



Robin Uthappa to Bat for SOG Grandmasters South as Bengaluru Hosts Inaugural Zonal Finals on December 18-19

The South Regional witnessed close to 55,000 registrations across Chess, Blind Chess and Online Rummy

New Delhi, 10th December 2024: Former Indian cricket star Robin Uthappa will be the face of the inaugural SOG Grandmasters Series' South 1 Zonal Finals, an initiative of the Skillhub Online Games Federation (SOGF), scheduled for December 18-19 at the Sheraton Grand in Whitefield, Bengaluru. Along with Uthappa's strong star power and overwhelming response through their registrations for the online qualifiers of the southern zone championship, the tournament will celebrate exceptional talents and unearth mind sports athletes and promote excellence nationwide.

The inaugural SOG Grandmasters Series registrations indicated significant interest across all categories. Over 55,000 players signed up for free online pre-qualifiers of Indian Rummy Grandmasters (IRG) and Indian Chess Masters (ICM), highlighting their increasing popularity as cognitive skill-based mind sports. The top 125 from the total registered players, who played the Online Qualifiers for IRG and ICM will travel to Bangalore for the Zonal finals. In addition, the Chess for the Blind event, organised by the All-India Chess Federation for the Blind (AICFB) served as pre-qualifiers to the Indian Chess Masters for the Blind (ICMB), from which 16 top players have been shortlisted for the South Zonal Finals.

Speaking about the event, Mr. Shankar Aggarwal, President of SOGF said: *"Having Robin Uthappa, a World Cup-winning cricketer known for his resilience and mental strength, represent the SOG Grandmasters South Regional Finals is a powerful way to inspire the next generation of mind sports athletes. Robin's story of overcoming challenges and excelling on the global stage will motivate participants to aim higher, with the dream of representing India. His presence bridges traditional sports and skill-based online games, helping to popularize these disciplines and encourage more players to step forward. The overwhelming response to the Grandmasters Series reflects India's growing passion for skill-based sports, and we are committed to creating an inclusive platform that nurtures this talent and propels it onto the global stage."*

Uthappa, a World Cup-winning cricketer known for his swashbuckling playing style, a popular TV Commentator and a strong advocate for mental health, serves as a powerful source of inspiration for the youth, as he becomes the face of the SOG Grandmasters South Regional Finals. As a champion of ethical playing and mental health and a proponent of resilience, hard work and making dreams come true, Uthappa exemplifies the values of focus, strategy, and perseverance that are essential in skill-based gaming.



Speaking about the event, Uthappa said, *"Mind sports are truly unique in how they celebrate cognitive skills. The SOG Grandmasters Series is a remarkable platform that highlights the power of strategy, focus, and mental resilience—qualities I deeply value both as a cricketer and as an advocate for mental well-being. This series not only showcases exceptional talent across India, but also nurtures the competitive spirit and creates new opportunities to unearth and spotlight talent in the mind sports arena. I'm excited to be part of this initiative and am eager to witness the next generation of champions rise from such an initiative."*

The South 1 Zonal Finals will be a lan event with "phygital" experience, blending physical and digital formats under one roof. The Bengaluru event will be followed by Zonal finals in other zones, with the finalists—two from chess for Men, two from Chess for Women, two from Chess for the Blind, and six from Online Rummy in each zone – competing in the Nationals in April 2025 in New Delhi.

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