



"Pretty special" to beat World Champions at home: Ireland captain Tucker after win over India in T20I

BELFAST [IRELAND], JUNE 26: Ireland defeated India by 34 runs in the first T20I match of the series and the hosts took 1-0 lead in the two-match series here on Friday. The Irish skipper, Lorcan Tucker, described the win over the World Champions as "pretty special."

It was pretty special. But just credit to the lads. I think we scraped through that game. We had some tough periods in it, but we stayed in it. And we were diligent, and we worked hard. And we were lucky to get the reward in the end," Tucker said.

Tucker made 50 off 36 balls with the help of five fours and a couple of sixes. After four early wickets, Tucker stitched a 64-run partnership with Gareth Delany for the first wicket, which helped the hosts set a big 183-run target.

On recovering from 36 for 3 and his partnership with Gareth Delany, the skipper said, "I think India bowled really well at the start. I think they bowled really good lengths. They didn't really waver from them. They stuck with them, found it challenging to hit good shots. It nearly felt like a Test match at one stage. But I think we tried to stay in the game, build a partnership, and then took our opportunities when they came a bit later."

This win was Ireland's first victory over India in international cricket. With



this win, Ireland became the 11th team to beat India in Internationals. India are the eighth Full Member side Ireland have beaten in Internationals, and now, only Australia, New Zealand, and Sri Lanka are left for the Irish side.

Talking about where this win ranks among Ireland's biggest victories, Tucker said, "I think it's pretty special, I think, to beat the world champions at home, first game of the season, T20 cricket. But credit's due to the lads. I think we had two debutants there who put in absolutely outstanding performances. I think to all the work that goes in behind the scenes, Cricket Ireland, everyone's very dedi-

cated, and I think that's why we like to try and bring these results and support everyone."

Matthew Holland and Jai Moondra made their international debut for Ireland, and the duo took five wickets combined and the former bagged the Player of the Match award for his bowling figure of 3/28.

On the performances of the two debutants, the skipper said, "I think they were really dogged. I think we learned a lot from how India bowled in the first innings. They didn't really stray from their lengths. I think we tried to tell the lads to do that as well, and they just showed their skill and their accuracy and their ability to

stay in that spot and make it challenging for their batters. So absolute credit to them, but credit to themselves. They worked so hard, and they were able to execute their plans, as we asked of them." Now, the hosts will look to seal the series with another victory in the final T20I match on Sunday at the same venue.

On the chance to seal a series win against India in the next match, the Irish skipper said, "Absolutely, yeah. A series win at home against India would be pretty special. I think the lads are absolutely mustered to get back here. I think the energy today was fabulous, the crowd were brilliant, so special."

Serena Williams draws 20-year-old Maya Joint in first Wimbledon singles match in 4 years

LONDON, JUNE 26: Serena Williams will face an opponent less than half her age when she plays 20-year-old Maya Joint in the first round at Wimbledon for her first singles match in nearly four years.

The seven-time Wimbledon singles champion, who is 44, accepted a wild-card entry to the grass-court Grand Slam, where she'll also compete in doubles with her older sister Venus, who turned 46 last week.

It's all part of a tennis comeback that started with two doubles warmup matches but kicked into high gear Sunday when the All England Club announced Serena would play singles. Brackets were set in Friday's draw.

Joint was born in Michigan - as was Williams - but represents Australia through her father. She is ranked No. 53 and made her Wimbledon debut last year, losing in the first round to Liudmila Samsonova 6-3, 6-2.

Joint won the grass-court Eastbourne Open last year for one of her two WTA tour-level singles titles. Williams hasn't played a singles match since a third-round loss to Ajla Tomljanovic at the 2022 U.S. Open. At the time, she said she didn't want to use the word "retiring" and instead declared she was "evolving" away from tennis. Her second daughter was born in 2023.

Williams' most recent appearance at Wimbledon was in 2022, when she lost in the



opening round to then-115th-ranked Harmony Tan.

If Williams beats Joint on Tuesday, she may face rising Filipino star Alexandra Eala, who is seeded 29th, in the second round. She could meet defending champion Iga Swiatek in the third round.

Swiatek opens against Taylor Townsend of the U.S. on Centre Court on Tuesday.

In a projected quarterfinal by seedings, No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka would meet French Open champion Mirra Andrevea; No. 2 Elena Rybakina, the 2022 champion, would face 2025 runner-up Amanda Anisimova; Swiatek, the No. 3 seed, would play Elna Svitolina; and No. 4 Jessica Pegula would meet Coco Gauff.

Sinner could meet Djokovic in semifinals.

On the men's side, No. 1 Jannik Sinner will begin his Wimbledon title defense against Miomir Kecmanovic on Centre Court on Monday.

Sinner and Novak Djokovic, the No. 7 seed, are in the same half of the draw and could meet in the semifinals.

Sinner underwent checks following his French Open meltdown - losing in the second round amid a heat wave in Paris - and said he felt physically good after an exhibition match this week in London, which also experienced high temperatures.

Djokovic, a seven-time champion at the All England Club, will play Wu Yibing of China. Djokovic could meet third-seeded Felix

Auger-Aliassime in the quarterfinals.

Two-time champion Carlos Alcaraz, who lost to Sinner in the 2025 final, will miss this year's tournament because of a wrist injury.

Wimbledon starts on Monday.

Serena and Venus in doubles

The Williams sisters are wild-card entries in the women's doubles and will play their first-round match against Colombia's Camila Osorio and Solana Sierra of Argentina.

Serena and Venus have won 14 Grand Slam titles together in doubles, including six at Wimbledon - the first in 2000 and the last in 2016. Their first two doubles titles at the All England Club, in 2000 and 2002, came as wild cards.

More than 100 women players sign up for ICC's protection programme against online trolling

LONDON, JUNE 26: More than 100 women cricketers have signed up for the ICC Player Protection Programme to "silence trolls on social media platforms" in partnership with AI-powered moderator Freedom2hear, which has weeded out almost 60,000 "harmful pieces of content" during the ongoing T20 World Cup.

Over 500 new sign-ups were recorded at the start of the tournament here, the ICC said in a release.

"...while the service provides additional protection across official ICC social media accounts. Seven of the 12 teams competing at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 are protected, with umpires and broadcasters also registered," the statement read.

After the first week of the

T20 World Cup, the tool reviewed nearly 2,50,000 comments and removed almost 60,000 harmful pieces of content.

"More than 2,000 repeat offenders had temporary restrictions put on their interactions, and 370 users were blocked."

Indian left-arm spinner Radha Yadav highlighted the growing "toxicity" of social media as a reason for joining the programme.

"Social media can be such an amazing resource for me to interact with friends, family and fans all over the world, but it's also become an increasingly toxic space, especially for female athletes," said Yadav.

"It's important to talk about this openly and find solutions to the problem, which is why I signed up for the ICC Player Protection

Programme."

Another protected player is England wicketkeeper-batter Amy Jones, who also said that the programme has helped her deal with some of the abuse on social media.

"It is something that we sadly have to deal with as international athletes in the public eye, and it can have a negative effect on you when you are simply trying to play the game to the best of your ability," she said.

"We have a great relationship with the vast majority of our fans, and we love interacting with them in person and on social media...But the downside is that there are people who choose to abuse you instead..."

"And for the ICC to be fully supportive in providing this kind of service is fantas-

tic. It is a programme that puts our wellbeing at the forefront, and that is a good thing."

First introduced ahead of the 2024 women's T20 World Cup, the programme is a key component of the ICC's "wider approach to player wellbeing and safeguarding."

The programme has been operated across all ICC events since then, helping participants engage confidently with fans while reducing exposure to harmful online content.

Scotland's Sarah Bryce, who signed up for it in 2024, said the ICC Player Protection Programme has "made a massive difference."

"It's nice having that peace of mind because a lot of the players, the young players in particular, use social media a lot," said Bryce.

Ludhiana: Football talent aplenty, but Punjab lacks a support system

LUDHIANA, JUNE 26: As the ongoing FIFA World Cup captivates fans across the globe, football enthusiasts in Punjab are reflecting on the state of a sport that once enjoyed considerable popularity.

Players, coaches and promoters argue there is no lack of talent in the region, and it needs sustained push, quality infrastructure, proper facilities and attractive job schemes to keep youngsters in the game.

There was a time when grounds bustled with activity and large numbers of youngsters took up the sport. However, football enthusiasts lament the game has seen a decline in recent years, with fewer youngsters taking it up.



Philanthropist and ardent football follower Brij Bhushan Goyal points out several countries with fewer resources than India have built strong football culture through sustained investment in youth development programmes, coaching infrastructure and competitive domestic systems.

Goyal says the key difference is in creating a structured pathway that nurtures talent from a young age and provides aspiring footballers with opportunities to progress.

According to Amit Kukreja, an avid follower of the game, the achievements of Indian-origin footballers,

who have gone on to represent other countries, underline the potential of youngsters here.

Echoing similar sentiments, former footballer Rachhpal Singh Raju says school and college competitions, once considered the backbone of talent identification, have gradually lost prominence. "A vibrant grassroots structure is essential if India wants to produce world-class footballers. Talent exists in every district, but opportunities remain limited," he adds. Ajay Aggarwal, a football enthusiast and sports promoter, expresses concern over what he says is a decline in number of community-level tournaments and local leagues.

ICC Women's T20WC: Jemimah highlights importance of aggressive intent against Australia

MUMBAI, JUNE 26: Ahead of her side's final league stage ICC Women's T20 World Cup match against Australia, Indian batter Jemimah Rodrigues said that Australia is a team that does not let other teams settle, and it is important not to be defensive against such an attacking, pressure-putting opponent.

Team India will take on Australia in their last league stage clash of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup at the iconic Lord's venue on Sunday, with the match determining India's chances for the semifinals. India are placed second in the points table with three wins and a loss, with six points and has South Africa just behind them at third spot with same record. South Africa enjoys the advantage of playing a weaker side, Bangladesh, but India are pitted against Australia, who have six ICC Women's T20 WC titles.

Speaking on JioStar's 'Champions Huddle', Jemimah highlighted the importance of being attacking against Australia. Who else knows attack better than Jemimah, who immortalised her name with a sensational 127* in 134 balls at Navi Mumbai to chase down a record-breaking 339 against Australia in the 2025 ICC Women's World Cup semifinal. However, with just 58 runs in four innings in the ongoing T20 WC with best score of 26, Jemimah is yet to fire.

"The thing about Australia is that they never let you settle. They are always attacking, always putting pressure. If you want to do well against them, you can't be defensive. You must dominate and take the game to them, and our team enjoys that challenge. We know there is no other way. You must match their intensity and stay ahead. That kind of mindset



works well for us," she said.

She highlighted how Shafali Varma (493 runs in 23 innings with two fifties at a strike rate of over 140 in T20Is against Australia) and pacer Renuka Thakur (16 wickets in 18 T20Is at an average of 29.93 with a four-wicket haul in T20Is against Australia) have done well against Australia and the team has quite a lot of experience facing them. Jemimah said that the team needs to go and show their aggressive intent and "everything will fall in place".

Read More

"Shafali Verma has played a lot against them. Renuka has also bowled well against Australia in the past. Most of our players have good experience against them. We have faced them many times. But on the day, it all comes down to execution. We just need to go out there, back ourselves,

and play with that aggressive intent. If we do that, I think everything will fall into place," she added.

Head coach Amol Muzumdar also highlighted the challenge he faced with India on taking the head coach gig back in October 2023, with the team needing a "shake up, a change in mindset, approach and attitude" and now the team looks different from what it was before he took up the job.

"We introduced new systems, new roles, and challenged the players to take more responsibility. The players responded well to the changes we brought in. They bought into the new plans and started backing each other. The results on the field are there for everyone to see. This Indian women's team is very different from what it was two years ago. Talking about Australia, they are a very strong side. Everyone knows that.