



## Srikanth ends runner-up at US Open Super 300 badminton tournament

**FULLERTON (USA), JUNE 29:** India's Kidambi Srikanth ended his impressive run with a runner-up finish at the US Open Super 300 badminton tournament after going down fighting in three games to Chinese Taipei's Su Li-yang in the men's singles final here.

The 33-year-old Srikanth, a silver-medallist at the 2021 World Championships, recovered from the loss of the opening game to force a decider but couldn't match the pace and intensity of world No. 46 Su, who is nine years his junior.

Srikanth eventually lost 15-21, 21-16, 9-21 in a physical battle that lasted just over an hour here on Sunday.

He had also ended second at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 and Syed Modi International Super 300 last year.

Playing his first final of the season, the former World No. 1 was the quicker off the blocks but a rare error, where his racket crossed the net during a rally, appeared to disrupt his rhythm as a string of unforced mistakes allowed Su to open up a 7-2 lead.

Srikanth, however, regrouped to win eight of the next 11 points and draw level at 10-10 after a series of fast-paced rallies. His powerful smashes proved crucial, helping him edge ahead by a point at the mid-game interval after Su smashed wide.

However, the Chinese Taipei shuttler wrested back control after the break, quickening the pace of the rallies and using subtle deception to force errors from Srikanth. He soon extended his lead to 17-12.



A cross-court smash followed by a delicate net shot helped Srikanth reduce the deficit to 14-18, but another error handed the initiative back to Su.

Su earned six game points with a thunderous smash. The Indian saved one before sending the shuttle long as Su wrapped up the opening game in 17 minutes.

After the change of ends, the contest remained evenly poised with neither player giving an inch. From 4-4, Srikanth reeled off three straight points to move 7-4 ahead, capping one extended rally with a superb cross-court block at the net.

Another breathtaking rally followed, with Su making the Indian cover every corner of the court before restoring parity at 8-8.

A deft backhand cross-court net shot took Srikanth to 10-8, and he entered the interval with a three-point cushion after Su smashed wide.

Su responded with two thunderous smashes after the break, but Srikanth's excellent net play helped him maintain a 14-10 advantage.

The Chinese Taipei player broke the rhythm with a flat push into the corner to close the gap to 13-15 as Srikanth sprayed two shots wide.

Su then sent one long before Srikanth's cross-court return made it 18-13. The Indian won the next flat exchange and earned seven game points when Su again went wide. Although Su saved three game points, Srikanth forced the decider with a powerful down-the-line smash.

Su came out firing in the deciding game, opening with a lightning smash before putting Srikanth under sustained pressure to race to a 4-1 lead.

Maintaining his aggression and injecting greater pace into the rallies, Su surged to 7-4 before another rocket smash

made it 9-5. Srikanth alternated between moments of brilliance and costly errors, often undoing his good work with loose shots. A judgment error on the baseline allowed Su to carry a four-point lead into the interval.

Srikanth was then denied permission by the chair umpire to change his shirt, leaving the Indian visibly upset. Su remained firmly in the zone, continuing his aggressive approach to widen the lead to 15-7.

Another pinpoint line-hugging winner was followed by a net error from Srikanth. Although the Indian produced a fine cross-court smash, it proved too little, too late as Su stretched his advantage to 18-8.

Su eventually earned 12 championship points after another wide return from Srikanth. The Indian saved one before Su clinched the first BWF World Tour title of his career.

## Special Pulse Polio Drive Conducted During Day Night All India Cricket Tournament in Doda

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, JUNE 29**

In a unique initiative to ensure that no eligible child is left behind, the Health Department Doda extended the Pulse Polio Immunization Programme beyond conventional vaccination booths by organizing a special vaccination session during the day-night matches of the ongoing All India 16th Gufran Memorial All India T20 Cricket Tournament at Sports Stadium, Doda.

The initiative was undertaken under the guidance of the Deputy Commissioner Doda Sh Krishan Lal JKAS, Chief Medical Officer Doda Dr Vinod Sharma and the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Doda, Dr. Sat Lal Manhas, and under the supervision of Block Medical Officer, Ghat, Dr. Abdul Gafoor.

The vaccination drive was carried out by a dedicated health team from Medical Block Ghat, headed by Mr. Ajay Singh, along with the under-training paramedical students of Govt ANMT School, Doda, including Ms. Sandhya, Ms. Anshu Manhas, Ms. Tejasvi Sharma, and Ms. Anisha Devi. The team administered Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) to children in the 0-5 years age group attending the tournament with their families.

Around 70 eligible chil-



children were administered Pulse Polio drops during the special outreach activity.

This is the first time that a Pulse Polio vaccination session has been organized during a major sporting event in Doda district,

demonstrating the Health Department's innovative approach to ensuring that every eligible child is reached with the life-saving vaccine.

The Health Department appreciated the dedicated

efforts of the vaccination team and appealed to all parents to ensure that every child below five years of age receives the Pulse Polio vaccine, reaffirming its commitment to the vision of a Polio-Free India.

## Cricket's Olympic qualification: Indian women qualify as continental leaders

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 29:** The Indian women's cricket team qualified for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games as the top-placed Asian team in the ongoing T20 World Cup while the men's squad will have to be the continental leaders in world rankings at the end of this year to clinch a direct berth.

The qualification criteria was unveiled by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday. Cricket is returning to the Olympics after a century and will feature six teams each in men's and women's competitions.

"Australia, Great Britain (through England), India and South Africa have qualified for the six-team women's event after finishing as the highest-ranked teams from Oceania, Europe, Asia and Africa, respectively, at the ongoing ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026," the ICC stated.

"...reigning ODI world champions India earned Asia's quota despite their T20 World Cup campaign ending earlier than hoped," it added. The Indian team had missed the semifinals

after losing to Australia in their final group match on Sunday.

The West Indies had also reached the women's World Cup semifinals like Australia, England, and South Africa, placing it among the top four. However, as a composite ICC member representing multiple Caribbean nations and not recognised as an IOC/NOC, it is ineligible to participate in the Olympic Games or to obtain a quota place as one entity.

West Indies comprises the NOCs of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the US Virgin Islands, which do not compete individually in ICC events. "As the side represents multiple Caribbean nations rather than a single IOC-recognised National Olympic Committee (NOC), it cannot directly compete at the Olympic Games.

"Should the West Indies finish among the highest-ranked teams not already

qualified by the end of 2026, the ICC will stage a dedicated Caribbean Qualifier to determine which NOC progresses to the ICC Olympics Qualifier," the ICC stated.

The process for men hinges on rankings to filter four early quota slots from different continents.

"These will be allocated to the highest-ranked eligible NOCs (National Olympic Committees) continentally (i.e. the top ranked NOCs from different continents), taken from the ICC Men's T20 Team Rankings, resulting in four teams in total," the ICC stated.

The cut-off date has been kept at December 31, 2026.

The host country, USA, is guaranteed one quota place each in the men's and women's competition on the basis that they have "satisfied the ICC criteria of appearing on a ranking of 15 or better in the Rankings during the qualification period." In addition, the Final Olympic Global Qualification Tournament (FOGQT) will be held separately for both genders, dates for which are yet to be finalised. The next eight highest-

ranked eligible teams, which have not yet qualified based on rankings, will fight it out for one slot each in the men's and women's competition.

No maximum limit on continental representation applies to the final qualifier.

ICC chairman Jay Shah said the announcement of the qualification pathway was a key milestone as the sport returns to the Olympics after a century, and will be a great opportunity for cricket-playing nations to showcase the game to the world. "The confirmation of this qualification pathway is an important step towards Los Angeles 2028 and gives Members across the world a clear and exciting route to the Olympic stage," said Shah.

"The Olympic Games represent the pinnacle of multi-event sport, and cricket's inclusion at LA28 will inspire players and fans in every region. This is an historic moment, and one of great opportunity for our Members, as we continue to grow the game and take it to new audiences around the world," he added.

## Army organises Marmat Volleyball Championship at Behota in Doda

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, JUNE 29**

The Indian Army organised the Marmat Volleyball Championship at Higher Secondary School Chilote, Behota, with the aim of promoting sports culture and constructive youth engagement in the remote region.

The championship witnessed enthusiastic participation from eight local teams representing various villages of Marmat tehsil, including Young Star Junaoli, Mangota, Labber, Mandole, Behota Star, Chilote, Langdar 11 and Bhat Kund. Conducted in a knockout format, the tournament drew an audience of over 300 local residents, including youth, elders and families.

The final match was played between Behota Star and Young Star Junaoli, in



which Behota Star emerged victorious after a closely contested match. Winners and runners-up were felicitated during the closing ceremony and refreshments were arranged for participants and spectators. The event received an over-

whelmingly positive response from the local population, who appreciated the initiative for strengthening bonds between the community and Indian Army. Such sporting events continue to encourage unity, sportsmanship and positive com-

munity engagement. The Indian Army remains committed to sustained youth outreach initiatives aimed at empowering local communities and fostering peace, development and constructive engagement across the region.

## Germany fans confident ahead of Paraguay clash, eye tough test against France

**BOSTON, JUNE 29:** Germany fans gathering in Boston on Sunday, a day ahead of their team's first World Cup knockout match against Paraguay, said they were confident about the chances of victory against the rugged South Americans, but the prospect of meeting France in the next round was more of a challenge.

"It's not going to be pretty but the result will count so they will have to put up a tough fight," said Tim Nikolayzik, who is originally from Bremen and has

worked in finance in New York since 2019, of Monday's game with Paraguay.

Nikolayzik said he was cautiously optimistic about the four-time world champions' encounter against the South Americans who are competing in their first World Cup in 16 years.

Germany crushed minnows Curacao 7-1 in their opening game of the tournament, but they had to come from behind to beat Ivory Coast and lost 2-1 to Ecuador in their final group game,

when they had already qualified for the Round of 32. That already is an improvement after shock first-round exits in 2018 and 2022. Money can't buy success in World Cup for gulf nations like Saudi Arabia and Qatar' Under coach Julian Nagelsmann, the Germans have stars such as striker Kai Havertz and attacking midfielder Jamal Musiala. Many fans, though, think they have a long way to go to equal the power of Spain, France and defending champions Argentina.

## Inter-Zonal District Level Kho Kho Competition for Boys held at Shopian

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, JUNE 29**

Department of Youth Services and Sports (DYSS), Shopian today organized the Inter-Zonal District Level Kho Kho Competition for Boys (Under-14 and Under-17) at Gunj Bakash Arhama, Shopian under 100-Day Nasha Mukh JK Abhayan.

District Youth Services and Sports Officer, Shopian, Mohammad Ayoub Bhat, interacted with the participants and highlighted the importance of sports in promoting a healthy and disciplined lifestyle.

He urged students to stay away from drugs and engage in sports activities for their physical and mental



well-being.

He encouraged the young players to build self-confidence, develop discipline and strive for excellence

through sports and teamwork.

The competition witnessed enthusiastic participation from players represent-

ing different zones of the district who displayed remarkable sportsmanship, teamwork and competitive spirit throughout the event.