

Siraj's spell, Buttler's blitz power Gujarat to victory over Bengaluru



TWISTS & TURNS
■ Having spent seven seasons in RCB colours, Siraj returned to haunt his former team, dismantling their top order and celebrating in style.
■ After delighting fans with an audacious scoop for six over the keeper, Sudharsan tried it again—only to hand a simple catch to Jitesh Sharma.
■ Dropped on 9, Livingstone made GT pay by smashing Rashid Khan for three sixes in an over, but his fightback wasn't enough to save RCB from a crushing defeat.

Mohammed Siraj

PTI, BENGALURU: A sensational spell from Mohammed Siraj (3/19) and a blistering unbeaten 73 from Jos Buttler powered Gujarat Titans to a dominant eight-wicket win over Royal Challengers Bengaluru in their IPL clash on Wednesday.

Chasing 169, GT reached 170/2 in 17.5 overs. Despite losing skipper Shubman Gill (14) early, Buttler and B Sai Sudharsan (49) built a crucial 75-run stand. Sudharsan played with elegance, while Buttler unleashed his power, reaching his fifty with a six and sealing the win with three more maximums off Josh Hazlewood. Impact Sub Sherfane Rutherford contributed 30* off 18 balls.

Earlier, RCB struggled after electing to bat. Virat Kohli (7) fell early, followed by Phil Salt, Rajat Patidar, and Devdutt Padikkal as RCB slumped to 42/4 in 6.2 overs. Liam Livingstone (54) and Jitesh Sharma (33) provided some resistance, adding 52 runs. Livingstone later hammered Rashid Khan for three sixes in an over, but R Sai Kishore (2/22) dismissed Jitesh and controlled the middle overs.

Despite Livingstone's late efforts, RCB managed only 169/8, which proved insufficient against GT's firepower.

SCOREBOARD

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Phil Salt b Mohammed Siraj 14, Virat Kohli c Prasidh Krishna b Arshad Khan 7, Devdutt Padikkal b Mohammed Siraj 4, Rajat Patidar (c) lbw b Sharma 12, Liam Livingstone c Buttler b Mohammed Siraj 54, Jitesh Sharma c Tewatia b Sai Kishore 33, Krunal Pandya c & b Sai Kishore 5, Tim David b Prasidh Krishna 32, Bhuvneshwar Kumar not out 1. **Extras:** 7. **Total:** 169 for 8. **Fall of wickets:** 1-8, 2-13, 3-35, 4-42, 5-94, 6-104, 7-150, 8-169. **Bowling:** Mohammed Siraj 4-0-19-3, Arshad Khan 2-0-17-1, Prasidh Krishna 4-0-26-1, Ishant Sharma 2-0-27-1, Sai Kishore 4-0-22-2, Rashid Khan 4-0-54-0.

Gujarat Titans: Sai Sudharsan c Sharma b Hazlewood 49, Shubman Gill (c) c Livingstone b Kumar 14, Jos Buttler not out 73, Sherfane Rutherford not out 30. **Extras:** 4. **Total:** 170 for 2. **Fall of wickets:** 1-32, 2-107. **Bowling:** Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-23-1, Josh Hazlewood 3-5-0-43-1, Yash Dayal 3-0-20-0, Rasikh Salam 3-0-35-0, Krunal Pandya 3-0-34-0, Liam Livingstone 1-0-12-0.

Man-of-the-Match: Mohammed Siraj

TODAY'S IPL FIXTURE

Kolkata Knight Riders and vs Sunrisers Hyderabad, at Eden Gardens, Kolkata, at 7.30 pm



Jos Buttler

BCCI fines LSG bowler Rathi for 'letter-writing' send-off

PTI, LUCKNOW: Lucknow Super Giants spinner Digvesh Singh Rathi was fined 25 per cent of his match fees and handed a demerit point for his unusual 'letter-writing' celebration after dismissing Punjab Kings batter Priyansh Arya.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India penalised Rathi for "breaching the IPL Code of Conduct" during LSG's match against PBKS at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow on Tuesday. PBKS won the game by eight wickets.

"Digvesh Singh admitted to the Level 1 offence under Article 2.5 and accepted the Match Referee's sanction," an IPL media advisory stated.

"For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding."

The controversial celebration took place on the penultimate ball of the third over during PBKS' chase of 172. Digvesh bowled a short and wide delivery, which Arya attempted to pull without much foot movement, only to top-edge the ball. Shardul Thakur completed a running catch.

As Arya walked back to the pavilion, Digvesh, his teammate from the Delhi T20 League, mimicked writing a letter an act seemingly directed at Arya.

The umpires took note of the gesture and had a word with the bowler as it also drew immediate comparisons to West Indies pacer Keshrick Williams, who popularised the 'notebook' celebration.

sportspopup

Tax evasion trial for Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti opens in Spain

MADRID: Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti attended the opening of his trial on tax evasion charges in Spain on Wednesday. The highly successful Italian manager spent two and-a-half hours inside the Madrid-based courthouse before telling reporters "all is well" upon leaving in a car. Ancelotti was dressed in one of his dark blue suits that he wears while coaching games. Spanish prosecutors have accused Ancelotti of defrauding the state of 1 million euros (\$1 million) in 2014 and 2015. State prosecutors are seeking a prison sentence of up to four years and nine months on two counts of tax fraud. They accused Ancelotti in March 2024 of having used shell companies to hide his true earnings. Prosecutors claimed Ancelotti, for example, used one company that lacked "any real (economic) activity" in the Virgin Islands as part of an alleged scheme. Ancelotti had denied any wrongdoing before the trial.

New Zealand beats Pakistan by 83 runs, leads series 2-0

HAMILTON (New Zealand): Ben Sears took 5-59 as New Zealand bowled out Pakistan for 208 to win the second one-day cricket international by 84 runs Wednesday, taking an unassailable 2-0 lead in three-match series. Faheem Ashraf top-scored for Pakistan with 73 and put on 60 for the ninth wicket with Naseem Shah, who made 51. Both posted their maiden ODI half centuries as Pakistan was dismissed in 41.2 overs. Will O'Rourke softened up the Pakistan batters with an outstanding opening spell of 1-8 from six overs on a lively pitch at Seddon Park. He twice hit Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan, once on the top hand and once on the biceps, and he later hit Haris Rauf on the helmet with a searing bouncer. Rauf retired hurt after failing a concussion test and was replaced by Naseem. Jacob Duffy and Sears reaped the rewards. Duffy took 3-35 and Sears snared a five-wicket haul on his ODI debut. Earlier, Mitch Hay was left stranded on 99 as New Zealand made 292-8 after being sent in. Hay hit 22 runs from New Zealand's final over, including two sixes and two fours, as he chased a maiden ODI century.

Maresca non-committal over Sancho's future at Chelsea

LONDON: Chelsea boss Enzo Maresca on Wednesday admitted Jadon Sancho "could do better" but was non-committal over the forward's future at Stamford Bridge. Reports last week said Chelsea were willing to sign the winger on a permanent deal from Manchester United despite a £5 million (\$6.5 million) clause that would allow them to cancel the agreement. Sancho moved to Stamford Bridge on loan in August in a deal that reportedly included an obligation for Chelsea to buy the player for between £20 and £25 million. But after a promising start to life at the club the 25-year-old's form has dipped and details have emerged of a way out for the London club if they paid a cancellation fee. With just two goals in all competitions and none since December, Sancho has struggled to hold down a regular place in Maresca's side as they chase qualification for next season's Champions League.

Experts involved in Maradona's autopsy testify that he had an abnormally large heart

BUENOS AIRES (Argentina): Experts involved in Diego Maradona's autopsy testified on Tuesday at the trial of seven health professionals accused of negligent homicide that the Argentine soccer star had an abnormally large heart, suffered from cirrhosis, and showed no traces of alcohol or drugs at the time of his death. Forensic expert Alejandro Ezequiel Vega told the court that Maradona's heart was "enlarged" and weighed about 503 grams, when the average weight is between 250 and 300 grams. Maradona, who led Argentina to the World Cup title in 1986, died on Nov. 25, 2020. He was 60. Vega explained that the examination of Maradona's heart showed that the former star suffered from "long-standing ischemia," with "lack of blood flow and oxygen." The autopsy concluded that Maradona died of acute pulmonary edema secondary to congestive heart failure.

PSG survive scare against Dunkerque to reach French Cup final

LILLE (France): Holders Paris Saint-Germain survived a major scare by coming from two goals down to beat second-tier outsiders Dunkerque 4-2 in the semi-finals of the French Cup on Tuesday, sealing their place in next month's final. Ousmane Dembele scored twice on the night for PSG to take his tally for the season to 32 goals in all competitions, while captain Marquinhos and Desire Doue also found the net for the capital side in a game played in Lille. In the final at the Stade de France on May 24, PSG will face the winners of Wednesday's second last-four tie between Reims and fourth-division Cannes. Luis Enrique's PSG side will be confirmed as Ligue 1 champions on Saturday if they avoid defeat at home to Angers. The Parisians then face Aston Villa next Wednesday in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final tie.

The Rolls-Royce in third gear: Ponting high praise for Iyer



PTI, LUCKNOW: Punjab Kings head coach Ricky Ponting compared skipper Shreyas Iyer to a 'Rolls-Royce in third gear' after the skipper produced a measured half-century to shape his team's big win against Lucknow Super Giants.

Ponting, in an interaction with his team, reminded the players to "not take anything for granted" during the IPL 2025 campaign.

Iyer smashed 52 not out, his second unbeaten half-century in as many games, as PBKS overhauled the 172-run target in 16.2 overs for the loss of two wickets.

Opener Prabhsimran Singh gave Punjab a flying start with a blistering

34-ball 69, while Nehal Wadhwa (43 not out off 25 balls) also picked up some confidence, boosting easy runs towards the end.

"Skipper (Iyer) did it easy again. Rolls-Royce just stayed in third gear for most of the day. Didn't have to go any harder than that. Just steers the ship home. You haven't got an average yet," said the former Australian skipper during the team meeting following the big victory.

Iyer is yet to be dismissed in IPL 2025, having notched up an unbeaten 97 in the opening game against Gujarat Titans. He is currently the second-highest run-getter in the season with 149 runs.

Samson set to lead Royals

B E N - GALURU: Sanju Samson is all set to return as Rajasthan Royals captain after receiving clearance from the National Cricket Academy to keep wickets in the Indian Premier League.

Samson had undergone surgery on his right index finger after being hit by former RR teammate and England pacer Jofra Archer during India's T20I series against England in February.

He had played in the first three games for Rajasthan Royals only as a specialist batter with Riyan Parag leading the side.

While Samson was substituted in during RR's season-opener against Sunrisers Hyderabad, he was substituted out in the contests against Chennai Super Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders, scoring 66, 13 and 20 runs.

Rajasthan Royals are currently placed second last in the points table with one win and two defeats in three matches.

Looked like Punjab curator prepared it: Zaheer Khan slams Lucknow pitch

PTI, LUCKNOW: Two losses in three games have hit Lucknow Super Giants hard, and team mentor Zaheer Khan did not hold back in his criticism of the home-ground pitch following the heavy defeat to Punjab Kings, remarking, it looked like the PBKS 'curator out here'.

Chasing 172 on a track that offered grip and variable bounce, PBKS rode on opener Prabhsimran Singh's 34-ball 69 to outplay the home side by eight wickets as LSG find themselves saddled at the No.6 spot with just one victory in three games and a net run rate in the negative.

"What was a little disappointing for me here, considering it's a home game, and you know, in IPL you've seen how teams have looked at taking a little bit of home advantage, you know," said the former India pacer in the post-match press interaction.

"So yeah, from that point of view, you've seen the curator is not really thinking that it's a home game. You know,

“What was a little disappointing for me here, considering it's a home game, and you know, in IPL you've seen how teams have looked at taking a little bit of home advantage, you know

— Zaheer Khan

I think maybe it looked like, you know, it was Punjab curator out here."

The former pacer, who was the global head of cricket development at Mumbai Indians before joining LSG, added that all this deprives the home team fans of watching their side dominating the proceedings.

"So, that's (pitch) something which we'll figure out. It's a new setup also for me here. But I hope that this is the first and the last game when it comes to that, because you are disappointing the Lucknow fans as well."

"They've come up with so much expectations of winning the first home game here. As a team, we are con-

fident, you know, we accept that we've lost the game, and we're going to do whatever it takes to make that impact in the home leg. We still have six more games to go here," he added.

Zaheer also said he will continue giving precedence to a "process-oriented setup" than a result-oriented one despite a big loss at home.

"This is the third game of the season, you know, so we've been very vocal about how the team is looking at this season. So, that's something which is very important for us as a group. It's a very process-oriented setup, not so much result-oriented.

"So, we're going to definitely focus on the positives. Yes, there is some work to be done, which will happen in the due course," said the former India pacer.

This was the first home game for LSG and a loss did come as a dampener to the fans but Zaheer said his main focus was on creating a "parameter" for the side to follow.

Coach Dimitris Dimitriou: The boys' goal is to make our patron Churchill Alemao proud by winning the title

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Churchill Brothers' head coach, Dimitris Dimitriou, displayed a calm sense of purpose as he prepared himself for what could be the most significant match of his tenure with the team on Saturday. The team stands just one point away from securing the I-League title, requiring only a draw against Real Kashmir in Kashmir to achieve their goal.

Speaking about preparations for the match, Dimitriou said, "It is another day in the office, and we prepare as usual. The only addition is in the psychological aspect; otherwise, everything remains the same. The opponent is very tough. The boys

have come from the lower level, and this is the first time they are so close to the ISL, so we are working on this."

When asked to elaborate on the psychological aspect, he explained that it involved visualising different aspects of the game and mentally preparing for the crucial match. "These are all very simple things that have been done over the years," he added.

Dimitriou described the mood in the team as excellent, with a strong sense of family and unity. The players, he said, were focused on making the occasion a joyous one for the club. When asked about the challenges he anticipated



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— Dimitris Dimitriou, Churchill Brothers' head coach

in the final match, he simply smiled and responded, 'None'. His sole focus, he emphasised, was on securing the result needed to win the title.

Dimitriou dismissed concerns about playing in Kashmir, citing the team's experience in similar conditions. "We have played in places like Shillong and most of the team was in the

I-League last season, so there is nothing particularly surprising about the conditions," he stated.

The 21-member squad will be travelling for the match on Thursday, flying to Kashmir ahead of the crucial encounter. He also expressed gratitude to the club's management, saying, "The family always takes care of the team's requirements, ensuring the best food and accommo-

dation." When asked about the key players he was relying on to turn the match in Churchill Brothers' favour, Dimitriou refused to single out any individuals. "I have five fingers on each hand, and they are all important to me," he remarked. "I will not go down that road. Everyone has to be ready, and I am happy that they are."

Reflecting on the season, Dimitriou described it as a 'great campaign', particularly appreciating the strong support from fans in their last home match. "We were able to bring the people of Goa back to the stadium. The team played very well, and since the fourth game, we have been at the top. This band of players has rekindled interest in Churchill Brothers, and our patron,

Churchill Alemao, is happy. The boys are playing for him, and their goal is to make him proud by winning the title," he said.

When asked if he was satisfied with the team's performances this season, Dimitriou was candid in his response. "I am never happy," he admitted. "Self-improvement is important in every aspect of life. This team has played well, but there is always room for improvement. The young players are developing, and this team will only get better in the future."

With the title within reach, all eyes will be on Churchill Brothers as they prepare to take on Real Kashmir in what could be a defining moment in the club's history.