samson, who will be leading Rajasthan Royals for a fifth successive year, credits Rahul Dravid's leadership as a major influence on his own approach. Dravid's return to Rajasthan Royals as head coach in 2025, after a successful tenure with the Indian team that culminated in their T20 World Cup triumph, marked a full-circle moment for Samson. Dravid's association with the Royals spans back to 2012-13, when he captained the side, a period during which the Indian great picked Samson during a trial. Dravid later became the team director and mentor in 2014-15. Samson said his journey from a young talent to the captain of the Royals has been shaped by Dravid's mentorship. "It's quite funny how things work out. In my first season, Rahul sir was the one who spotted me during the trials," Samson told JioHotstar.

Pant is unique in way he scores runs: Denesh Ramdin

RAIPUR: Rishabh Pant is among the top keeper-batters in the world for the manner in which he scores runs, feels former West Indies skipper Denesh Ramdin, who is here to play the International Masters League T20 tournament. "Obviously, Rishabh Pant is one—he's unique in the way he bats and scores runs. There's a young guy from Australia, Josh Inglis—he did well in the Champions Trophy. There are many young keepers coming through," Ramdin was quoted as saying in a press release. The 40-year-old, who played 71 Tests, 139 ODIs and 74 T20Is, feels that role of keepers have evolved over the years since Adam Gilchrist came into prominence. "Back in the day, wicketkeepers were primarily just keepers, but now cricket has evolved. The role of the keeper-batsman has expanded, starting with players like Adam Gilchrist, who opened the batting and excelled. Others like Quinton de Kock, Brendon McCullum, and of course, the exceptional Mahendra Singh Dhoni, have been fantastic in shaping the modern wicketkeeper's role," Ramdin also shared his thoughts on how Sunil Narine might perform in the upcoming IPL season.

50 Pakistan cricketers find no takers in Hundred Draft

LONDON: Top Pakistan cricketers such as Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub and Shadab Khan found no bidders in the Hundred Draft where 50 players from the country had signed up. Pakistan were represented by 45 male cricketers and five female players in the draft. Naseem and Shadab were in the top category price bracket of GBP 120000 while Ayub placed himself in the GBP 78500 segment. Among the women players, Aliya Riaz, Fatima Sana, Yusra Amir, Iram Javed, and Jaweria Rauf did not find any takers. The Indian Premier League owners buying stakes in the Hundred teams could be cited as a reason behind this. Currently, four IPL franchises have stakes in the Hundred teams — Mumbai Indians in Oval Invincibles, Lucknow Super Giants in Manchester Originals, Sunrisers Hyderabad in Northern Superchargers and Delhi Capitals in Southern Brave.

Handbook of Cricket Psychology launched, a book deals with pressure points in sport

BENGALURU: Former first-class cricketer Krishnaraj Srinath on Friday slipped into the role of an author with the release of Handbook of Cricket Psychology, which he co-authored with psychologist MN Viswanath. The book is an attempt to delve deep into the ability of athletes to tackle pressure situations and emotional turmoil which in turn can enhance their performance. Former India skipper and coach Anil Kumble penned the foreword of the book. Srinath, who played for Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, appeared in 24 first-class matches and made 1169 runs at an average of 34.58 with three hundreds and five fifties. After his playing days, Srinath has dabbled with umpiring and coaching before entering the world of letters.

Liverpool's Alexander-Arnold to miss League Cup final in injury blow

LONDON: Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold will miss the League Cup final against Newcastle with an ankle injury that leaves the defender facing an extended spell on the sidelines. Alexander-Arnold was injured in the second half of Liverpool's Champions League last 16 penalty shoot-out defeat against Paris Saint-Germain at Anfield on Tuesday. The 26-year-old's absence is a huge blow to Liverpool boss Arne Slot, who is without a recognised right-back for Sunday's showdown with Newcastle at Wembley. Conor Bradley and Joe Gomez, the usual candidates to replace Alexander-Arnold, are both still recovering from injuries. "Trent is not available. He will not be there at the final," Slot told reporters on Friday. "He is still to be assessed for how long it will take but we do expect him back before the end of the season."

Invest in grassroots if you want to achieve big in 2036 Olympics: PR Sreejesh

BENGALURU: Double Olympic medallist PR Sreejesh on Friday stressed the need for grassroots investment and talent identification while outlining what India must do to build a stronger future at the sport's grandest stage. The 36-year-old Sreejesh retired after playing a pivotal role in India's second successive Olympic bronze medal at the Paris Games last summer, bringing to an end a glorious career. "Exposure is the key. Getting into the world level and performing from there is the dream," Sreejesh said during the RCB Innovation Lab Indian Sports Summit here. "What makes the Olympics unique is the mental pressure. Preparing athletes to be equipped to perform at that level is most important." He noted that young athletes today have many examples of Indian success on the global stage, which can help them believe in their potential. "When we started playing, we always heard about the history of the sport. Now, we can realistically show young kids that we can achieve at the global stage. When I work with U21 players at Hockey India, I want them to believe that they too can achieve success," he added.

MI start favourites to bag 2nd title, DC aim to break jinx

PTI, MUMBAI: Powered by the all-round brilliance of Nat Sciver-Brunt and Hayley Matthews, Mumbai Indians head into the Women's Premier League final as favorites to claim their second title, while Delhi Capitals hope to break their title jinx in what promises to be a thrilling showdown, here, on Saturday.

PREVIEW

Sciver-Brunt (493 runs, 9 wickets) and Matthews (17 wickets and 304 runs) currently top the batting and bowling charts respectively, making them crucial to MI's title charge against Meg

Lanning's formidable Delhi outfit. Lanning, who has retired from International level is one of the greatest captains in women's cricket, would be determined to add a WPL trophy to her decorated career and end DC's trophy drought -- both in the women's and men's IPL since 2008.

While DC secured a direct entry into the final due to a superior net run rate, MI's firepower with the bat gives them an edge on a batting belter that the Brabourne Stadium provides.

For DC, their chances would depend more on a very potent bowling attack with Southern

Stars spinner Jess Jonassen and seasoned India seamer Shikha Pandey, both of whom had 11

wickets each in the league stages at a decent economy rate.

In their last round robin en-

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE TEAMS

Mumbai Indians: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Akshita Maheshwari, Amandeep Kaur, Amanjot Kaur, Amelia Kerr, Chloe Tryon, Hayley Matthews, Jintamani Kalita, Keerthana Balakrishnan, Nadine de Klerk, Natalie Sciver-Brunt, Parunikha Sisodia, Sajeevan Sajana, Sanskriti Gupta, G Kamalini (wk), Yastika Bhatia (wk), Saika Ishaque and Shabnim Ismail
Delhi Capitals: Meg Lanning (c), Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Sneha Deepthi, Alice Capsey, Annabel Sutherland, Arundhati Reddy, Jess Jonassen, Marizanne Kapp, Minnu Mani, N Charani, Niki Prasad, Radha Yadav, Shikha Pandey, Nandini Kashyap (wk), Taniya Bhatia (wk), Sarah Bryce (wk) and Titas Sadhu

Match starts at 7.30 pm