

Ashwani's dream debut, Rickelton's 50 fuel MI's 8-wkt win over Knights

PTI, MUMBAI: Ashwani Kumar's record four-wicket haul on IPL debut and Ryan Rickelton's 62 not out powered Mumbai Indians to a commanding eight-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders, here, on Monday.

The 23-year-old Ashwani from Punjab's Jhanjeri became the first Indian ever to take four wickets on IPL debut as he ended with figures of 3-0-24-4 to blow away KKR's star-studded batting lineup. With only four senior T20 matches in his kitty apart from four List A games and two Ranji Trophy matches, Ashwani's rich returns heralded the domination shown by MI's seamers.

Deepak Chahar (2/19), Trent Boult (1/23) and Hardik Pandya (1/10) ensured a collective bowling performance as KKR crumbled for the lowest total of this season, rolling over for just 116 in 16.2 overs.

Even as Rohit Sharma (13) endured another forgettable outing, Ryan Rickelton (62 not out off 41 balls, 4x4s, 5x6s) made his first impact on the IPL stage as Mumbai Indians went over the line with 7.1 overs to spare. Surya-kumar Yadav hit a quick 9-ball 27 not out and ended the game with a six behind the wicket.

The left-handed South African Rickelton survived initial challenges from KKR pacers to fight back with a flurry of boundaries for his maiden half-century in the competition and helping his side record their first win of the season.

Left-arm seamer Ashwani accounted for Ajinkya Rahane (11), Rinku Singh (17), impact sub Manish Pandey (17) and Andre Russell (5)



Mumbai Indians batters Suryakumar Yadav and Ryan Rickelton celebrate their team's victory in the IPL 2025 match against Kolkata Knight Riders, in Mumbai, on Monday

to break the Knight Riders' back after Chahar and Boult made early inroads in the powerplay.

KKR had a forgettable start when their openers Quinton de Kock (1) and Sunil Narine (0) fell inside the first two overs and by the end of the powerplay, the visitors had limped to 41 for four. Boult outsmarted Narine with a fuller one which swung away to clean him up in the first over.

In the next over, Chahar

had de Kock caught at mid-off with Ashwani timing his jump perfectly to complete a sharp grab. Rahane hit a six and a four to counter-attack but perished soon after for Ashwani's maiden wicket on his first ball.

The Punjab seamer lured Rahane outside the off and KKR skipper obliged, albeit hitting in the air with the ball flying to deep backward point to Tilak Varma, who showed quick reflexes to complete the catch after

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total of this season, rolling over for just 116 in 16.2 overs ■ The left-handed South African Ryan Rickelton survived initial challenges from Kolkata Knight Riders pacers to fight back with a flurry of boundaries for his maiden half-century in the competition and helping his side record their first win of the season



the ball popped out.

Angkrish Raghuvanshi (26) looked the most promising when he began with a couple of attractive fours on both sides of the wicket and also hit Ashwani into the stands for one of the few sixes which KKR hit.

But Raghuvanshi was also guilty of throwing it away when he hit one short ball meekly off Hardik Pandya (1/10) and Naman Dhir did a fine job running from deep square leg to take the catch.

Pandey, pressed into ser-

vice as an impact sub with KKR reeling at 45 for five, could not make the opportunity count and was cleaned up by Ashwani in the 11th over.

Dhir was in action again when Rinku danced down the track to smash a short ball from Ashwani two balls later but was caught at deep point and the MI fielder also took a fine diving catch in front of him at deep midwicket to dismiss Harshit Rana and help Vignesh Puthur add one wicket to his tally.

SCOREBOARD

Mumbai Indians: Rohit Sharma c Rana b Russell 13, Ryan Rickelton not out 62, Will Jacks c Rahane b Russell 16, Suryakumar Yadav not out 27. **Extras:** 3. **Total:** 121-2. **Fall of wickets:** 45-1, 90-2. **Bowling:** Spencer Johnson 2-0-14-0, Harshit Rana 2-0-28-0, Varun Chakravarthy 3-0-12-0, Andre Russell 2.5-0-35-2, Sunil Narine 3-0-32-0.

Kolkata Knight Riders: Quinton de Kock c Kumar b Chahar 1, Sunil Narine b Boult 0, *Ajinkya Rahane c Varma b Kumar 11, Angkrish Raghuvanshi c Dhir b Pandya 26, Venkatesh Iyer c Rickelton b Chahar 3, Rinku Singh c Dhir b Kumar 17, Manish Pandey b Kumar 19, Andre Russell b Kumar 5, Ramandeep Singh c Pandya b Santner 22, Harshit Rana c Dhir b Puthur 4, Spencer Johnson not out 1. **Extras:** 7. **Total:** 116-10. **Fall of wickets:** 1-1, 2-2, 25-3, 41-4, 45-5, 74-6, 80-7, 88-8, 99-9, 116-10. **Bowling:** Trent Boult 4-0-23-1, Deepak Chahar 2-0-19-2, Ashwani Kumar 3-0-24-4, *Hardik Pandya 2-0-10-1, Vignesh Puthur 2-0-21-1, Mitchell Santner 3.2-0-17-1.

Man-of-the-match: Ashwani Kumar

Pandya credits MI scouts for unearthing fresh talent

PTI, MUMBAI: Skipper Hardik Pandya on Monday credited Mumbai Indians' scouting team for unearthing fresh talent after debutant left-arm pacer Ashwani Kumar starred for the side in its eight-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL here.

Opting to bowl, MI rode on Kumar's brilliant display with the ball to bundle out KKR for 116 before they chased down the target in 12.5 overs.

Left-arm pacer Kumar became the first Indian to take four wickets on IPL debut and help restrict KKR, who were bowled out in 16.2 overs.

"Very satisfying to win, especially at home. The way we did it, as a group, everyone chipped in - can't be happier. It's always a challenge of picking one guy here and there. With our team it's pretty sorted with the players who we are backing.

"This wicket just offered a bit more and we thought Ashwani can come in and bowl the way he bowled. First of all, it's all because of the scouts. All MI scouts have gone all the places and picked these young kids," Pandya said after the team's first win of the season.

"We played a practice game and it looked like he had that zip and late swing, had a different action and plus he is a leftie. The way he took that wicket of (Andre) Russell was a very crucial wicket. And especially, how he started with that catch of Quinton. Was great to see a fast bowler jumping that high."

KKR skipper Ajinkya Rahane said it was collective batting failure from his team "Collective batting failure, it was a good wicket to bat on. 180-190 would have been a good total on this pitch. We expect that (here), it has good bounce."

Lewandowski leads the way as Barcelona regains 3-point advantage over Madrid

AP, MADRID: Barcelona reestablished its three-point lead over Real Madrid at the top of the Spanish league after beating Catalan rival Girona 4-1.

Robert Lewandowski added to his league-leading tally with two second-half goals. Lewandowski has scored nine goals in his last nine league games and has 25 goals in total in the competition, three more than Madrid's Kylian Mbappé.

"For me the most important thing is what I can do to help the team," Lewandowski said. "I know that if I score two goals, I'll be helping my team. As a striker it's important to have confidence for when the ball comes to me."

Barcelona went in front with an own-goal by Girona defender Ladislav Krejci in the first half. Ferran Torres added the fourth goal for Barcelona in the final minutes at Montjuic stadium.

On Saturday, Madrid had moved level on points

with Barcelona with a 3-2 victory over Leganes at home and third-placed Atletico Madrid dropped nine points off the lead following a 1-1 draw at Espanyol.

It was Barcelona's sixth win in a row in all competitions, and 11th in its last 12 matches. Hansi Flick's team is yet to lose in 20 games this year, with its last loss coming against Atletico in December.

"We are in great form at the moment

and we are creating a lot of chances when we have the ball. What I take from today is our ability to react after the break," Flick said.

"The great thing about my team is that we always want to score goals and everyone likes to see that." Barcelona has scored four or more goals in 20 of its 45 matches in all competitions this season.

"When you score four times it means you played a great match," Lewandowski said. "We've been scoring a

lot, and it's important that when we can't score early we have been patient and not changing our game plan."

Flick praised the "special" Poland striker.

"Lewandowski is really important," Flick said. "I don't like to pick out individuals but he is special inside the box."

Arnaut Danjuma scored early in the second half for Girona, which is winless in

seven consecutive matches and stayed in

13th place. Barcelona forward Raphinha stayed on the bench to get some rest following his matches with Brazil in South American World Cup qualifying.

Barcelona visits Atletico in the second leg of the Copa del Rey semifinals on Wednesday. The first match ended 4-4.

Real Betis came from behind to beat rival Sevilla 2-1 at home and win its first league derby since 2018.

England Test captain Stokes to miss early county games

AFP, LONDON: Ben Stokes is not expected to play in the early rounds of the County Championship as he battles to be fit to lead England, his Durham coach Ryan Campbell said on Monday.

The 33-year-old Test captain is recovering from hamstring surgery after breaking down in New Zealand in December, his second hamstring tear in five months.

But the all-rounder is not yet ready for action in the four-day domestic championship, which starts on Friday.

England host Zimbabwe in May, with a five-Test series against India to follow. Later in the year they head to Australia for a five-match Ashes series.

Durham have six matches in the top tier of the County Championship before the Zimbabwe Test.

Campbell, who is also without England quicks Brydon Carse (toe) and Mark Wood (knee), made it clear no risks would be taken.

"When you look at Carse, Stokes and Wood, at this stage they're probably not likely to play for us. My expectation is that it'll be zero -- anything else is an added bonus," he said.

"They're all coming back from serious injuries. The facts are that they need to get up and running by the time the Test matches start."

"But what we know about Stokesy is that he's here nearly every single day working his butt off. The guy had hamstring surgery and was in the next day lifting weights, which I couldn't believe. He sets the bar, wherever he is."

sportspopup

Pakistan, Bangladesh drop ODI series, to clash in T20I series

KARACHI: Pakistan and Bangladesh have agreed to play a five-match T20 international series in May instead of a three-match ODI series to prepare for the Asia Cup and next year's World T20 Cup. An official source in the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) the two boards felt that with two major T20 events coming up, playing a prolonged T20 series made more sense and would allow both teams to give their young players exposure. "Originally, the Bangladesh tour to Pakistan included three T20s and three ODIs. But now it has been decided the visitors will instead play a five-match T20 series," he said. The source said while Bangladesh will most probably play in Lahore, Multan and Faisalabad, the Pakistan team will also go to Bangladesh in June or July for a three-match T20 series.

Cricket Australia hails 'box office' India fixtures

SYDNEY: Cricket Australia has touted India's "box office appeal" after confirming the schedule for a string of white-ball fixtures at home ahead of the Ashes later this year. Australia's men will host India for three one-day internationals and a five-match Twenty20 series in October-November. The women's teams play in February and March next year in three T20s, three ODIs and a sole Test match. Cricket Australia chief executive Todd Greenberg welcomed "the fantastic box office appeal of the India men's and women's teams". Australia's schedule also includes three home T20s and three ODIs against South Africa in August. Matches will be spread far and wide across Australia, mixing grounds in the country's tropical north with more storied venues such as the Sydney Cricket Ground. Australia host England for the five-Test Ashes series starting in November. It will be the first time an Ashes Test has been staged at the new Perth venue which replaced the old WACA ground, last used in 2017.

Fourth consecutive term for Shammi Silva as SLC president

COLOMBO: Shammi Silva has been re-elected as the president of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) at the 64th annual general meeting of the governing body held here on Monday. He was elected uncontested to steer the governing body for the 2025-27 term, the SLC said. This marks his fourth consecutive term as president, and the third time he has been elected uncontested. Silva is widely seen as an ally of India's Jay Shah, the current boss of the ICC. He had replaced Shah as the president of the Asian Cricket Council in December last year. Silva's tenure was marred by his clash with the then sports minister Roshan Ranasinghe in 2023. As an immediate fallout of the ICC suspension, the under-19 Men's World Cup scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka in January last year was shifted to South Africa.

Asian Games medalist Narender to lead Indian team at World Boxing Cup in Brazil

NEW DELHI: Asian Games bronze medalist Narender Berwal will headline a 10-member Indian men's boxing team that was handed a mixed draw at the inaugural World Boxing Cup in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, starting Monday. This will be the first event hosted by World Boxing since receiving provisional recognition from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in February and the inclusion of the sport in the 2028 LA Olympics. Competitions will be held for both men and women, but India has sent only male boxers, as the women's National Championships concluded only on Thursday. It will be the first time Indian boxers compete internationally in the new weight categories introduced by World Boxing. Boxers who finished first and second in each weight category at the National Championships in January travelled to Brazil for a week long camp.

Repeatedly ignored by UP, former U-19 World Cupper Zeeshan finally gets IPL stage

NEW DELHI: At 16, Zeeshan Ansari was the youngest member of the Indian U-19 World Cup team in 2016 that had a posse of future India internationals in its ranks. While Rishabh Pant, Ishan Kishan, Washington Sundar, Sarfaraz Khan, Avesh Khan and Khaleel Ahmed were striving to graduate to the next level, Ansari sank into oblivion. Since then he has played just five Ranji Trophy matches and one Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy contest for Uttar Pradesh. The wiry leg-spinner from Lucknow's famous shopping hub Hazratganj, wasn't the centre of attention in that illustrious batch that had six players, who later went on to play for the senior Indian team across formats with varying degree of success. On Sunday afternoon, after years of wilderness, the now 25-year-old and better-built Ansari walked into the collective consciousness with wickets of Faf du Plessis, Jake Fraser-McGurk and KL Rahul albeit in a losing cause for Sunrisers Hyderabad on his IPL debut.

Dhoni can't bat 10 overs running full stick: CSK coach Fleming

GUWAHATI: Mahendra Singh Dhoni can't bat ten overs running full stick as his knee remains dodgy and the former captain decides on his batting position based on the match situation, revealed Chennai Super Kings coach Stephen Fleming. The 43-year-old Dhoni had faced criticism for batting at number 9 during CSK's 50-run loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru at Chepauk last week. On Sunday, the CSK talisman walked out at number 7 with the team needing 54 off 25 balls but could manage just 16 runs off 11 balls as they suffered a six-run loss to Rajasthan Royals. "It's a time thing. MS judges it. His body, his knees aren't what they used to be. He's moving okay but there's still a nutrition aspect to it. He can't bat 10 overs running full stick. So he will gauge on the day what he can give us," Fleming said at the post-match press conference. "If the game's in the balance like today, he will go a little bit earlier and he backs other players when other opportunities are up. So he's balancing that. I said it last year, he's too valuable to us, (with his) leadership and wicket keeping, to throw him in at 9-10 overs."

I want to improve my strike rate in T20s, bowl consistently at 140kmph: Azmatullah Omarzai

NEW DELHI: Afghanistan and Punjab Kings all-rounder Azmatullah Omarzai wants to replicate his remarkable ODI success in the T20 format and for that, he is working on his batting strike rate besides improving his pace as a fast bowler. The last 12 months have been rather memorable for the 25-year-old who was named ICC ODI Cricketer of the Year in January, the first one from his country to get that honour. He is also the top-ranked all-rounder in the ICC ODI rankings. Omarzai had a dream game against England in the Champions Trophy as he led his team to another famous win over their fancied opponents with an all-round performance including a 31-ball 41 and a five-wicket haul. For someone who considers himself as a batting all-rounder, bouncing out the likes of Jos Buttler was a big deal for Omarzai.

Jakub Mensik prevents Djokovic from his 100th title, wins Miami Open for first ATP trophy

AP, MIAMI GARDENS: Novak Djokovic faced a series of obstacles in the Miami Open final: a delay of more than 5 ½ hours before the match, an eye infection and a slippery court due to high levels of humidity following the rain.

But the largest roadblock was the youth and power of 6-foot-4, 19-year-old phenom Jakub Mensik, who outdueled the 37-year-old Serbian in two tiebreakers 7-6 (4), 7-6 (4) to win his first ATP title.

Ranked 54th entering the tournament, the Czech Republic teenager plowed through Djokovic with poise and a stellar 130 mph serve. He collected 14 aces and got broken only once. Mensik bashed a service winner on match point and

fell on his back.

"You're the one I idolized when I was young," Mensik said to Djokovic during the ceremony after the match that lasted 2 hours, 3 minutes. "I started playing tennis because of you."

Mensik's victory spoiled the party for Djokovic, who was seeking his 100th career title and a record seventh in the Miami Open. Djokovic will have to wait, while the teenager looks ready to join the elite.

"This is a joyous moment for him and his family — an unbelievable tournament, first of many," Djokovic said. "It hurts me to admit it, you were better. In the clutch moments you delivered the goods. For a young player like yourself, this

is a great feature."

The crowd pulled hard for Djokovic, who hadn't played here since 2019. More than three-quarters of the fans stuck around despite the massive delay, chanting "No-vak!" and singing his name across critical parts of the match.

Djokovic, far from a fan favorite here earlier in his career, saluted the fans, saying it was one of the warmest crowds he's had ever.

But the men's leader with 24 Grand Slam titles seemed compromised by his eye issue, with redness seen under the eyelid. Djokovic applied eyedrops during two changeovers in the first set. It was unclear if it affected his vision.

During the set, he also slipped twice on the court. The humidity reached 90% after hours of rain disrupted the card. Sweating profusely, Djokovic asked the umpire for a bucket of sawdust to sprinkle on his wet grip.

Mensik had lost to Djokovic in a three-setter last October at the Shanghai Masters but the youngster said before the match he had played too nervously.

Mensik was playing his first ATP 1000 final. He was not quite 2 years old when Djokovic won his first Miami Open title in 2007.

There was more fearlessness this time than in Shanghai. Mensik got up 3-0 with an early break but Djokovic broke back at 4-3,

