

# India cruise past Wales 4-1, confirm Women's Hockey World Cup spot

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian women's hockey team delivered a commanding 4-1 victory over Wales in their Pool B clash at the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup Qualifiers 2026 in Hyderabad, confirming their place in the upcoming FIH Women's Hockey World Cup.

Star forward Navneet Kaur stole the spotlight with a brilliant hat-trick, while Sakshi Rana opened the scoring at the G. M. C. Balayogi Hockey Stadium on Wednesday evening. With the emphatic win, India not only finished strongly in the pool stage but also secured qualification for the global event set to be held next year in Belgium and the Netherlands.

India began the match with intensity, overwhelming Wales with aggressive pressing and quick attacking moves.

The breakthrough came in the 7th minute when Salima Tete surged down the right flank and set up Sakshi Rana, who unleashed a powerful reverse hit from the edge of the circle to give the hosts a 1-0 lead.

Wales attempted to respond midway through the second quarter but Indian goalkeeper Bichu Devi produced a crucial save to deny their first penalty corner opportunity. Just before halftime, Navneet Kaur doubled India's advantage. The forward converted a penalty corner with a precise low drag-flick in the 29th minute, sending India into the break with a comfortable 2-0 lead.



Navneet continued her outstanding performance in the second half. She added her second goal with another penalty corner conversion, extending India's lead to 3-0 and firmly putting the hosts in control of the contest.

The Indian attack maintained relentless pressure, with players like Sunelita Toppo combining effectively with Sakshi Rana to stretch the Welsh defence. Wales managed to pull one goal back in the 39th minute through Betsan Thomas, who capitalized on a counterattack and slotted the ball home from a tight angle. The visitors briefly threatened to close the gap further but India quickly regained control of possession and territory. In the final quarter, Wales had a chance to reduce the deficit after earning a penalty stroke, but the attempt was

missed. Navneet Kaur then wrapped up the match in style by converting a penalty stroke in the 55th minute, completing her hat-trick and sealing India's dominant 4-1 victory.

The win ensured that India finished top of Pool B in the Hyderabad qualifiers. Importantly, it also helped the hosts avoid a potential semifinal clash with England, giving them a more favorable route as the knockout stages approach. Head coach Joerd Marijne had earlier stressed the need for improved finishing following India's 2-2 draw against Scotland, and the team responded with a clinical attacking display against Wales. India will now face Italy in the semifinals as they aim to secure a place in the final of the qualifiers. Qualification for the FIH Women's Hockey World Cup is being determined through two separate qualifying tournaments, each featuring eight teams, making 16 teams in total competing for seven World Cup spots.

The first qualifying event in Santiago, Chile, has already concluded, with Chile, Australia, and Ireland confirming their World Cup places.

The Hyderabad qualifiers provide three automatic spots for the teams that finish in the top positions. The seventh and final spot is reserved for the highest-ranked team (in the FIH World Rankings) that finishes fourth in either tournament. In the Santiago event, Japan, currently ranked No. 15 in the world, finished fourth. India, however, are ranked No. 9 in the world.

Because of this ranking gap, India would have to suffer a massive points drop from losing their remaining matches to fall below Japan in the rankings, a scenario that is mathematically impossible. As a result, India secured their World Cup qualification even before the semifinals of the Hyderabad event.

India's dominant performance, highlighted by Navneet Kaur's hat-trick, not only secured a convincing win but also confirmed their participation in the next Women's Hockey World Cup. With momentum on their side and a semifinal clash against Italy ahead, the Indian team will now aim to carry this form forward as they prepare for the biggest stage in international women's hockey.

# Defending champion Jack Draper stuns Novak Djokovic in Indian Wells thriller to continue fairy-tale comeback

**PARIBAS:** Novak Djokovic let slip a one-set advantage against defending champion Jack Draper to be eliminated from the BNP Paribas Open in the fourth round. 24-year-old Draper is on a comeback trail after spending eight months out of the sport fixing an arm injury.

Djokovic is a five-time winner of the event—he won titles at Indian Wells in 2008, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016—and looked set to march on to the next round when he claimed the first set 6-4. But Draper was in no mood to roll over and rallied to beat the 24-time Grand Slam champion from Serbia 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5) late on Wednesday night.

"I came out here tonight and I won that match through determination and trying to problem solve and do my best and have a great



attitude," Draper was quoted as saying in his on-court interview by ATP website.

"I'm proud of the way I regrouped. I haven't been playing on the Tour [in] a long time, so to put away guys who are top players, it's something that comes with confidence. It was a tough moment for me, but again, something I'm getting used to since coming

back and I regrouped really well. That's something I can be really proud of."

Draper advanced to the quarterfinals where he will face Daniil Medvedev, who beat Alex Michelsen 6-2, 6-4 in the round of 16 to move on.

Djokovic, seeded third, led 6-5 in the third set before Draper rallied and forced a tiebreaker.

# Thomas O'Connor upstages dad Shayne with 13-wicket haul

**NEW DELHI:** Left-arm seamer Thomas O'Connor produced the second spectacular bowling performance in the sixth round of the four-day Plunket Shield, after Brett Randell's five in five, which ended on Thursday. Thomas, the 21-year-old son of former Black Cap Shayne O'Connor, followed up figures of 7 for 58 in the first innings for Otago against Auckland with 6 for 27 in the second to carry his team to a crucial victory inside three days at Eden Park Outer Oval.

Thomas' first-innings figures of 7 for 58 is the best for Otago in the Plunket Shield since Neil Wagner claimed 7 for 46 against Wellington in Dunedin in 2011-12. Thomas' match analysis is the best for Otago since 1989-90 and seventh best overall for the side in the Plunket Shield.

Along the way, Thomas rewrote family history, outdoing Shayne's career-best first-class figures of 12 for 122 in 1998-99.

Thomas is a chip off the old block. His action and ability to generate inswing, especially, are strikingly similar to Shayne's. One of those hooping inswingers knocked Auckland No.3 Hrishabh Kannan over in the first innings. Thomas also got the inswinger going against right-hand batters, pinning Dale Phillips, the brother of Glenn, for 3 in the second innings.

Though Thomas is only four first-class games old, he's no one-trick pony. Against the left-handed Lachlan Stackpole, the left-arm seamer got the ball to dart away from over the wicket and had him caught behind by keeper Max Chu.



"I think, yeah, our actions are similar, so people have told me," Thomas said after wrapping up the win for Otago. "But I think the most important advice he [Shayne] has given me is around the mental space, not necessarily anything technical, but to enjoy it, go out there, have fun. We're pretty lucky to do a job that we love, so enjoy it, enjoy being around your team and contributing to it."

"I think it'll take a while to sink in. Obviously, you don't play the game for the milestones, but it's pretty special to get one. It's icing on the cake to get a win as well, so yeah, pretty proud and pretty pleased."

So, does Thomas get to claim bragging rights in the family after topping his father's best match figures?

"There's not a whole heap in terms of banter, but we get on good and I'm sure he'll be proud," Thomas said. "He's definitely got me on wickets and he's played international cricket, so he's definitely got me there too. I think as it got, as the pitch aged a little bit, it was a little bit less assistance for the seamers, but I think this plan is to

stay the same, as cliché as it is, try and hit the top of the stumps and play the patience game."

When Thomas was breaking records in Auckland, Shayne was officiating as a match referee in the third ODI between New Zealand and Zimbabwe in Dunedin. Shayne was promoted to the ICC International Panel of Match Referees last year. During his playing career, Shayne was a potent swing bowler for New Zealand and is known for yorking Steve Waugh for 96 in the WACA Test in 1997. Shayne took 99 international wickets for New Zealand between 1997 and 2001. Coincidentally, umpire Billy Bowden, who was an umpire in this Plunket Shield game, had also officiated in the Shell Trophy game (now Plunket Shield) in 1999 when Shayne bagged a 12-for.

"No, I didn't know that," Thomas said.

Thomas should know that he has a bright future ahead of him. Even before he broke records in the Plunket Shield, he was signed by Leinster club in Ireland as their overseas player for 2026.

# Salman Mirza denies 'misbehaviour', sends legal notice to journalist

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan fast bowler Salman Mirza has taken legal action after reports claimed he misbehaved with a woman during the T20 World Cup 2026 in Sri Lanka. The pacer sent a legal notice to a Pakistani news outlet and a journalist, calling the allegations "false, malicious, and highly defamatory." The reports alleged that the incident took place at a hotel in Kandy before Pakistan's final Super 8 match against Sri Lanka.

According to those reports, a female housekeeping staff member raised an alarm, which led hotel staff to intervene, and the matter was later communicated to Pakistan's media

manager. Mirza has strongly denied the claims and publicly criticised the report, saying it was irresponsible to broadcast unverified information. Addressing the issue on Instagram, he wrote: "An absurd news is circulating in the media and I strongly condemn this sort of cheap journalism. Any media house can't air any unverified news [sic]." In the same post, Mirza named the journalist and the news channel and confirmed he would pursue legal action. "#PakistanCricketBoard has already denied this baseless and fake news, and I'm going to take legal action against #ShahidHashmi (journalist) who works for ARY News."

This sort of filthy reporting must be banned and #GovernmentofPakistan must take action against such people!" he added. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) also rejected the allegations and backed the player. The board demanded a public apology from the reporter and warned that it would take action if the issue was not addressed. "Agenda-driven fake news targeting the character of our players is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The reporter must publicly apologise without delay; failing which, the PCB will take all necessary steps to tackle such malicious content firmly and nip it in the bud."

# Bim10 corruption: Javon Searles among three provisionally suspended

**MUMBAI:** Fast-bowling allrounder Javon Searles, Titans team owner Chitranjan Rathod, and team official Trevon Griffith have been provisionally suspended from all cricket after being charged with breaches of anti-corruption codes relating to the 2023-24 Bim10 tournament in Barbados.

The charges were brought by the ICC and Cricket West Indies (CWI) under their respective anti-corruption codes. All three individuals face charges linked to the Bim10 tournament, which is under the jurisdiction of the CWI anti-corruption code. Griffith has also been charged with an additional offence relating to international matches under the ICC anti-corruption code.

Rathod faces three charges under the CWI code and Searles four, while Griffith faces four charges under the CWI code and one under the ICC code. The trio have been charged with: Breach of Article 2.1.1 of the CWI code: fixing, contriving to fix or otherwise influencing improperly, or being a party to an agreement or effort to fix or contrive in any way or otherwise influence improperly, the result, progress, conduct or other aspect of matches in the Bim10 tournament in 2023-24 (or attempting to do so).

# Clean energy discovered in the depths of old coal mines

Cumberland, B.C. was built on coal mining—both literally and practically. For more than 80 years, the industry shaped the village's economy and identity, employing thousands of workers and exporting millions of tonnes of coal. When the mines closed, they left behind vast underground workings and a community searching for a new economic direction.

Today, Cumberland is looking beneath its streets for that next chapter. In partnership with the University of Victoria-led Accelerating Community Energy Transformation (ACET) initiative, the village is exploring how

its abandoned mine network could anchor a shift to clean energy. At the center of the effort is the Cumberland District Energy project. Researchers are studying whether water that has collected in the old mine shafts and tunnels can be used as a geothermal resource to heat and cool local buildings. Mayor Vickey Brown views the proposal as part of a broader reinvention. Cumberland is already known for outdoor recreation, drawing mountain bikers and nature enthusiasts. She believes the geothermal plan could strengthen its identity as a destination rooted in sustainability, while also changing

how residents and visitors think about the village's industrial past. "This is a way to highlight the history of Cumberland and bring it into a sustainable-future, clean-energy ethos," she says. "It's something that old Cumberland can be proud of, because we're using the waste of that old resource to transition to cleaner energy."

The concept relies on a basic temperature principle. According to ACET community energy planner and project lead Zachary Gould, water trapped underground in the former mines remains cooler than surface air during summer and warmer during winter. Heat pumps could har-

ness this steady underground temperature to provide building heating and cooling at relatively low cost and with near zero carbon emissions. "[The Cumberland District Energy project] is technically a very large ground-source heat exchanger," explains Emily Smejkal, a fellow at the Victoria-based Cascade Institute who focuses on geothermal systems. Because mine tunnels extend beneath much of the village, the resource could potentially serve a large portion of the community. Geologists have mapped the extensive underground network to evaluate its suitability for long-term energy use.

# How multi-agent AI economics influence business automation

Managing the economics of multi-agent AI now dictates the financial viability of modern business automation workflows.

Organisations progressing past standard chat interfaces into multi-agent applications face two primary constraints. The first issue is the thinking tax; complex autonomous agents need to reason at each stage, making the reliance on massive architectures for every subtask too expensive and slow for practical enterprise use.

Context explosion acts as the second hurdle; these advanced workflows produce up to 1,500 percent more tokens than standard formats because every interaction demands the resending of full system histories, intermediate reasoning, and tool outputs. Across extended tasks, this token volume drives

up expenses and causes goal drift, a scenario where agents diverge from their initial objectives.

To address these governance and efficiency hurdles, hardware and software developers are releasing highly optimised tools aimed directly at enterprise infrastructure.

NVIDIA recently introduced Nemotron 3 Super, an open architecture featuring 120 billion parameters (of which 12 billion remain active) that is specifically-engineered to execute complex agentic AI systems.

Available immediately, NVIDIA's framework blends advanced reasoning features to help autonomous agents finish tasks efficiently and accurately for improved business automation. The system relies on a hybrid mixture-of-experts architecture combining three major innovations

to deliver up to five times higher throughput and twice the accuracy of the preceding Nemotron Super model. During inference, only 12 billion of the 120 billion parameters are active. Mamba layers provide four times the memory and compute efficiency, while standard transformer layers manage the complex reasoning requirements. A latent technique boosts accuracy by engaging four expert specialists for the cost of one during token generation. The system also anticipates multiple future words at the same time, accelerating inference speeds threefold.

Operating on the Blackwell platform, the architecture utilises NVFP4 precision. This setup reduces memory needs and makes inference up to four times faster than FP8 configurations on Hopper systems, all without sacrificing ac-

curacy. The system offers a one-million-token context window, allowing agents to keep the entire workflow state in memory and directly addressing the risk of goal drift. A software development agent can load an entire codebase into context simultaneously, enabling end-to-end code generation and debugging without requiring document segmentation. Within financial analysis, the system can load thousands of pages of reports into memory, improving efficiency by removing the need to re-reason across lengthy conversations. High-accuracy tool calling ensures autonomous agents reliably navigate massive function libraries, preventing execution errors in high-stakes environments such as autonomous security orchestration within cybersecurity.

Jai Mata Di

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