

FIH Pro League: India register fighting 4-3 win over arch-rivals Pakistan

LONDON, JUNE 23: India defeated Pakistan 4-3 in a pulsating FIH Pro League match here on Tuesday, extending their decade-long unbeaten streak against the arch-rivals in international hockey.

The victory lifted India to seventh in the standings and came in the first meeting between the two sides since the 2024 Asian Champions Trophy in China, where the Harmanpreet Singh-led side had prevailed 2-1.

Ahmad Nadeem gave Pakistan the lead in the eighth minute through a penalty corner before Abhishek (22nd) struck from a field effort to draw parity.

Nilakanta Sharma then gave India the lead converting a penalty corner in the 24th minute as the Harmanpreet Singh-led side went into the breather with a 2-1 lead.

India extended their lead in the 40th minute through a field goal from Sukhjeet Singh and then Rajinder Singh made it 4-1 from a penalty corner.

But Pakistan came back strongly in the final quarter, with Abu Mahmood (53rd) and Moin Shakeel (60th) scoring from penalty corners to reduce the margin but it was not enough.

India will next take on hosts England in the London leg of the Pro League here on Friday.

After a slow start in the opening quarter, India found their rhythm to secure their fourth win of the Pro League season.

The match began with both teams playing cautiously and trading early circle entries.

Pakistan earned the first breakthrough in the eighth minute when Nadeem capitalised on a penalty corner routine to make it 1-0.

India immediately responded with aggressive attacks but struggled to find the final pass in the third quarter.

In the final minute of the first quarter, India won three consecutive penalty corners, but Pakistan goalkeeper Ali Raza made a fine save to deny India



skipper Harmanpreet Singh.

India turned up the heat with quick passing in the second quarter to find an equaliser. In the 22nd minute, Dilpreet Singh's powerful shot was padded away by Raza, but Abhishek quickly pounced on the rebound to make it 1-1.

Three minutes later, India won another penalty corner and Nilakanta reacted sharply to the rebound and smashed the ball through the goalkeeper's legs to put India ahead 2-1.

Raza stood tall for Pakistan later in the quarter, saving penalty corners from Jugraj Singh in the 28th minute and Harmanpreet a minute later to keep the score 2-1 at halftime in favour of India.

Pakistan increased their

tempo in the third quarter, creating multiple circle entries, but the Indian backline held firm.

Defender Amit Rohidas showed great composure to break up a dangerous two-on-one counter-attack led by Pakistan's Nadeem.

India then extended their lead in the 40th minute when Abhishek set up Sukhjeet inside the circle, who produced a handsome finish to make it 3-1.

The final quarter was filled with late drama as Pakistan pushed hard to reduce the deficit.

After the Indian defence blocked back-to-back Pakistan penalty corners in the 51st minute, India launched a swift counter-attack to earn a penalty corner of their own in the 52nd

minute.

In a clever routine, Harmanpreet acted as a decoy, allowing Rajinder to fire the ball past substitute goalkeeper Waqar to make it 4-1.

Pakistan fought back immediately as captain Mahmood scored from a penalty corner flick through the legs of Indian goalkeeper Suraj Karkera to make it 4-2.

Jugraj missed a chance from India's 11th penalty corner in the 56th minute, setting up a tense finish.

With just 14 seconds left on the clock, Pakistan's Shakeel scored on a penalty corner rebound to make it 4-3, but India held their nerves in the final seconds to secure the hard-fought three points.

Dutch Ladies Open: Indian trio finish in top-5 as Diksha, Avani fall one shot short

EEMNES [THE NETHERLANDS],

JUNE 23: Indian women golfers celebrated one of their finest collective performances on the Ladies European Tour (LET) this season as Diksha Dagar, Avani Prashanth and Pranavi Urs all secured top-five finishes at the Dutch Ladies Open. Diksha and Avani came within a single shot of joining the playoff for the title.

Diksha and Avani shared third place on eight-under-par, while Pranavi finished tied fifth at seven-under, capping a memorable week for Indian women's golf in the Netherlands.

It was Diksha's fourth top-10 finish of the season, Avani's second successive top-five result and Pranavi's first top-five finish of 2026, underlining the growing consistency of the Indian challenge on the LET.

Both Diksha and Avani had genuine chances of forcing their way into the playoff on a dramatic final day.

Avani, who produced one of the best rounds of Sunday, carded a five-under 67 featuring six birdies to surge into contention. She reached nine-under through 17 holes after Thailand's Aunchisa Utama had posted the clubhouse lead, but a bogey on the closing hole denied the 19-year-old a place in the playoff and dropped her back to eight-under.

Playing in the penultimate group, Diksha also threatened to gate-crash the title battle. A birdie on the 17th lifted her to eight-under, leaving her needing another gain on the par-five last to reach nine-under.



However, she could only make par, leaving both Indians tied for third, just one stroke behind the eventual finalists.

Despite the disappointment of narrowly missing the playoffs, Avani took plenty of positives from another excellent week.

"I'm obviously very happy with how the day went, but the last hole, I guess that's just sport. I played solid out there, start to finish. Every part of my game really did well, so I'm happy," she said.

The Bengaluru golfer added that returning to full fitness after her back problems had transformed her game, while successive top-five finishes had given her renewed confidence.

Diksha, meanwhile, continued her impressive run of consistency with rounds of 68, 70 and 69. The Hero Women's Indian Open champion has quietly established herself among the LET's most dependable per-

formers this season, and another podium finish strengthened her growing reputation.

Pranavi Urs also enjoyed an outstanding finish to the tournament. After opening with a 73, she recovered superbly with rounds of 69 and 67 over the weekend to climb into a share of fifth, ensuring India had three players inside the top five in the same LET event.

While the Indian trio dominated much of the attention, Thailand's Aunchisa Utama emerged as the champion after a thrilling finish. Starting the final day tied for 15th, Utama fired a flawless six-under 66 to set the clubhouse target at nine-under before defeating Norway's Dorthea Forbrigt with a birdie on the first playoff hole to claim her maiden Ladies European Tour title.

Utama carded six birdies without dropping a shot and later revealed that changes

to her putting over the previous fortnight had proved decisive. Her victory also continued Thailand's strong record in the tournament following Trichat Cheenglab's success in 2023.

Forbrigt finished runner-up after narrowly missing her birdie chance in the playoff, while Pranavi shared fifth place with Wales' Chloe Williams, American Annika Borrelli, Australia's Justice Bosio and Kirsten Rudgeley, England's Hannah Screen, Nigeria's Georgia Iziemgbe Oboh and Spain's Harang Lee.

The LET now heads to Czechia for this week's Czech Ladies Open, where the Indian contingent will look to carry forward the momentum from an outstanding performance that showcased the growing depth and quality of Indian women's golf on the European circuit. (ANI)

Savita Punia conferred Padma Shri, Bhagwandas Raikwar awarded posthumously; Vijay Amritraj gets Padma Bhushan

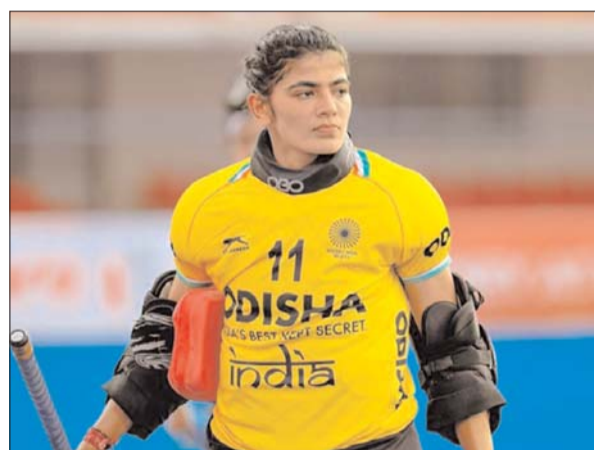
NEW DELHI [INDIA],

JUNE 23: Veteran Hockey player Savita Punia and late Bhagwandas Raikwar have been conferred with the Padma Shri in recognition of their outstanding contribution to Indian sports.

Raikwar was honoured posthumously with the Padma Shri for bringing international recognition to 'Akhada' (traditional wrestling/martial arts), the most ancient weapon-based art form of Bundelkhand.

His son Rajkumar Raikwar received the award from President Droupadi Murmu at the function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Tuesday evening.

Tennis legend Vijay Amritraj received the Padma Bhushan, while Vladimir Mestvirishvili was honoured with the Padma Shri posthumously, for his contribution in the field of Sports as a coach, becoming the first foreign coach to receive a Padma award.



Punia in 2025 became only the second Indian goalkeeper, after PR Sreejesh, to reach 300 international caps, joining an elite club and underlining her remarkable longevity and consistency at the highest level.

She also played a pivotal role in India's historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, a landmark campaign that elevated the stature of Indian women's

hockey worldwide. Her experience and presence between the posts were also invaluable in qualifying for the Rio 2016 Olympics for the first time in 36 years and the 2018 Hockey Women's World Cup, where India reached the Quarter-Finals.

While Amritraj peaked at 18 and 23 in singles and doubles careers, respectively, winning 13 doubles and 15 singles titles throughout his journey as a tennis player, which lasted

over two decades.

Also, former Indian skipper Rohit Sharma has been conferred with the Padma Shri in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Indian cricket over the past decades.

Under the leadership of Rohit Sharma, India's men's team clinched the ICC T20 World Cup 2024 title in Barbados and the Champions Trophy 2025 in Dubai.

The Padma Awards 2026 are being conferred by President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. During the second Civil Investiture Ceremony on June 23, a total of 65 Padma Awards are scheduled to be presented, including two Padma Vibhushan, seven Padma Bhushan and 56 Padma Shri awards.

The first Civil Investiture Ceremony for the Padma Awards 2026 was held on May 26, during which 66 Padma Awards were conferred. (ANI)

Suryansh Shedge replaces Nitish Reddy in India's squads for Ireland and England series

NEW DELHI, JUNE

23: The promising Suryansh Shedge has replaced injured all-rounder Nitish Reddy in India's squads for the upcoming T20I series against Ireland and England, the BCCI said on Tuesday.

Earlier, India were dealt a blow as Reddy was ruled out of the white ball tour of UK with a quadriceps injury that he had sustained during the recent ODI series against Afghanistan.

"The men's selection committee has named Suryansh Shedge as a replacement for Nitish Kumar Reddy in India's squads for the upcoming T20I series against Ireland and England," the BCCI said in a statement.

Reddy reported left quadriceps discomfort after the third ODI against Afghanistan on June 20. Following a subsequent medical assessment, the BCCI medical team has recommended a period of rehabilitation, ruling him out of both T20I series.

Shedge earned the call-up following a string of impressive performances for India A in the recently concluded tri-series in Sri Lanka. Batting in the middle order, the 23-year-old scored 147 runs in five matches and also chipped in with the ball, bowling 23 overs across the tournament.



He was also one of the standout performers for Mumbai in their victorious Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy campaign in 2024-25, scoring 131 runs at a strike rate of 251.92 in the lower middle order.

Reddy was also supposed to fill in the void left by Hardik Pandya, who also has quadriceps niggle and is not in condition to bowl 10 overs in ODIs.

"Nitish Kumar Reddy has been ruled out of the Ireland series. The MRI has revealed swelling with fiber

disruption in the left quadriceps. He has been asked to report at COE for further assessment," the medical bulletin in possession of PTI stated.

It is understood that Reddy will take a minimum of four weeks—the recovery timeline could extend too—to complete his rehabilitation before he can start his 'Return To Play' protocols.

The 23-year-old played 10 Tests, 6 ODIs and 4 T20Is for India so far. During the Afghanistan series, he had played two ODIs while

missing the second game in Lucknow.

While bowling coach Morne Morkel had then said that the injury didn't look serious, it has now taken a far more serious turn.

Many believe that although Reddy's stint with independent fast bowling coach Steffan Jones helped him increase his speed from late 120 kmph to a brisk mid 130 kmph, the flip side is that his body is unable to adjust with demands of sudden uptick in pace.

Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20: Skipper Aneeshwar Gautam leads Hubli Tigers to commanding 7-wicket win

MYSURU, JUNE 23: Captain Aneeshwar Gautam produced a composed unbeaten half-century as Hubli Tigers registered a comprehensive seven-wicket victory over defending champions Mysore Warriors in the Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20 tournament.

After their opening fixture against Coastal Kings Mangaluru was washed out, the Tigers made an emphatic statement in their first completed

game of the season.

Chasing a modest target of 162 at the Srikantadatta Narasimha Raja Wadiyar Ground on Monday, they remained in control throughout the innings and comfortably reached 162/3 with 15 balls to spare.

The chase got off to a shaky start when Preethesh Ingle was dismissed off just the second ball of the innings, caught by Lavish Kaushal without a run on board. However, Mohammad

Taha and Mayank Agarwal quickly steadied the innings, taking the attack to the Mysuru bowlers.

Taha was particularly severe on anything short or wide, punishing the bowlers with an array of attacking strokes. Mysuru captain Vyshak Vijaykumar endured a difficult outing, conceding 47 runs from his four overs.

Taha and Agarwal added 49 runs in just 4.3 overs for the second wicket to steer the chase.