

# East Bengal And Mohun Bagan Lock Horns In Durand Cup Quarterfinal

The 134th Durand Cup enters the knockout stage with a quarter-final on Sunday, as the footballing capital braces for its biggest spectacle. At the iconic Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (Salt Lake Stadium), Emami East Bengal take on arch-rivals Mohun Bagan Super Giants in the legendary Kolkata Derby, a match that transcends sport and resonates with the very heartbeat of the city, according to a release from the Durand Cup. Both teams have stormed through the group stage unbeaten, ensuring an unforgettable evening of football drama.

Just as Shillong and Kokrajhar turned into carnivals during the group rounds, Kolkata is set to surpass them all with its electrifying Derby atmosphere.

Emami East Bengal topped Group A with a perfect nine points, while Mohun Bagan mirrored the feat in Group B, setting the stage for an epic clash where only one will march into the semifinals.

When the Salt Lake floodlights blaze on Sunday night, two titans of Indian football will collide



in a battle for the ages. East Bengal, rejuvenated under Spanish tactician Oscar Bruzon, arrives in red-hot form after topping their group with a 100% record. Their campaign included a resounding 5-0 win over South United FC, a narrow but gritty 1-0 triumph over Namdhari FC, and a sensational 6-1 demolition of Indian Air Force FC. New signings have transformed the Red and Gold Brigade. Moroccan striker Hamid Ahadad,

Brazilian midfielder Miguel Figueira, and Palestinian international Mohammed Rashid have blended seamlessly with experienced campaigners Saul Crespo and Bipin Singh. Greek forward Dimitrios Diamantakos has led the line with authority, making East Bengal look every bit the champions in waiting.

Coach Bruzon struck a confident note ahead of the derby: "We must control emotions and focus on the

pitch. Derby can make you a hero or a villain depending on the result. We want to stay cool. We know the weight of this derby--it's everything to our fans. We've prepared intensely, and the boys are buzzing to deliver on this massive stage." Mohun Bagan Super Giants, led by Spanish coach Jose Francisco Molina Jimenez, have been equally dominant. The Mariners launched their campaign with a 3-1 win over

Mohammedan SC, followed by a 4-0 dismantling of BSF FC, and capped their group with a ruthless 5-1 rout of Diamond Harbour FC.

Liston Colaco has been the tournament's standout star, netting five goals in three matches to become joint-top scorer. With creative spark Sahal Abdul Samad and sharp finishers Jamie Maclaren and Jason Cummings in support, the Mariners' attack looks lethal. However, injuries to

Manvir Singh and Kiyan Nassiri may force tactical tweaks.

Fearless East Bengal or Confident Mohun Bagan?

East Bengal's high-pressing attack, spearheaded by Ahadad, Diamantakos, Bipin Singh, and David Lalhlansanga, will test a Bagan defence that has looked occasionally fragile. Mohun Bagan, meanwhile, will rely on their clinical finishing and big-game temperament, with Colaco and Sahal at the heart of their creativity.

The stakes are monumental: progression to the semifinals, bragging rights in a century-old rivalry, and the chance to add to their Durand Cup legacy. Mohun Bagan edge the historical tally with 17 titles, while East Bengal have 16, setting up another chapter in this age-old battle. With the city's coffee houses, tram rides, and markets already buzzing with Derby talk, the Salt Lake Stadium will transform into a cauldron of emotion on Sunday night. Fans snapped up tickets within hours of release, some even camping overnight, underlining the magnitude of this clash.

## Teenager Kriish Tyagi Only Indian In US Open Juniors



Kriish Tyagi has made it to the Wimbledon and Australian Open, but the break in big apple will be big for the Indian teenager. However he dismisses the pressure factor. "No pressure as the only Indian in the US Open Junior Tennis Championships." The 18 year old has been supported by the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis association as a part of their juniors development programme. He will participate in the ITF J300 before taking part in the US Open Junior C'ships.

The Karnataka teen has had his own share of challenges. Firstly, he switched sports and took to swimming at the age of 10. The result, though, came in quick time because of 'dedication, improvisation and discipline. He is currently India No.1 in the junior category.

"Hitting with the players, being a part of that environment, made me feel like I belonged," he expressed. "I was a little nervous during my singles match at Wimbledon-the crowd and atmosphere, it's not something I was used to. But I took that reflection into my doubles and I felt much more confident."

"For the US Open, we skipped a few events to make time for physical, mental and skillful training. I feel more ready now," he said.

So what does he need to be successful in US Open? "One key thing I want to bring to the US Open is strength, physical dominance and mental resilience during clutch points. That's where I believe I can grow," said Kriish.

In the last 8 years Kriish has made a successful transition from swimming pool to tennis. A good result at the US Open can rejuvenate the Indian tennis fans

## Nick Woltemade Transfer: Claudio Pizarro Explains Why Bayern Munich After After 'Special' Stuttgart Forward



The Nick Woltemade to Bayern Munich transfer rumours might be progressing with the same steam but there's still some room left before the deal can be called 'dead'. Though Bayern aren't willing to match Stuttgart's asking price for the young striker, things can change before the transfer window concludes. While Bayern's interest in the young German is concrete, some critics haven't managed to wrap their heads around the extravagant interest from the Bundesliga champions. Before the start of the German Super Cup in Stuttgart, former Bayern

striker Claudio Pizarro was asked about what makes Woltemade such an interesting player for Bayern.

Pizarro is one of the top-scoring players in Bundesliga history, spent the finest period of his career with Bayern. Being a Peruvian in the Bundesliga, Pizarro is well aware of the dearth of traditional No. 9s in Germany. Seeing Woltemade who incredible promise, Pizarro knew that Bayern would not want to miss out on the opportunity of signing such a talent.

"First for Bayern that he's German, of course, when a German player is

doing well then Bayern is like okay the satellites are on. I know him really well, I played with him when he was 17 in Bremen and I could see how he improved and I think that's something special. He was learning a lot in the first year and then suddenly last year he did a great job and I think there's still space that he can learn more for that, so I think he's a good player," Pizarro said.

When asked about the lack of top quality strikers in Germany in recent times, Pizarro sees a potential in Woltemade that can finally bridge this gap.

"We see the history, the German strikers were always tough, big guys scoring a lot of goals and in the last years you didn't see that much, so I think it's going to be something special to get a player like that again in the German team. He has to learn still because he's really big, but sometimes he doesn't use his body like he used to or score many goals with the head, but as I said, he still needs a little bit of time to improve in some things, but I think he's a great player," Pizarro asserted.ndt

## Austin Dillon makes NASCAR Cup playoffs with redemptive victory at Richmond



RICHMOND, Va. Austin Dillon left no doubt this time that he will make the NASCAR Cup Series playoffs with his second consecutive victory at Richmond Raceway.

A year after his championship eligibility was revoked for wrecking two drivers on the final lap, Dillon grabbed a playoff berth Saturday night with a clean run to the checkered flag on the 0.75-mile oval.

The Richard Childress Racing driver outdueled Ryan Blaney over the final 100 laps, seizing control with a shrewd strategy call to pit his No. 3 Chevrolet four laps earlier than the Team Penske driver's No. 12 Ford. Dillon, who led 107 of 400 laps, won by 2.471 seconds over Alex Bowman. Blaney faded to third, followed by Joey Logano and Austin

Cindric.

With his sixth career victory, Dillon became the 14th race winner to lock into the 16-driver field for the Cup playoffs, which are contested over the final 10 races of the season.

The regular season will conclude next Saturday night at Daytona International Speedway, where the final two playoff drivers will be confirmed.

After a consistent start to his season, Chase Elliott is in a slump heading into the playoffs. The 2020 Cup champion finished last at Richmond and failed to finish for the first time since last October at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

Elliott nearly had cleared the pileup on the 198th lap when he was tagged in the right rear by Kyle Busch.

## Sinquefield Cup: D Gukesh In Familiar Territory, R Praggnanandhaa Aims For Podium

World Champion D Gukesh returns to classical chess after a brief hiatus to face a star-studded field at the Sinquefield Cup starting Monday while R Praggnanandhaa will eye a podium finish in the fifth leg of the Grand Chess Tour to strengthen his overall fifth-place standing. While many argue that the field feels incomplete without world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen, the Norwegian Grandmaster has openly admitted that he no longer enjoys classical chess. Without Carlsen, the GCT was announced and this is the culmination point where in the players would qualify for the grand finale slated later this year.

Fabiano Caruana of United States, Alireza Firouzja from France, and in-form Armenian-turned-American Levon Aronian are most likely to pose a stiff challenge for the Indian duo but the rest of the field is also quite impressive as all the nine selected players for the Grand Chess Tour for this year will compete together.

Given his current form



in faster version, Gukesh may not be one of the favourites here but one should be reminded that classical chess is the Indian GM's forte.

Praggnanandhaa, meanwhile, has already cemented his credentials by qualifying for next year's Candidates Tournament, which will decide Gukesh's challenger for the world title.

Both Gukesh and Praggnanandhaa have also chosen to compete in the Grand Swiss in Uzbekistan next month, underlining their intent to win everything.

In the GCT standings, Praggnanandhaa currently leads Gukesh, but consistency will be key as they face seasoned opponents. Among them, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave remains the man to beat,

while 42-year-old Aronian has rediscovered top form. The former world junior champion and World Cup winner has already bagged two titles in as many weeks -- Freestyle Chess in Las Vegas and the St. Louis Rapid & Blitz. Now it's classical chess and an encore is what his fans are rooting for.

The event, to be played over nine rounds between ten players, has a total prize pool of USD 350,000.

Participants: D Gukesh, R Praggnanandhaa (both India); Fabiano Caruana, Wesley So, Levon Aronian, Sam Savian (All USA); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Alireza Firouzja (both France); Duda Jan Kryzstof (Poland), Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzbekistan).

## Ex-England Star's Bizarre Tactic To Shake Up Opponents: "Didn't Brush For Days"



Former England cricketer Phil Tufnell recently revealed one of the most disgusting tales about his teammate and former wicketkeeper Jack Russell. He stated how the English wicketkeeper used a strategy to distract the opposition batters during the matches, which left the viewers in shock. Cricket is a game which brings out the tough competition between the players. Despite being known as "the gentleman's game", players often goes to any extent to clinch the victory for the team and stay ahead in the competition.

Tufnell revealed that how Russell didn't use to brush his teeth for days, in order to distract the opposition batters with his breath. "My wicketkeeper, Jack Russell, didn't use to brush his teeth for a couple of days. He said he wanted to put the batters off when he was standing up to the crease. Lots of little shenanigans go on there," Tufnell revealed on BBC, as quoted by the Times of India. West Indies all-

rounder Carlos Brathwaite, who was also part of the discussion, spoke about how the wicketkeepers can change the momentum of the game.

"Yes, there are some that, when you're batting, it's just like, shut up. But as a bowler, you just love it. It brings a different energy. When you have a quiet keeper, it feels like the game takes so long," said Brathwaite.

Talking about Indian cricket, the Shubman Gill-led side registered a 2-2 draw against England in the five-match Test series. It was a dominating show from a young Team India, backed by skipper Shubman Gill, who led from the front and scored 754 runs in 10 innings. Pacer Mohammed Siraj emerged as the highest wicket-taker with 23 wickets in five matches.

Now, the fans are waiting for the announcement of India's squad for the Asia Cup 2025, which will be played in UAE. The tournament will kick-start from September 9 and will end on September 28.

## Carlos Alcaraz To Face Defending Champ Jannik Sinner In Cincinnati ATP Final

World number one Jannik Sinner and hot rival Carlos Alcaraz will face off in a major final for the fourth time this season after both booked straight-set wins into the title match at the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open on Saturday.

Defending champion Sinner ruthlessly subdued 136th-ranked qualifier Terence Atmane 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 while Spanish second seed Alcaraz defeated an ailing Alexander Zverev, who was suffering badly from the 32 Celsius heat and humidity, by 6-4, 6-3. Alcaraz and Sinner have played for trophies this season in Rome, Roland Garros and Wimbledon, with the Italian winning their most recent at the All England Club last month.

Sinner, celebrating his 24th birthday, ended Frenchman Atmane's dream run and will now try to become the first man since Roger Federer in 2014-15 to win back-to-back titles in Cincinnati.

Sinner, tuning up for the US Open in his first tournament since winning



Wimbledon, hasn't dropped a set en route to the final.

"It's a very, very tough challenge every time you play a new opponent," Sinner said. "In the later stages of the tournament, the pressure is on, they deserve to be there." Alcaraz will also be playing in his second Cincy final after losing to Novak Djokovic in 2023.

The Spaniard increased his ATP season match win lead to 53 in a year of five titles.

Alcaraz broke Zverev once in the opening set to claim it before the German, who is diabetic,

begin feeling poorly and took a medical timeout off court after the third game of the second set.

Zverev, who has retired in only two matches since 2014, came back out to finish what was a patchy match from Alcaraz, who double-faulted for times in the second game of the second set but won the last 12 points with Zverev running on fumes.

"We started well with good rallies, a good level," Alcaraz said. "All of a sudden he felt bad and I was thinking more about how he was feeling instead of playing good tennis."

"It was tough and I just

wish him all the best."

Alcaraz said he is keen to try and take his Wimbledon revenge on Sinner in the unorthodox Monday final.

"We always bring our best tennis. We raise each other's level. I'm ready to take the challenge," Alcaraz said.

"I will try and adjust my game better and correct what I did wrong in our last match. I want to be ready with my 100%. Mentally I'll be ready -- I'm excited for Monday."

"Pressure was on me" - Atmane gave birthday boy Sinner a Pokemon card shortly before they went on court, but he was in a less giving mood once they were underway.

But Sinner surrendered just three points in his first six service games as they went to the tiebreaker with neither man facing a break point. Atmane double-faulted on the first point of the decider and Sinner was away, powering to a 5-2 lead and pocketing the set at his second opportunity.

"My experience helped in the first set," he said.

## Alyssa Healy Makes No Secret Of Big Challenge In India-Hosted Women's World Cup: "Biased..."



Batting stalwart Alyssa Healy has acknowledged that Australia will have to negotiate the spin challenge in a big way to stake claim to the World Cup for a record-extending eighth time in the Indian subcontinent. The star wicketkeeper-batter will be the one to watch out for when the showpiece event begins in India and Sri Lanka next month as the Southern Stars aim to retain the title they won in New Zealand in 2022.

Healy gave a preview of what to expect in the global event when she blazed away to an unbeaten 137 as Australia A picked up consolation nine-wicket win against India A in the third one-dayer here. Though Australia A lost the series 1-2, Healy stood out in the opener's role by emerging as the highest run-getter in the series. She had struck a 91 in the

previous game, once again displaying her mastery against the India A spin attack that had the likes of Radha Yadav, Minnu Mani, Tanuja Kanwar and Prema Rawat, who did not play in the inconsequential game.

"They've (India A) got a really spin-heavy attack and we're going to have to play a lot of that throughout the World Cup as well, a lot of the middle overs will be spin-biased," Healy told cricket.com.au.

Australia A was more determined on Sunday as they made a mockery of the spin attack to finish the match in less than 28 overs by chasing down a modest 217-run target for the loss of just one wicket.

Australia A coach Dan Marsh too felt that Healy's performance on Sunday places her in good space ahead of the World Cup in India.