

IOA wants to host 2026 CWG but remains firm on boycotting next edition

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NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 14

THE INDIA Olympic Association (IOA) went into the meeting room with the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) squabbling on a boycott. Somehow, at the end of it, they ended up expressing interest to host the very event they wanted to snub. Whether it was the CGF officials pulling off some sort of a salesman trick or their IOA counterparts shooting from the hip, one can't say.

But even as the impasse continues over India's participation in the 2022 Commonwealth Games and beyond, IOA secretary general Rajeev Mehta announced they are considering a bid for the 2026 edi-

tion. "We are willing to host 2026 CWG. We will first take approval from the (IOA) executive board and general assembly. Then we will approach government. If they allow, we can host the Games," Mehta said.

The declaration surprised CGF president Louise Martin and CEO David Grevenberg, who shared the stage with Mehta at a media briefing after the meeting on Thursday. Even IOA president Narinder Batra, sitting next to Mehta, looked a little perplexed. No one offered an immediate response to it, with a few other IOA members saying it was Mehta's 'personal opinion'.

The same was said in June as well, when Mehta floated the idea of India boycotting the 2022

Games because the organisers excluded shooting, a sport where the country wins the bulk of its medals. The stray remark by the IOA secretary general snowballed into a major controversy. And when the IOA's president suggested that India should withdraw from the Games for good, the CGF top brass was forced to undertake a trip to Delhi to broker peace.

The CGF hoped they would explain the rationale behind shooting's exclusion and also remind the IOA that Mehta and then president N Ramachandran were among the representatives of 71 Commonwealth nations who agreed to keep shooting in the 'optional sport category' in the CWG during a meeting in 2015. "It is dis-

appointing because it was a unanimous decision. But we are where we are right now," Martin said.

Multiple options were considered on Thursday to appease India. The CGF has suggested that the Commonwealth Shooting Championship, which will be held simultaneously, offers world ranking points - that call, however, will be taken by the International Shooting Sport Federation. The IOA, on the other hand, has demanded that the medals won by shooters at the Championship be counted in the CWG medals tally.

A lot of vague scenarios but at the end of the meeting, two things were clear: shooting will not be a part of the 2022 CWG, against India's wishes and the IOA has not withdrawn its boycott threat, con-

trary to what the CGF hoped.

But India did soften its stand, with Batra saying 'boycott was not an appropriate' word. "It should have been 'withdrawal'. It was a successful and productive meeting but the proposal of withdrawal from 2022 CWG still stands," he said.

Batra said the bigger concern for him was the short gap between the Commonwealth and Asian Games. The Asiad, he said, assumes significance for a lot of sports where Olympic qualification berths are up for grabs. "You can't expect an athlete to peak today and then again after 32 days, given that is the gap between the 2022 CWG and Asian Games," he added. "It's not that CWG medals are not important, they are. So are

Asian Games, which is also an Olympic qualifying event for some. And how do I increase my Olympic medals if we have to bid for the 2032 Olympics? We keep everything in mind."

The IOA has already expressed interest to host a bunch of events, including the 2026 Youth Games, 2030 Asian Games and 2032 Olympics. Mehta's announcement that India will also bid for the 2026 CWG means the country has now thrown its hat in the ring for almost all multi-discipline events during that cycle. At the moment, however, confusion prevails over whether the IOA wants to boycott the CWG or host it. Perhaps, they feel the safest way to ensure shooting returns to the CWG programme is by hosting it.



IOA president Narinder Batra with CGF counterpart Louise Martin in New Delhi on Thursday. CGF

Captain Sparv ready to lead Finland to the promised land

REUTERS
STOCKHOLM, NOVEMBER 14

AFTER 17 years of service in his nation's colours, Finland captain Tim Sparv is on the cusp of doing something that no senior male Finnish footballer has managed - leading his side to the finals of a major soccer tournament. A win against Liechtenstein in front of a capacity crowd in Helsinki on Friday will guarantee the Finns, better known for their prowess at winter sports such as ice hockey and cross-country skiing, a berth at Euro 2020.

"It's hard to put it into words. It's just amazing the opportunity that we have -- a home game against Liechtenstein, the stadium is going to be packed. It's hysterical in Finland right now," he told Reuters in a telephone interview.

Finland took part in several Olympic soccer tournaments, but few Finnish fans count that as an achievement.

Instead, they have waited patiently to take their place among the footballing nations of the world, with Sparv cheering them on from the terraces before first lining up for them at under-15 level in 2002 and then for the senior side for the last decade.

"It was a dream of mine to represent the national team when I was growing up. If you were a young Finnish footballer back then, you looked up to Sami Hyypia, Jari Litmanen, Antti Niemi, Jussi Jaaskelainen - it was a big deal for me when I first came into the national team in 2009.

"These guys were still there, so it was a fantastic opportunity for me to learn from guys who had played in big clubs, won Champions Leagues. That was pretty cool. You have to remember, this was the golden generation," the midfielder explained.

"Everybody expected them to

bring Finland to a championship, so I think it was a surprise and maybe a disappointment for many that they never managed it." The names and clubs of the current squad may be less well-known -- Sparv plays for FC Midtjylland in Denmark -- but a combination of defensive organisation, team spirit and the goals of striker Teemu Pukki, who plays for Norwich City in England's Premier League, have put them on the brink of qualification. "Pukki brings that X-factor, the simple playing philosophy that everybody knows has helped us. He's been so amazing for us," he said of the 29-year-old Pukki, who has netted seven of Finland's 12 goals in qualifying.

"We know that if we create a chance for Teemo, he'll score nine times out of 10. He's really developed into a star player."

Citing his side's defensive stability and Iceland's recent success in qualifying for Euro 2016 and the 2018 World Cup as sources of inspiration, Sparv said Finland's heart and togetherness would see them through.

"Everybody plays for the flag on the front of the shirt, rather than the name on the back. You can see that the players in the Finnish national team love the team. No-one creates any issues or problems," he said.

Armenia and Bosnia could still pip the Finns to second place, but not if Sparv's side beat Liechtenstein, a team with no wins and only two points and two goals scored so far in qualifying. "I can't imagine what it will be like if we win. People have been talking about these final two games for weeks," Sparv said. "We still have some work to do, but it's going to be a big party all over Finland if we make it." **TV:** Live on Sony ESPN, 10:30 pm onwards.



Sparv's Finland are a win away from securing a spot in the finals of a major football tournament for the first time. Reuters

Tsitsipas wins Next Gen battle

21-year-old Greek demolishes 22-year-old Zverev 6-3 6-2 to book a place in the last four of the ATP Finals

REUTERS/AP
LONDON, NOVEMBER 14

DEBUTANT STEFANOS Tsitsipas crushed defending champion Alexander Zverev 6-3 6-2 on Wednesday to book his place in the last four of the ATP Finals with a match to spare.

The 21-year-old, the first Greek player to qualify for the elite eight-man season-ender, backed up his opening round-robin win over Daniil Medvedev with another virtuoso performance at the O2 Arena and is yet to lose a set. His emphatic victory secured a top-two place in the group and left Zverev, world number one Rafael Nadal and Medvedev scrambling to join him in Saturday's semi-finals.

A year ago Tsitsipas was winning the NextGen title in Milan -- the ATP's showcase event for up-and-coming players -- and in his two matches so far in London he has bolstered the impression that he has the game to start collecting Grand Slam titles.

His swashbuckling all-court game, with a booming serve, aggressive groundstrokes, deft volleys and silky movement have made him an instant crowd favourite at the O2 Arena.

All those weapons were on display against Zverev in what was the youngest, in terms of combined age, match at the ATP Finals since Andy Murray played Juan Martin del Potro in 2009. Zverev's last three matches at the O2 were straight sets victories over Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic and Nadal -- a trio with 55 Grand Slam titles between them.

But the form of Monday's group-stage win over Nadal deserted him as Tsitsipas, with whom he is said to have a frosty



Despite reaching the semifinals, Stefanos Tsitsipas said he will not take his foot off the pedal against World No 2 Rafael Nadal on Friday. Reuters

relationship, beat him for the fourth time in five matches.

Tsitsipas broke in the eighth game when Zverev opted to follow in a weak second serve and made a mess of a low volley.

From that point on it was one-way traffic.

Zverev's level tailed off alarmingly in the second set and Tsitsipas wrapped things up with an ace. Tsitsipas later revealed he had needed a painkilling injection in a

foot injury.

Yet despite having already reached the semis, he will not take his foot off the gas against Nadal on Friday when he could knock the Spaniard out.

"I'm going to give it my all. I'm going to try to give my soul, and I think it's also a very good challenge for me in order to prepare for more difficult matches in the semi-finals," he said. "It's going to educate me, and I'm going to try to get and absorb as

much as I can from that."

Consolation win

Matteo Berrettini will leave the ATP Finals with a victory after beating Dominic Thiem 7-6 (3), 6-3 on Thursday.

The match was essentially meaningless as Thiem had already qualified for the semifinals after winning his first two round-robin matches, while Berrettini had no chance of advancing after two losses.

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Thiem didn't play anywhere near as well as in his wins over Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic but came from a break down to force a tiebreaker in the first set. However, Berrettini raced out to a 6-1 lead in the tiebreaker and converted his third set point with an ace.

In the second set, the Italian broke for a 4-2 lead and served out the match at love, sealing the win with a forehand drop shot.

Berrettini surprised many just by qualifying for the year-end event for the world's top eight players, and said he enjoyed the experience despite the early exit.

"It was a great week," Berrettini said. "For sure being here wasn't a goal at the beginning of the year. It's just crazy that it happened."

After hitting 50 winners in his three-set victory over Djokovic on Tuesday, Thiem finished with just 13 in this match.

"Of course I felt a little bit the two first matches, and then also it's a bit of a tricky situation to know that I'm already through," the Austrian said. "Of course I was still trying to win that match 100%, but also, in the same time, I knew in my head that I have to take care for Saturday, because obviously it's the way more important match there."

Zverev denies using phone

ALEXANDER ZVEREV denied using his cell phone during his match against Stefanos Tsitsipas after videos of him appearing to fiddle with something inside his kit bag emerged on social media. *The New York Times* writer Ben Rothenberg was among the first to share a clip of Zverev's alleged misdeed. "Tennis Channel catches Zverev apparently using his phone during last changeover, nice spot. Very much against the rules. Zverev was not particularly slick about the phone use either. He's down a double break in this set, so it hasn't much helped," he tweeted.

According to the laws, players are not allowed to access any electronic device during matches. Zverev, however, vehemently denied the allegations and said it was probably an "empty bottle".

"My cellphone? My cellphone was within the locker room, truly. My cellphone was within the locker room. I at all times depart it there. I don't know what they noticed, but it surely was undoubtedly not a cellphone," he told reporters at the post-match conference. On further probing, Zverev said: "A water bottle? Empty water bottle possibly?"

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GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI HOME DEPARTMENT,
5th LEVEL, WING-C, DELHI SECRETARIAT, IP ESTATE, NEW DELHI.

F. No. 8/302/2019/HP-II/4432 Dated: 14/11/2019

PUBLIC NOTICE

With respect to the incident dated 02.11.2019 at Tis Hazari Courts Complex, Delhi resulting in clashes between lawyers and police officials, the Government of NCT of Delhi vide Notification F.No. 8/304/2019/HP-II/4346-4362 dated 06.11.2019 has notified appointment of Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. P. Garg, Former Judge, High Court of Delhi, to conduct Judicial Inquiry in the said incident, in compliance of the directions of the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi vide order dated 03.11.2019 passed in WP (C) No. 11652/2019 titled Court on its Own Motion V. Union of India & Ors.

All concerned are hereby informed that the Judicial Inquiry set up, is operational with effect from 15.11.2019 from Ground Floor, C-Wing, Vikas Bhawan-2 Civil Lines, near Metcalf House Delhi-110054.

If any person is having any relevant and authentic information or is having any evidence in his possession pertaining to the said incident (including audio/video recordings, call records, photographs, etc.), he/she may contact this office on any working day between 10:00AM to 04:00PM, along with his identity proof and contact details.

If any person wishes to depose as a witness regarding the said incident, he/she shall provide relevant details (including identity proof and contact details) to this Office at the earliest. He/she shall be summoned individually to appear in person before the Judicial Inquiry for recording statement.

The requisite information be provided to this Office within a week of publication of this notice. The information/identity shall be kept confidential.

For and under the authority of the Judicial Commission
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Ministry of Minority Affairs
Government of India

Hunar Haat

14 to 27 Nov., 2019 | 10.00 am to 7.30 pm
India International Trade Fair, Hall No. 7C, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi
All are cordially invited

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Participation of 80 Craftsmen

- Ajrakh and Shibori Print of Gujarat
- Dhakai Silk of Bengal
- Dhokra Art of Jharkhand
- Golden Grass Products of Assam
- Mangalgiri & Kalamkari Prints of Andhra Pradesh and a lot more...

Inauguration
Friday 15 Nov. 2019 | 11.00 am
Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi
Union Minister of Minority Affairs, Govt. of India

August Presence
Kiren Rijiju
Minister of State for Minority Affairs, Govt. of India

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