

‘It’s a huge feeling to be World champion and means a lot to me’

Koneru Humpy bests Lei Tingjie to claim the women’s rapid crown; Carlsen reigns supreme amongst men

CHESS

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD
It is a dream come true for Koneru Humpy!
Tipped by Viswanathan Anand more than a decade ago to be a World champion, Humpy became one on Saturday by winning the women’s World rapid chess championship at the Grand Sports Arena of the Luzhniki Olympic Complex in Moscow.

Intense
The 32-year-old from Vijayawada, arguably the best-ever women’s chess player from India, emerged triumphant in an intensely-contested championship which went down to the wire.
Humpy, seeded 13th, claimed the title after drawing the Armageddon game against China’s Lei Tingjie and went home richer by \$40,000. The Indian and Chinese had, along with Turkey’s Ekaterina Atalik, finished with nine points from 12 games.
The men’s crown was won by classical World champion Magnus Carlsen of Norway.

Not targeting title
Reflecting on the historic triumph, the first Indian woman to win the World rapid title said she was hoping only



Well played! Newly-crowned World rapid champion Koneru Humpy offers her commiserations to Lei Tingjie after their title-deciding match. ■ PICTURE COURTESY: FLICKR.COM/FIDE

for a top-three finish as she was keen to improve her game in the format.
“Frankly, rapid and blitz formats are not my cup of tea. But, I must say that I played some quality chess in crunch games to clinch the title.

“There was no pressure at all but I did have a feeling that it was the best chance for me to have a go. I was tense before the second game in the tie-breaker for there was no plus or minus here. I had to respond quickly but I handled the situation really well,” the champion stated.
The ONGC officer is on a comeback trail after taking a break from competitive chess in 2016 to start a family.
“This win means a lot to me. It is a huge feeling to be a

World champion. I have been waiting for this to happen, though not certainly in the rapid format,” said a happy Humpy.
“To be a World champion in any format is definitely a dream for any chess player and I am no different. That

A quest resurrected

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE
The queen is back!
Koneru Humpy’s triumph is the biggest by an Indian in chess.
That makes India one of the few countries that have produced the World rapid chess champions both among men and women.
Viswanathan Anand has won it multiple times.
The genial genius from Chennai has also won the more important classical World championship (in which the games are played over much longer duration than the rapid one and thus is more prestigious).
Humpy had come close to becoming the classical World champion in the past, but could not quite finish the job. She saw her rivals becoming stronger,

while she had to take a break for a couple of years from competitive chess following childbirth.
Back to her best
If there were doubters who had felt her best might be behind her, she proved them wrong – even before the World rapid championship. She has performed superbly in the first two legs of the FIDE Women’s Grand Prix chess, which is part are part of the process to identify the challenger for the next World championship.
After winning the opening leg at Skolkovo (Russia) last September, she finished runner-up in Monaco to maintain her lead in the overall Grand Prix points. It was just a few days after the Monaco

event the World rapid championship commenced in Moscow.
She also deserved to win a senior World title after claiming just about every championship for various age-groups, beginning with the World Under-10, way back in 1997.
Four years later, she won the World junior championship at 14, when the age-limit was 20. She also became only the second woman in history, behind Hungarian Judit Polgar, to cross 2600 Elo points.
It had seemed it would only be a question of when, and not if, she wins the World title. But somewhere along the line, the hopes began to fade a bit. In Moscow, they have been resurrected.

South Africa draws first blood

Rabada, Nortje do the damage to break England’s resistance



The end! The South African players celebrate victory after Stuart Broad was bowled by Kagiso Rabada. ■ REUTERS

ENGLAND IN SA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CENTURION
South Africa broke down stubborn England resistance to win the first Test of their World Test Championship series by 107 runs at the SuperSport Park on Sunday.
England needed 376 to win but despite some committed batting was bowled out for 268 on the fourth day.
An enthralling contest swung South Africa’s way when left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj bowled Ben Stokes to halt a brief flurry of strokes as the allrounder and captain Joe Root tried to lift the scoring rate before the second new ball was due.
The new ball then had an

immediate impact with Kagiso Rabada having Jonny Bairstow caught at gully before Anrich Nortje claimed the crucial wicket of Root, who made a fighting 48 before he was caught behind.
It was the second time in the day Nortje claimed a

SCOREBOARD

South Africa – 1st innings: 284.
England – 1st innings: 181.
South Africa – 2nd innings: 272.
England – 2nd innings: R. Burns c Rabada b Nortje 84, D. Sibley c & b Maharaj 29, J. Denly lbw b Pretorius 31, J. Root c de Kock b Nortje 48, B. Stokes b Maharaj 14, J. Bairstow c Hamza b Rabada 9, J. Buttler c Pretorius b Rabada 22, S. Curran c de Kock b Rabada 9, J. Archer c van der Dussen b Nortje 4, S. Broad b Rabada 6, J.

Anderson (not out) 0; Extras (b-8, lb-3, w-1): 12; Total (in 93 overs): 268.
Fall of wickets: 1-92, 2-139, 3-158, 4-204, 5-222, 6-232, 7-251, 8-256, 9-262.
South Africa bowling: Rabada 24-3-103-4, Philander 20-8-35-0, Nortje 17-4-56-3, Pretorius 16-6-26-1, Maharaj 16-3-37-2.
MoM: Quinton de Kock.
South Africa won by 107 runs, takes 1-0 lead in the 4-match series.

Big victory for Australia despite Blundell’s fighting century

Pattinson begins dismantling, Lyon completes task as Kiwis chase daunting target

NZ IN AUSTRALIA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE
Nathan Lyon took four wickets as Australia thrashed New Zealand by 247 runs to win the second Test here and the series on Sunday with a battling century from opener Tom Blundell proving futile.
The Black Caps, chasing a massive 488 to win, were in serious trouble after a fiery James Pattinson ripped through the top order to leave them reeling at 38 for three.
Fighting partnerships
But some fighting partnerships spearheaded by Blundell delayed the inevitable until Lyon worked his magic as the pitch deteriorated.
Blundell was last man out for a swashbuckling 121 – his second Test century and his first in two years – as New Zealand was dismissed for 240 with Trent Boult not batting after fracturing his hand in the first innings.
It was the second heavy defeat for the Black Caps, who lost by 296 runs in Perth and will be playing for pride in the final Test at Sydney later this week.
Pattinson, playing for the injured Josh Hazlewood, did the early damage. New Zealand had reached 32 without



In vain: Tom Blundell fought gamely in a tall chase. ■ AFP

loss when he snared the key wickets of Tom Latham, batting linchpin Williamson and the experienced Ross Taylor for three just runs.
Latham, scorer of a dogged 50 in New Zealand’s 148 first innings, fell for eight when he edged a thunderous delivery to the diving Paine.
Blundell, in only his third

Test, and B.J. Watling put on 72 before Lyon finally broke their dangerous partnership.
Lyon then mopped up Colin de Grandhomme and Mitchell Santner before Tim Southee was run out in a horror mix-up, with Blundell swinging his bat before he was caught by Lyon off Marcus Labuschagne.

SCOREBOARD

Australia – 1st innings: 467.
New Zealand – 1st innings: 148.
Australia – 2nd innings: D. Warner c Blundell b Wagner 38, J. Burns c Watling b Santner 35, M. Labuschagne run out 19, S. Smith c Southee b Wagner 7, M. Wade (not out) 30, T. Head b Wagner 28; Extras (lb-4, b-4, w-2, nb-1): 11; Total (for five wkts. decl. in 54.2 overs): 168.
Fall of wickets: 1-62, 2-100, 3-110, 4-110, 5-168.
New Zealand bowling: Boult 9-0-30-0, Southee 15-3-44-0, de Grandhomme 5-0-14-0, Wagner 17.2-1-50-3, Santner 8-0-22-1.
New Zealand – 2nd innings: T. Latham c Paine b Pattinson 8, T. Blundell c Lyon b Labuschagne 121, K. Williamson lbw b Pattinson 0, R. Taylor b Pattinson 2, H. Nicholls st Paine b Lyon 33, B.J. Watling c Warner b Lyon 22, C. de Grandhomme c Warner b Lyon 9, M. Santner c Paine b Lyon 27, T. Southee run out 2, N. Wagner (not out) 6, T. Boult absent hurt 0; Extras (lb-7, nb-1, w-2): 10; Total (in 71 overs): 240.
Fall of wickets: 1-32, 2-33, 3-35, 4-89, 5-161, 6-172, 7-212, 8-214, 9-240.
Australia bowling: Starc 15-3-59-0, Cummins 18-4-47-0, Pattinson 12-3-35-3, Lyon 23-4-81-4, Labuschagne 3-1-11-1.
MoM: Travis Head.
Australia won by 247 runs, seals series 2-0.

Siddle quits internationals



Peter Siddle. ■ GETTY IMAGES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE
Veteran Australian bowler Peter Siddle announced his international retirement on Sunday after a 67-Test career, with national coach Justin Langer praising him as giving his “heart and soul” to the team.
The 35-year-old had been called up to the second Test squad in Melbourne but was not selected in the side to face New Zealand and decided to call it quits.
“Just being able to play, to walk out, wear the baggy green – I’d watched guys like Punter (Ricky Ponting), Steve Waugh, guys like that wear it, represent Australia,” he said.
“Every time I stepped out was amazing, I don’t think I could pick one special one. At the end of the day, to play one is amazing, to end up playing what I did is truly special,” he said.

VAR reviews aid Liverpool in warding off Wolves

Late strikes help Chelsea spoil Arsenal manager’s Arteta’s home debut

PREMIER LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON
Liverpool continued its relentless march towards a first Premier League title in 30 years, but Jurgen Klopp’s men needed the benefit of two VAR reviews to see off Wolves 1-0 on Sunday.
Sadio Mane scored the only goal three minutes before half-time as the Senegalese’s strike was allowed to stand after initially being ruled out for handball against Adam Lallana. Moments later Wolves had an equaliser scored by Pedro Neto disallowed by VAR for the tightest of offside decisions.
Chelsea ruined Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta’s home debut as Tammy Abraham’s late strike sealed a dramatic 2-1 win after Bernd Leno’s horrific blunder turned

the tide in a thrilling London derby on Sunday.
Leading through Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang’s early goal, Arteta was just seven minutes away from securing his first victory in his second game in charge.
But Gunners goalkeeper Leno made a hash of coming to catch a free-kick and Jorginho tapped in to spark a Chelsea fightback that climaxed in Abraham firing home with three minutes left.
The results: Liverpool 1 (Mane 42) bt Wolverhampton Wanderers 0; Arsenal 1 (Aubameyang 13) lost to Chelsea 2 (Jorginho 83, Abraham 87). **Saturday:** Burnley 0 lost to Manchester United 2 (Martial 44, Rashford 90+5); Norwich 2 (Vrancic 18, Aurier 61-og) drew with Tottenham 2 (Eriksen 55, Kane 83-pen); West Ham 1 (Fornals 45) lost to Leicester 2 (Iheanacho 40, Gray 56).



The clincher: Tammy Abraham, right, takes flight as a delighted Mason Mount tags him after the former netted Chelsea’s last-gasp second goal. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Soucou’s brace earns Mumbai a hard-fought win

ISL

NANDAKUMAR MARAR
MUMBAI
Two stylish goals by Modou Soucou set up Mumbai City FC’s hard fought 2-1 win in the Indian Super League game at the Mumbai Football Arena here.
Hyderabad FC fought till the end in the action-packed match, scoring only in the 86th minute through Bobo
Disallowed goal
The visitor scored again in the 90th minute, but the goal was disallowed. Matthew Kigallon was caught off-side when Bobo slotted the ball in.
Marcelinho Pereira came close to scoring twice for Hyderabad – the Brazilian wearing the captain’s armband was first hustled by a

Pratik Chaudhary charge onto his body, then was denied by the upright after the goalkeeper was beaten by a looping shot to the far post.
Quick movement
The host’s first goal was the result of quick movement by the blues.
Subhashish Bose picked out Diego Carlos, free and ready on the left.
The latter arrived at the goalline with a burst of speed, turned the ball across for Soucou to direct home with a right-footed strike to the right.
The forward celebrated his first goal this season with a run across the half, holding his finger up in triumph to the dugout.
Soucou beat the goalkeeper a second time with a diagonal volley, on the bounce

off a long pass lobbed towards him.
Kamaljit Singh, under the visitor’s bar, remained on his toes right through the first half. Carlos tested him in the second minute, going wide down the left, cutting in and essaying a curling right-footed shot.
The goalkeeper was in position to punch the threat away.
A few minutes later, Pereira misfired a free-kick on the edge of the box, after Mohammed Larbi tricked the defence with sudden twist to roll the ball towards his teammate.
The win took Mumbai to fourth place after 10 games, while Hyderabad remained 10th.
The result: Mumbai City FC 2 (Modou Soucou 6, 78) bt Hyderabad FC 1 (Bobo 86).