

Chhetri's last-gasp goal breaks Goan hearts as FC Goa bow out

Bengaluru FC skipper Sunil scores a stoppage time winner against FC Goa to take the Blues into the Indian Super League final after a 3-2 aggregate win

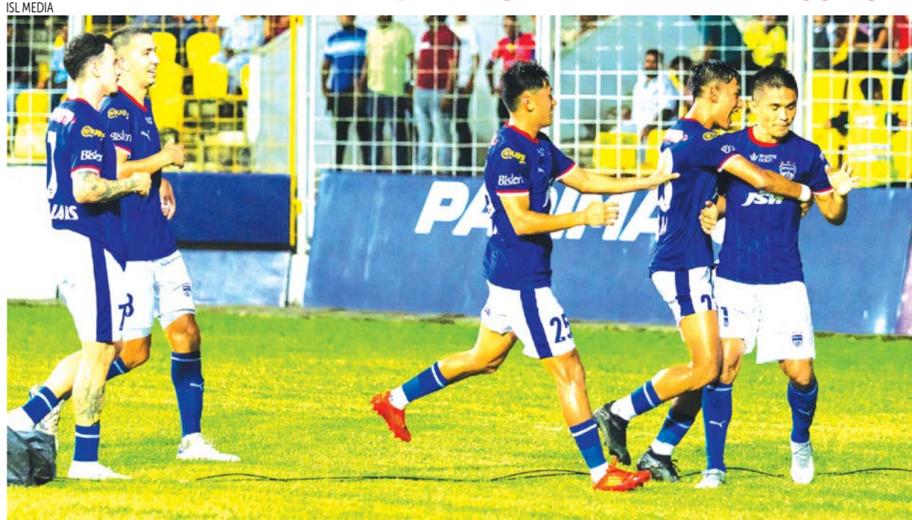
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FATORDA: Bengaluru FC qualified for a record fourth final of the Indian Super League 2024-25 after a 3-2 aggregate win against FC Goa in the semi-final.

Though the Blues lost the second leg 2-1, at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, here, their 2-0 win from the first game of this fixture earlier this week ensured that they entered the summit clash, with Sunil Chhetri starring courtesy of a decisive goal in the added time of the second half.

The Gaurs looked to set the tone of this game from the onset, with Boris Singh hammering a shot from distance way too high to the target in the seventh minute. In the very next move, Udanta Singh supplied a precise pass to Iker Guarrotxena inside the 18-yard box, which the attacker kicked high and wide to the left. Though these endeavours did not materialise into goals, they spoke volumes about FC Goa's intent to cut the deficit early on.

In the 13th minute, Dejan Drazic swung into the thick of things, pouncing upon a delivery by Aakash Sangwan to direct the ball right at the



Bengaluru FC skipper Sunil Chhetri scored a stoppage time winner against FC Goa to take the Blues into the final at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Fatorda, on Sunday

centre of the net. However, the eventual shot lacked the pace required to power its way into the back of the net.

The home side kept dabbling with outside-of-the-box efforts, with Ayush Dev Chhetri and Guarrotxena teaming up in the added time of the first half for the Spaniard's shot to meet a timely block as the game entered the half-time break without troubling the scores.

FC Goa's positive momentum finally paid off in the form of a goal from Borja Herrera in the 49th minute. They pushed numbers ahead at the start of the second essay of the game too, and a free-kick from the absolute edge of the penalty area propelled them to find their way back in the contest. Herrera stepped up on the set-piece duties and smashed the ball into the

bottom left corner through impeccable precision to bring up his team's first goal of this semi-final tie.

The Manolo Marquez-coached team had plenty of close chances coming their way in the forthcoming phase of the game too. Ayush Dev Chhetri miscued a shot at the high centre of the goal from inside the box in the 69th minute, and it was followed with Udanta's

cross to Guarrotxena being headed on target by the latter. None of the two shots had the finesse required to find their way past Gurpreet Singh Sandhu though.

The stage was set perfectly for an exciting concluding passage of the encounter. Sangwan's prowess from lateral zones was optimised in the 89th minute when his cross was nodded by Armando Sadiku from

the centre of the box into the bottom right corner to equalise the scores.

The goal, however, stimulated Bengaluru FC to rediscover their offensive instincts as they immediately rushed to outnumber the FC Goa backline, resulting in Sandesh Jhingan and Brison Fernandes conceding hasty corners in the added time. In the consequence of one such corner kick, Namgyal Bhutia whipped in a cross that was received and headed by Sunil Chhetri with great vigour into the high centre of the goal, bagging the Blues a place in the summit clash.

Chhetri came off the bench in the 55th minute and embraced a concentrated role upfront, completing 10 out of his 12 attempted passes, producing one goal-scoring chance, in addition to tackling and netting once each.

Bengaluru FC will play the final of the ISL 2024-25 on April 12, against the winner of the semi-final tie between Jamshedpur FC and Mohun Bagan Super Giant. FC Goa's run in the campaign wraps up with this match.

RESULT
FC Goa 2 (2) (Borja Herrera 49', Armando Sadiku 88') Bengaluru FC 1 (3) (Sunil Chhetri 90+2')

Mohun Bagan seek to overturn deficit against Jamshedpur

PTI, KOLKATA: Hosts Mohun Bagan Super Giant will have their task cut out as they look to overturn a one-goal deficit against Jamshedpur FC in their second leg semi-final of the Indian Super League, here, on Monday.

Jamshedpur FC will enter Mohun Bagan SG's bastion -- Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (VYBK) -- with a 2-1 aggregate advantage after the Khalid Jamil-coached side snapped MBSG's six-game unbeaten streak against the Red Miners.

The League Shield winners will be drawing confidence from their

impeccable home record though, having not given away a goal in any of their previous six games at the stadium.

They will have to extend that streak to overturn the deficit and find a place in the summit clash for the third year running.

MBSG, however, have lost three of their last four playoff games in the ISL, including each of their last two. They had faced defeats in only two of their first nine playoff matches before this patch began; a promising run of form they will seek to regain starting from this game.

Having scored 21 goals from

set-pieces this season, which is the most ever by a team in a single ISL campaign, Mohun Bagan Super Giant's mastery from dead-ball situations could be instrumental in dissecting Jamshedpur FC's backline.

Jamshedpur FC have scored multiple goals in each of their last

2ND LEG SEMI-FINAL PREVIEW

four ISL games, which is their second-best such streak ever. However, they have never netted more than once in consecutive games against MBSG before, and an alert

home side defence will be eager to sustain that record.

While their attacking form has been inspiring, the Red Miners have conceded a league-high 23 goals in the first half. Jamil will push his team to shore up defensively early on to avoid conceding their aggregate advantage. Mohun Bagan Super Giant head coach Jose Molina brought the focus to the core objective from the coming match: to progress into the finals.

"The only thing that is there in my mind right now is the matchday. We have to perform well and win - that's the goal currently," he said.

"We have kept our preparations for this match the same as before."

Jamshedpur FC head coach Khalid Jamil recognised MBSG's strength at home.

"We have kept our preparations for this game the same as before. There is no doubt about Mohun Bagan Super Giant, who always play very well, especially at home," he said.

The two sides have played 11 games against each other, with MBSG winning five times and Jamshedpur FC emerging victorious four times. Two encounters have produced draws.

Gill, Siraj & Washington shine in GT's easy 7-wkt win

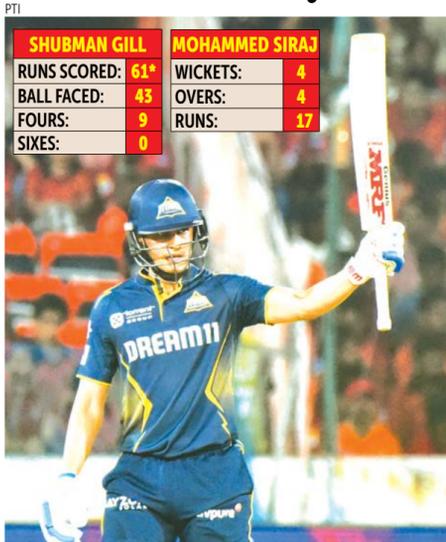
PTI, HYDERABAD: Skipper Shubman Gill led by example with a classy half-century after Mohammed Siraj bowled with fire in his belly to return excellent figures of 4/17 as Gujarat Titans crushed Sunrisers Hyderabad by seven wickets in their IPL match, here, on Sunday.

Sent at number four, Washington Sundar too showed his class with a 29-ball 49 as GT registered their third win in four outings, even as SRH suffered their fourth defeat in five matches. The chase of 153 was completed with as many as 20 balls to spare, with Gill making an unbeaten 61 off 43 balls.

Bowling first, GT restricted SRH to 152 for eight with left-arm spinner R Sai Kishore (2/24) and seamer Prasidh Krishna (2/25) too performing admirably on a slow surface. Mohammed Shami (2/28) and Pat Cummins (1/26) brought SRH back into the contest with their early strikes as GT found themselves at a tricky 16 for two in the fourth over.

B Sai Sudharsan (5) could not keep his shot down and was caught at square leg off Shami, and Cummins then dismissed Jos Buttler for a three-ball duck with a back of a length delivery that nipped back in sharply, and Heinrich Klaasen did the rest behind the stumps.

The two wickets gave SRH a glimmer of hope but skipper Shubman Gill and Washington Sundar joined forces to stitch a third-wicket partnership of 90 runs to pave the way for their team's win. Helping



Gujarat Titans' batter Shubman Gill celebrates his half century during the Indian Premier League match against Sunrisers Hyderabad, at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, in Hyderabad, on Sunday

SCOREBOARD

Sunrisers Hyderabad: Abhishek Sharma c Tewatia b Siraj 18, Travis Head c Sudharsan b Siraj 8, Ishan Kishan c Sharma b Krishna 17, Nitish Kumar Reddy c Khan b Kishore 31, Heinrich Klaasen b Kishore 27, Aniket Verma lbw b Siraj 18, Kamindu Mendis c Sudharsan b Krishna 1, *Pat Cummins not out 22, Simarjeet Singh b Siraj 0, Mohammed Shami not out 6. **Extras:** 4. **Total:** 152-8. **Fall of wickets:** 9-1, 38-2, 50-3, 100-4, 105-5, 120-6, 135-7, 135-8. **Bowling:** Mohammed Siraj 4-0-17-4, Ishant Sharma 4-0-53-0, Prasidh Krishna 4-0-25-2, Rashid Khan 4-0-31-0, Sai Kishore 4-0-24-2.

Gujarat Titans: Sai Sudharsan c Verma b Shami 5, *Shubman Gill not out 61, Jos Buttler c Klaasen b Cummins 0, Washington Sundar c Verma b Shami 49, Sherfane Rutherford not out 35. **Extras:** 3. **Total:** 153-3. **Fall of wickets:** 15-1, 16-2, 106-3. **Bowling:** Mohammed Shami 4-0-28-2, *Pat Cummins 3-4-0-26-1, Simarjeet Singh 1-0-20-0, Jaydev Unadkat 2-0-16-0, Zeeshan Ansari 4-0-33-0, Kamindu Mendis 1-0-12-0, Abhishek Sharma 1-0-18-0.

Man-of-the-match: Mohammed Siraj



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GT duo to get their innings up and running after the early wobble was a horrendous sixth over from pacer Simarjeet Singh, who conceded 20 runs to ease the pressure on the visitors.

Simarjeet was guilty of repeatedly bowling short and Washington took full advantage of it by pulling and hooking him for two sixes over fine leg after collecting two fours.

Gill was all class reaching his half-century in 36 balls with the help of some delightful shots but Washington got out one short of what would have been a well-deserved fifty.

A flurry of boundaries from Sherfane Rutherford (35 not out off 16 balls) then helped GT finish the game with plenty to spare.

Bumrah to return, MI look to overcome batting woes

PTI, MUMBAI: Mumbai Indians' worries on the bowling front might have subsided a bit with Jasprit Bumrah set for a comeback, but they will hope for their batters to get the act together against an inspired Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the IPL match here on Monday.

Bumrah trained at nets here on Sunday after joining the MI camp on Saturday night, a good enough sign for head coach Mahela

TODAY'S IPL FIXTURE

Mumbai Indians vs Royal Challengers Bengaluru, at the Wankhede Cricket Stadium, Mumbai, at 7.30 pm

Jayawardene to confirm his availability for the game against RCB.

But with three defeats in four games marking yet another poor start for the five-time winners, Mumbai Indians are grappling with batting woes. Only two MI batters have hit half-centuries so far

in four matches -- Suryakumar Yadav and Ryan Rickelton. Among all the 10 IPL teams, this is the least number of contributions in terms of fifties per batter.

At the centre of MI's struggles with the bat are former skipper Rohit Sharma, who missed the

last game against Lucknow Super Giants due to a blow to his knee at the nets after a poor start to the IPL, and middle-order batter Tilak Varma, who has not converted his starts into big scores.

It remains to be seen if Rohit is fit for the clash against RCB but MI will certainly need a quick fix to their batting woes and would need Suryakumar to continue doing the heavy lifting.

FROM PAGE 1

Churchill Bros I-League provisional toppers

Heading into the final round on Sunday, four teams -- Churchill Brothers, Inter Kashi, Real Kashmir and Gokulam Kerala -- were all in title contention. Churchill needed a win in Srinagar to seal the title outright but could only manage a draw against a resilient Real Kashmir which ended unbeaten at home.

"I would like to thank the Almighty and Mother Mary," said Valanka Alemao, CEO of Churchill Brothers, after the match. "Every single victory belongs to Lord Jesus. And this would not have been possible as every Goan supported our team through each and every match and they carried them on their shoulders. I am proud of the team. The boys have played excellently and it has been our year. With regards to Inter Kashi, championships are won on the pitch and

not in the courtroom."

Goa Football Association (GFA) president Caitano Fernandes said, "It is a very good development for Goa football. We are happy that a Goan team has done well. Now there are two teams in the ISL. My best wishes for them."

For the fans of Churchill Brothers, it has been a highly satisfying season. Rahil Khan, a die-hard fan from Baina, said: "Being a fan of Churchill Brothers is about the loyalty, the passion, and the unwavering commitment we have to our team, through thick and thin. We've endured many ups and downs, and through it all, we've seen our players fight for every single point, give their all, and represent our club with the utmost pride. No matter how things play out, we already know that the spirit of Churchill Brothers has shone through this season."

MATCH HIGHLIGHTS

■ Real Kashmir led 1-0 at half-time through Lalramsanga's 7th-minute header

■ Churchill equalised in

ISL PROMOTION HINGES ON AIFF PANEL VERDICT

■ Churchill Bros finished with 40 pts, one ahead of Inter Kashi (39)

■ There could be a twist if Inter Kashi are awarded three additional points -- currently kept in abeyance -- from their protest over Namdhari SC fielding an ineligible player earlier this

INTER KASHI-NAMDHARI SC MATCH CONTROVERSY

■ The controversy relates to Inter Kashi's match against Namdhari SC on Jan 13, when the latter won 2-0

■ AIFF Disciplinary Committee found out that they fielded an ineligible player

the 50th minute when Rafiq Aminu slotted home after being set up by Wayde Lekay

■ Ended the season with 40 pts from 22 matches

season

■ The AIFF Appeal Committee to hear the case on April 28

■ If the decision goes in Inter Kashi's favour, their points tally will rise to 42, making them the I-League champs and seal their promotion to ISL

■ It awarded a 3-0 forfeit win to Inter Kashi along with 3 pts

■ The panel put the decision 'inoperative and in abeyance' until the final hearing