



Adkar, Raina storm into singles semifinals, pair reach doubles final at ITF W35 Kalaburagi

KALABURAGI, MAR 6: Third seed Vaishnavi Adkar and eighth seed Ankit Raina continued their impressive run at the ITF W35 Kalaburagi, advancing to the semifinals in both the singles and doubles events after commanding performances on Friday.

Adkar produced a clinical display to defeat Elina Nepliy 6-1, 6-3, and Raina followed with an equally dominant showing, overcoming Evgeniya Burdina 6-0, 6-2 to secure her place in the final four.

The Indian duo later teamed up in the doubles semifinals, edging past Sonal Patil and Bela Tamhankar to reach the final. Meanwhile, Akanksha Dileep Nitture and Karnataka's Soha Sadiq formed the second doubles final pairing.

Vaishnavi Adkar set the tone early in her quarterfinal encounter, finding the lines with both her forehand and backhand to break Elina Nepliy in the second game and surge to a 3-0 lead.

Despite Nepliy attempting to disrupt the rhythm with well-timed drop shots and forcing a prolonged deuce battle, Adkar remained composed and continued to pressure her opponent into errors, extending her advantage to 4-0. Nepliy managed to hold serve once late in the set, but Adkar quickly wrapped it up 6-1 with another solid service game.

The second set followed a similar pattern as Adkar broke Nepliy in the opening game before backing it up with a tough hold. While



Nepliy briefly fought back to reduce the deficit and capitalised on a few service errors from Adkar to break and make it 4-2, the Indian immediately responded with a flurry of backhand winners to break again for 5-2.

Nepliy managed another break after a long deuce game, but Adkar raised her level in the following game with clean returns to seal the 6-3 victory.

In the following quarterfinal, Ankit Raina started strongly against Evgeniya Burdina, breaking in the opening game after forcing errors from the Russian before comfortably consolidating with her serve.

Burdina struggled to find consistency as double faults and unforced errors allowed Raina to race to a 3-0 lead. The pressure continued to mount as Raina dominated the rallies, pushing the score to 5-0 before Burdina took a

medical timeout. Upon returning, Burdina was unable to halt Raina's momentum as the Indian closed the set 6-0.

The second set began with both players exchanging breaks, but Burdina continued to struggle with her accuracy. Raina capitalised again in the fifth game and finally consolidated the break with a strong hold to move ahead 4-2. Maintaining control from the baseline, she extended her lead to 5-2 before sealing the match in the eighth game after creating three match points, with Burdina sending a return long.

In the doubles semifinals, Vaishnavi Adkar and Ankit Raina battled past Sonal Patil and Bela Tamhankar in a tight contest, winning 7-6(5), 6-2 to book their place in the final.

The pair held their nerve in a closely contested opening set before taking control

in the second.

In the other semifinal, Akanksha Dileep Nitture and Soha Sadiq staged a spirited comeback to defeat Sravya Shivani Chilakalapudi and Japan's Michika Ozeki 6-7(7), 6-0, [10-5], setting up an all-Indian final.

Singles Quarterfinals
Vaishnavi Adkar (IND) bt Elina Nepliy 6-1, 6-3; 8-Ankita Raina (IND) bt Evgeniya Burdina 6-0, 6-2; 6-Thasaporn Naklo (THA) bt 2-Anchisa Chanta (THA) 6-4, 6-1; 1-Jasmijn Gimbrere (NED) bt Maayan Laron (ISR) 6-2, 6-2

Doubles Semifinals
2-Vaishnavi Adkar (IND) / Ankit Raina (IND) bt Sonal Patil (IND) / Bela Tamhankar (IND) 7-6(5), 6-2; Akanksha Dileep Nitture (IND) / Soha Sadiq (IND) bt Sravya Shivani Chilakalapudi (IND) / Michika Ozeki (JPN) 6-7(7), 6-0, [10-5]. (ANI)

Rajasthan Regals complete dominating finals win to become inaugural champions of PGTI's 72 The League

NEW DELHI [INDIA], MARCH 6: Rajasthan Regals wrote a fantastic new chapter in the history of Indian professional golf, winning the inaugural PGTI's 72 The League, with a commanding 12-3 win over table-toppers UP Prometheans on Friday at Qutab Golf Course.

After qualifying for the finale from the five-round league stage as the second-placed team, Regals got their revenge over Prometheans for their crushing 4-10 loss against the same team in the fifth round of the league, as per a press release from PGTI.

The winning team received the stunning Vibhor Sogani-designed 72 The League Trophy and INR 1 crore prize money. The runner-up team took home a silver salver and INR 50 lakh.

Prometheans put together their two strongest players - unbeaten captain Shaurya Bhattacharya and Arjun Prasad - in the singles upfront. However, Regals demolished that plan with Jairaj Singh Sandhu, who beat Bhattacharya 4&3, and Akshay Sharma, who defeated Prasad 2&1.

With only one win required from the remaining three matches on the field, Rajasthan sealed the deal when their foursome pairing of Aryaman Mohan and Yuvraj Singh beat Joshua Seale and Arjun Sharma on the 18th hole.

Young Mohan had the honour of making the winning putt for his team when they tied the final hole.

In the remaining four-ball matches, Regals captain Ajeetesh Sandhu lost his first match of the tourna-



ment in the company of Michele Ortolani, while Chikkarangappa S and Dhruv Sheoran completed the 12-3 margin with an in-consequential 2&1 win over Gaurav Pratap Singh and Pranav Mardikar.

A delighted Sandhu said, "It's been an incredible honour to lead this bunch of players. From the moment of the auction, I knew we had a lot of depth in the team. However, more importantly, when we got together for the first time, everyone jelled with each other. The chemistry has been fantastic."

"It's been an amazing journey over the past two weeks, and we could not have asked for a better finish. It's been an unforgettable tournament for us players. We are all so proud that we will forever be remembered as the first team to win it."

"I haven't been part of a lot of teams, but if this is what it feels like, then I'm on board for a lot more of them."

Mohan admitted that even though it was a putt of less than four feet, his hands were trembling as he settled over the winning putt.

"I've had putts to win before, and we are so accustomed to rolling in those four-footers every single day. But, on that one, I am not gonna lie, I couldn't feel my hands. I was a mess, but thankfully, Yuvraj helped me," said Mohan.

Bhattacharya said it was one of "those days" when nothing went their way.

"It wasn't our day, I guess. We played well throughout the tournament, but it just didn't go our way. It will take a little time to sink in, and we are all disappointed, but we had a great stretch going in, and we gave ourselves a chance to win the trophy. We will come back strong next year," added Bhattacharya.

Charminar Champions won the Plate Championship, thus finishing third ahead of fourth-placed Kolkata Classics in the tournament launched by DP

World PGTI in partnership with Game of Life Sports (GOLS).

Coincidentally, Charminar, who received a cheque for INR 20 lakh, had lost the opportunity to appear in the finale in a countback to Rajasthan after both teams tallied 43 points in the league stage.

FINALE
RAJASTHAN REGALS BEAT UP PROMETHEANS: 12-3

Singles:
Jairaj Singh Sandhu beat Shaurya Bhattacharya 4&3
Akshay Sharma beat Arjun Prasad 2&1

Foursomes:
Michele Ortolani/Ajeetesh Sandhu lost to Abhinav Lohan/Manoj S3&2
Chikkarangappa S/Dhruv Sheoran beat Gaurav Pratap Singh/Pranav Mardikar 2&1

Foursomes:
Aryaman Mohan/Yuvraj Singh beat Joshua Seale/Arjun Sharma 1-up
Plate Championship
3rd Charminar Champions - 122 points

Axar is going to be one of India's greatest players: Gavaskar

NEW DELHI, MAR 06: Former captain Sunil Gavaskar foresees Axar Patel becoming one of India's greatest players thanks to his all-round skills and "cricketing intelligence", which was on display during two "unbelievable" fielding efforts in the T20 World Cup semifinal win over England.

Axar got rid of the dangerous Harry Brook and Will Jacks in two different yet important phases of the game, which India won by seven runs in Mumbai on Thursday night.

The India vice-captain ran 24m backwards from the cover position to pull off a stunning catch off a slow-cutter from Jasprit Bumrah to dismiss Brook inside power-play.

His second act of brilliance came in the 14th over when Jacob Bethell got out. It was a wide full toss from Arshdeep Singh that Bethell sliced towards deep point and Axar scampered to his left to catch the ball before relaying it to Shivam Dube as he crossed the ropes.

"Axar's catch to dismiss Brook was unbelievable. Brook can take the game away and you have to grab every chance to get his wicket. Axar did that. He ran 24m away from his fielding spot, kept his eyes on the ball, balanced himself, and took the catch. Unbelievable stuff," Gavaskar said on Star Sports.



"He also played a key role in Will Jacks' dismissal. The Bethell-Jacks partnership was taking the game away. But Axar ran to his left, grabbed the ball, and smartly passed it to Shivam Dube. That shows great cricketing intelligence.

"At the highest level, temperament separates the greats from the good. With his batting and bowling, Axar is going to be one of India's great players," the former batting great added.

Gavaskar said Axar is doing well to fill the void left by the T20 International retirement of Ravindra Jadeja.

"We had Ravindra Jadeja before him and Axar is filling that void well. His bowling needs a little more polish. That will come with experience. His line, length, and speed are improving every year.

"The vice-captaincy

means he is thinking about everyone's game, not just his own. That is great for his growth," said the former India captain, he said.

Gavaskar was also effusive in his praise for "once in a century bowler" Jasprit Bumrah who stifled England towards the fag end of the run chase.

England needed 45 runs from 18 balls at one stage with centurion Jacob Bethell (105) going strong.

But Bumrah squeezed a tight 18th over to allow only six runs nailing his yorkers with pin-point accuracy, which left England with the improbable task of 39 runs to score from the final two overs.

"Jasprit Bumrah is not just a once in a generation bowler. He is a once in a century kind of a bowler. Because he plays all formats. Test matches, 50-over games, T20s. You give

him the ball, he will deliver.

"Yes, there might be odd match where he goes for runs. That's understandable.

He is human after all. But more often than not, when it matters, Bumrah will bowl that crucial over. It might not always be a wicket-taking over. But he will give just seven or eight runs when others are going for 15 or 20."

On the prospect of India becoming the first team to lift the T20 World Cup title at home, Gavaskar said, "It would be really special to witness India lifting the T20 World Cup trophy on home soil.

"Any time you play at home in a World Cup, it is special. The backing you get from the crowd, the applause when you do well, whether you save runs, take a catch, or score runs, it is an incredible feeling."

'Still processing the moment': Smriti Mandhana becomes 1st Indian cricketer to have 'Barbie doll' after her

NEW DELHI, MAR 06: Indian cricket star Smriti Mandhana is breaking barriers and inspiring others once again, and this time it's through a limited-edition 'Barbie' doll. The Indian vice-captain (women) has become the first cricketer in the world to receive this honour.

The announcement was made by Mattel on March 5, just days before International Women's Day, which is celebrated on March 8. The initiative celebrates women who are breaking barriers in their respective fields.

However, the doll, which



is part of an elite group of eight influential women from different professions across the globe, will not be available for commercial sale.

The 'Dream Team' also in-

cludes tennis icon Serena Williams, astronaut Kellie Gerardi, Mexican racing driver Regina Sirvent Alvarado, English footballer Chloe Kelly, German singer Helene Fischer, climber

Zoja Skubis and Australian surfing champion Stephanie Gilmore. According to Mattel, the Dream Team recognises women who have achieved significant milestones and opened doors for the next generation.

Mandhana shared pictures on Instagram and admitted she was "still processing the moment".

"They're all amazing women and Barbies," a user wrote on Instagram. Another reacted, "What a wonderful and well-deserved recognition." A third commented, "Truly an inspiration!"

India-England T20 World Cup semi-final shatters global digital viewership record: ICC

AHMEDABAD, MAR 06: The second semi-final of the T20 World Cup between India and England set a new global benchmark in digital sports viewership, registering a peak concurrency of 65.2 million viewers on JioHotstar, according to ICC.

The blockbuster clash, which saw India defeat England to enter the final, recorded the highest peak digital viewership for any live event globally, underscoring cricket's unmatched ability to draw massive au-



diences in the Indian market.

"Second semi-final of the ICC T20 World Cup 2026 has shattered the world record for digital viewer-

ship. The match between BCCI and England Cricket registered a peak digital concurrency of 65.2 million viewers on JioHotstar which is the highest for any

live event across the world," ICC chairman Jay Shah posted on X. He said the record highlighted the ability of marquee global cricket events to attract huge audiences while also crediting the tournament organisers and broadcast partners.

"This demonstrates the unparalleled capacity of marquee global cricket to aggregate Indian fans as well as the prowess of my team at the ICC and our partner JioStar in recruiting and engaging fans at scale," Shah wrote.