

Nabi's hat-trick gives North control over East; Arshdeep, Rana shine with intense spells

BENGALURU: Pacers Arshdeep Singh and Harshit Rana produced lively spells while Aquib Nabi bagged a five-wicket haul, including a hat-trick, as North Zone bundled out East Zone for 230 to gain command on the second day of the Duleep Trophy quarterfinals here Friday.

Wicketkeeper batter Kanhaiya Wadhawan (76) made a fluent fifty as North, overnight 308/6, reached 405 all out, and, now, they lead by 183 runs after East's stutter against Nabi (5/28).

The Asia Cup-bound Arshdeep and Rana showcased their game readiness with intense spells spread across three sessions on the day.

There might have been a little more focus on Arshdeep as he was playing a first-class match after October 2024. He was also making a comeback from an impact injury to his left thumb that he sustained during an intra-squad match at Beckenham, England, in July.

But the left-arm pacer showed no sign of discomfort while bowling 17 overs on the day, marked with sustained hostility. Of course, the largely overcast conditions and an



increasingly two-paced pitch gave him appreciable assistance but Arshdeep moved the ball well and found an ideal fuller length instantly in the initial hour.

On the other hand, Rana, whose last first-class assignment was against the England Lions, operated with a slew of heavy balls, which fetched him the wickets of Utkarsh Singh (38) and Sridam Paul (7).

Utkarsh might be a tad disap-

pointed after the umpire adjudged him caught behind off a lifter down the leg side. However, Paul had little idea about a brisk delivery that moved just enough to take the outside edge en route to Wadhawan's gloves. Arshdeep's dismissal of East Zone opener Sharandeep Singh earlier was a mirror image as the ball moved just enough to clip the off-stump bails.

While both Arshdeep and Rana

have a white ball assignment to ponder over in the immediate future, their ability to deliver in long spells through the day will be an encouraging sign for the selectors when they sit together to pick the squad for the home Tests against the West Indies.

However, the East Zone could have been in a better position had they shown a little more restraint. Virat Singh played wonderfully well for a 69 off 102 balls but a moment of indiscretion cost him his wicket, playing the wrong line to get bowled by Nabi.

It opened the floodgates as the Jammu and Kashmir pacer, who took 44 wickets in the previous Ranji season, dismissed Manishi and Mukhtar Hussain in the next two balls to complete the hat-trick in the 53rd over.

Manishi shouldered arms to an incoming delivery to get caught plumb in front while Hussain was beaten for pace to get bowled.

Nabi soon completed his five-wicket haul dismissing Mohammed Shami in an excellent second spell — 3.1-0-5-5, which included four wickets in as many balls.

India kickstart campaign with thrilling 4-3 win against China

NEW DELHI: Captain Harmanpreet Singh rose to the occasion with a hat-trick of penalty corners as India edged past China 4-3 in a tense Pool A clash to open their Asian Cup hockey campaign on a winning note on Friday in Rajgir, Bihar.China struck first through Du Shihao in the 12th minute, putting the hosts under pressure early. But India hit back strongly in the second quarter with quick goals. Jugraj Singh equalised in the 18th minute, and just two minutes later, Harmanpreet converted his first penalty corner to hand India a 2-1 lead at half-time.

The advantage stretched further in the 33rd minute when the Indian skipper unleashed his trademark drag flick, beating the Chinese goalkeeper despite a partial save. At 3-1, the momentum seemed firmly in India's favour.However, China refused to back down. Chen Benhai pulled one back in the 35th minute with a penalty corner conversion, and Gao Jiesheng struck again in the 42nd to level the contest heading into the final quarter.With the game in the balance, Harmanpreet once again delivered. In the 47th minute, he powered home his third penalty corner, restoring India's lead and completing his hat-trick.



The strike proved decisive as India held on despite late pressure from the Chinese forwards.The 4-3 result gave the hosts a crucial opening victory in their Pool A campaign, though the match highlighted areas for improvement in defence against set-piece situations. Harmanpreet's clinical finishing from penalty corners, however, underlined his status as one of the best drag flickers. India will now look to build on the hard-fought win as they prepare for their remaining group-stage matches in the tournament. Their next Pool A fixture is against Japan on August 31, Sunday.

The Indian men's hockey team began their Asia Cup 2025 campaign with a 4-3 win against the People's Republic of China at the Rajgir Hockey Stadium in Bihar on Friday.

For India, seventh in the men's hockey rankings, captain Harmanpreet Singh (20', 33', 47') scored a hat-trick, while Jugraj Singh (18') was the other goal scorer. World No. 23 China got their goals from Shihao Du (12'), Benhai Chen (35') and Jiesheng Gao (41').

Right from the push back, India were on the front foot as they attacked with pace. China absorbed the early pressure, survived a penalty corner and then started to stitch together a few moves that had India concerned.

The pressure eventually paid off for China as they won a penalty corner of their own and then converted it courtesy of Shihao Du. India tried to mount a comeback quickly and put pressure on China but trailed 1-0 at the end of the first quarter.

Delhi CM unveils Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon 2025 Finisher's Medal

NEW DELHI: Chief Minister of the Government of NCT of Delhi Rekha Gupta today unveiled the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon 2025 Finisher's Medal at Delhi Secretariat. The Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon 2025 will be handing out Finisher's Medal to commemorate the landmark 20th edition of the marathon which will be held on Sunday, October 12, 2025.

For two decades, the World Athletics Gold Label Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon (VDHM) has been a defining part of Delhi's sporting calendar, inspiring thousands to adopt a healthier lifestyle, empowering young talent, and bringing the community together in a celebration of fitness and endurance. The event's ethos resonates strongly with the FIT India Movement championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Marking its milestone year, the VDHM Finisher's Medal has been

crafted from high-quality zinc sourced from the legendary Zawar Mines in Udaipur, the world's oldest and largest zinc mines. Produced by Hindustan Zinc Limited, part of the Vedanta Group, this medal is more than a token of achievement; it is a piece of India's industrial and cultural heritage that every finisher can wear with pride. Speaking to media persons at the unveiling Delhi Chief Minister said "I urge all the residents of Delhi to come and participate in the 20th edition of the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon, it is our responsibility to keep ourselves and Delhi fit and healthy and take the Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's FIT India vision forward, so I urge everyone to come forward and participate in the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon." Non-Executive Director, Vedanta Ltd., Chairperson, Hindustan Zinc Ltd. Priya Agarwal Hebbbar said,

"The Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon is a celebration of grit, unity and purpose. As the event marks its 20th edition, we are honoured that the Hon'ble Chief Minister unveiled the Finisher's Medal- crafted with zinc from the historic Zawar Mines of Hindustan Zinc, making this milestone even more meaningful. It is a symbol of endurance, strength, and India's proud industrial heritage. Through our #Run-ForZeroHunger campaign, every step taken goes beyond the finish line, creating impact and nourishing children through our 'Nand Ghar' initiative, while also extending care to animals through 'TACO-The Animal Care Organization'. Shreepad Shende, Chief Marketing Officer, IDFC FIRST Bank, said, "Running a marathon and achieving financial well-being both call for immense planning and discipline. At IDFC FIRST Bank, our customer-first philosophy emp-

owers individuals on their journey to become financially independent. Much like runners charting their path to the finish line. As the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon celebrates its landmark 20th edition with the unveiling of the finisher's medal, we are proud to continue our partnership with this iconic platform that celebrates the city of Delhi and its people. It is a true celebration of resilience, progress, and purpose, values that define both running a marathon and IDFC FIRST Bank's journey with customers."

Anil & Vivek Singh, Program International, said, "The Finisher's Medal for our runners is a symbol of dedication, perseverance, and triumph after months of hard work and training. It was a moment of honour as the Hon'ble Chief Minister of the Govt of NCT of Delhi, Smt. Rekha Gupta, graciously unveiled the Finisher's Medal for the 20th edition.

India to host IAU 50km World C'ships in December 2025

NEW DELHI: The Athletic Federation of India in coordination with International Association of Ultrarunners will organise 50km World Championships in December, Adille Sumariwalla, vice president of World Athletics said here on Friday.

"India will host a series of IAU 50km World Championships in India," Sumariwalla said.

"The first of the series will be held on December 7 this year in New Delhi from the iconic Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium."

According to Sumariwalla, a former AFI president, the 2027 and 2029 editions of the IAU 50km World Championships have also been allotted to India.

Distance beyond a marathon (42.195km) is called ultra.

The marathon is the longest footrace that features in track and field competitions at continental; world and Olympic Games.

The 2025 edition of the global ultra race will be held in elite men and women's categories in individual and team events.

Apart from elite, competition in masters and open categories will also be organised.

"The registration for the 2025 edition will commence early next month," Sumariwalla added.

Golf union celebrates World Sports Day

NEW DELHI: The Indian Golf Union(IGU), the National Sports Federation (NSF) for golf, celebrated the National Sports Day with much fanfare across India commemorating the birth anniversary of hockey legend Major Dhyan Chand.

The IGU organized special events in all State Capitals and major cities of India and encouraged all amateurs to take the National Sports Day pledge "I solemnly pledge that I will make myself physically fit, mentally strong and emotionally balanced. I will encourage my family and friends to participate in sports and fitness activities every day. I will strive to embody the Olympic values of excellence, respect and friendship in every sport."

In Delhi NCR, the IGU organized the NCR Junior Boys Cup with children between the ages of 11 and 18 years of age to promote the game at the grassroots level. From the Indian Golf Union, the dignitaries present at the ceremonial tee-off were Major General (Retd) Bibhuti Bhushan, Director

General of IGU, and Mr Sanjeev Rattan, Honorary Treasurer of IGU.

Harjai Milkha Singh, the grandson of 'Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh and son of Golf icon Jeev, expressed his excitement at being part of the National Sports Day celebrations.

"This is the first time I am taking part in the National Sports Day celebrations. All thanks to the Indian Golf union for organizing such a beautiful event. The National Sports Day intends to promote sports in the country and a culture of fitness. I think this is very important for every citizen to dedicate at least one hour to a physical activity. It helps to eradicate all kinds of lifestyle diseases. I urge everyone to dedicate Ek Ghanta Khel Ke Maidan Mein," said Harjai, who is last week's winner of IGU Northern India Junior Boys Championship in Panchkula.

IGU Director General Maj. Gen. (Retd) Bibhuti Bhushan said "The IGU organized the National Sports Day in all major cities of India today.

MONDO Athletics Track unviold in Delhi's JLN stadium

NEW DELHI: On the occasion of 'National Sports Day' union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya today unviold India's first MONDO Athletics Track at the city's Jawahar Lal Stadium.

The track, completed in a record four months by SAI's engineering wing, was unveiled in the presence of Paralympic committee of india President Devendra Jhaharia, Olympian Anju Bobby George, Secretary, Sports Hari Ranjan Rao, Head of World Para Athletics Paul Fitzgerald, para-athletes Sumit Antil, Simran Sharma, Preeti Pal, Praveen Kumar and many others.

Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra in his televised message described the occasion as "a milestone moment for Bharat's sport", while Paralympic gold medallist Sumit Antil hailed the track as "a new vision for excellence in sports that will inspire generations of athletes."

Marketing AI boom faces crisis of consumer trust

The vast majority (92%) of marketing professionals are using AI in their day-to-day operations, turning it from a buzzword into a workhorse. According to SAP Emarsys – which took the pulse of over 10,000 consumers and 1,250 marketers – while businesses are seeing real benefits from AI, shoppers are becoming increasingly distrustful, especially when it comes to their personal data. This divide could easily unravel the personalised shopping experience that brands are working so hard to build.

The rush to bring AI into marketing has been fast and decisive. As Sara Richter, CMO at SAP Emarsys, puts it, "AI marketing is now fully in motion: it has transitioned from the theoretical to the practical as marketers welcome AI into their strategies and test possibilities."

For businesses, the appeal is obvious. 71 percent of marketers say AI

helps them launch campaigns faster, saving them over two hours on average for each one. This newfound efficiency is doing what we often hear AI is best at: freeing up teams from repetitive work. 72 percent report they can now focus on more creative and strategic tasks.

The results are hitting the bottom line, too. 60 percent of marketers have seen customer engagement climb, and 58 percent report a boost in customer loyalty since bringing AI on board.

But shoppers are telling a different story. The report reveals a "personalisation gap," where the efforts of marketers just aren't hitting the mark. Even with heavy investment in AI-driven tailoring, 40 percent of consumers feel that brands just don't get them as people—a huge jump from 25 percent last year. To make matters worse, 60 percent say the marketing emails they receive are

mostly irrelevant.

Dig deeper, and you find a real crisis of confidence in how personal data is being handled for AI marketing. 63 percent of consumers globally don't trust AI with their data, up from 44 percent in 2024. In the UK, it's even more stark, with 76 percent of shoppers feeling uneasy.

This collapse in trust is happening just as new rules come into play. A year after the EU's AI Act was introduced, more than a third (37%) of UK marketers have overhauled their approach to AI, with 44% stating their use of the technology has become more ethical.

This creates a tension that the whole industry is talking about: how to be responsible without killing innovation. While the AI Act provides a clearer rulebook, over a quarter (28%) of marketing professionals are worried that rigid regulations could stifle creativity.

Olympic 100m champ Noah Lyles triumphs in Zurich, Alfred shines



MUMBAI: Olympic 100m champions Noah Lyles and Julien Alfred will head to the world championships in Tokyo in two weeks' time on the back of impressive victories at Thursday's Diamond League finals. Lyles and Alfred were but two of the cream of track and field's elite who rose to the top in a scintillating night of action at a 25,000 sell-out Letzigrund Stadium. Lyles produced a strong finish to outpace Botswana rival Letsile Tebogo for victory in the men's 200m in 19.74 seconds for a record-breaking sixth Diamond League track trophy.

"Another record in the list. It is pretty nice to have that," said Lyles. "The most

important is getting wins. I know if I panicked, I was not going to win. If you are tight, you are done for."

Lyles said he would head to Tokyo "with a lot of energy. I will use that to my advantage".

Alfred had earlier clocked 10.76sec for her win over 100m ahead of Jamaica's Tia Clayton (10.84) in what was the perfect tonic before departing to the September 13-21 world championships in Tokyo.

"I feel like I want to add another gold in my collection," she said. "I am much fitter than before and also mentally, I am on the right place where I want to be."

Twenty-six Diamond League champions were

unveiled at the Letzigrund Stadium as quality oozed through at every turn, as athletes fine-tuned preparations for the Tokyo worlds.

One of the most competitive events on the men's circuit is the 800m, with athletes edging ever nearer to David Rudisha's world record of 1:40.91.

Kenya's Emmanuel Wanyonyi faded in the home stretch in Zurich, but just managed to hold on for victory in 1:42.37, 0.05sec ahead of Britain's Max Burgin, with Canada's world champion Marco Arop taking third.

There were no surprises in the 400m hurdles as Dutch world champion

Femke Bol improved on her own meet to 52.18sec, her 30th straight hurdles race victory on the Diamond League circuit.

"It's crazy, another Diamond League season undefeated, it's really cool!" said Bol.

Norway's Karsten Warholm, the world record holder and three-time world champion, then nonchalantly repeated Bol's feat, bettering his 2019 mark with a new meet record of 46.70sec.

"That was my target for this meeting," said Warholm. "I'm on the right path for Tokyo. I have three titles as world champions, and I want more. I'm greedy."

New fossils reveal humans' mysterious lost cousin

An international team of researchers has uncovered new fossils in Africa showing that Australopithecus and the earliest known members of Homo lived in the same region at the same time, between 2.6 and 2.8 million years ago. Among the finds was a previously unknown species of Australopithecus, unlike any identified before.

The discoveries come from the Ledi-Geraru Research Project, led by scientists at Arizona State University. This site has already produced the world's oldest known Homo specimen, as well as the earliest examples of Oldwan stone tools.

Detailed study of the newly recovered Australopithecus teeth confirmed that they represent a distinct species rather than belonging to

Australopithecus afarensis, the species of the famous fossil "Lucy." This finding reinforces that no remains of Lucy's lineage are known to be younger than 2.95 million years.

"This new research shows that the image many of us have in our minds of an ape to a Neanderthal to a modern human is not correct – evolution doesn't work like that," said ASU paleoecologist Kaye Reed. "Here we have two hominin species that are together. And human evolution is not linear, it's a bushy tree, there are life forms that go extinct."

Reed serves as a Research Scientist at the Institute of Human Origins and is a President's Professor Emerita in the School of Human Evolution and Social Change at Arizona State University.

She has also co-directed the Ledi-Geraru Research Project since 2002.

So what fossils helped shape these new conclusions? The team uncovered 13 teeth in total.

The Ledi-Geraru site has drawn attention before. In 2013, Reed and her colleagues reported the discovery of the earliest known Homo fossil—a jaw dating to 2.8 million years ago. The new study builds on that legacy, describing additional teeth from the site that belong to both the genus Homo and a newly identified species of Australopithecus.

"The new finds of Homo teeth from 2.6 – 2.8 million-year-old sediments, reported in this paper, confirm the antiquity of our lineage," said Brian Villmoare, lead author and ASU alumnu.

"We know what the teeth and mandible of the earliest Homo look like, but that's it. This emphasizes the critical importance of finding additional fossils to understand the differences between Australopithecus and Homo, and potentially how they were able to overlap in the fossil record at the same location."

The team cannot name the species yet based on the teeth alone; more fossils are needed before that can happen.

The Afar region remains an active rift zone, marked by frequent volcanic and tectonic activity. When these volcanoes erupted, they released ash containing crystals known as feldspars, which provide scientists with a way to determine their age, explained Christopher Campisano, a geologist at ASU.

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