

# Devdutt blossoms under Virat as RCB keep all-away-win record intact with 7-wkt win

The duo added 103 in 11.3 overs by playing textbook cricketing strokes with minimal risk

**PTI, MULLANPUR:** The stylish Devdutt Padikkal blossomed under the able guidance of peerless Virat Kohli as Royal Challengers Bengaluru exacted a sweet revenge on Punjab Kings keeping their all-away-win record intact with an easy seven-wicket victory in an IPL match, here, on Sunday.

Having lost the rain-curtailed home match to Punjab Kings on Friday, RCB turned the tables within less than 48 hours, chasing down a target of 158 without much ado in just 18.5 overs to enter the top four in the points table.

Southpaw Padikkal (61 off 35 balls), who is an effortless elegance when on song, scored his first IPL half-century in 22 innings while chases like these have been a cakewalk for someone of Kohli's caliber as he played second fiddle for the better part of his innings.

He finished with a flourish, remaining unbeaten on 73 off 54 balls. The duo added 103 in 11.3 overs by playing textbook cricketing strokes with minimal risk.

It was Kohli, who started off with a signature pull off Arshdeep Singh where the rolling of wrists kept the ball down and a bowler's back-drive off Xavier Bartlett to sig-

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## TODAY'S IPL FIXTURE

Kolkata Knight Riders vs Gujarat Titans, at the Eden Gardens Cricket Stadium, Kolkata-West Bengal, at 7.30 pm

nal his intentions.

He got an able partner in Padikkal, who hit fours and sixes in equal measure.

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to sprint for four runs.

Kohli farmed the strike with ease and when needed, got a boundary like once when he rode the bounce to back-cut Jansen towards backward point.

Padikkal was finally gone trying to get for a fifth six off left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar's bowling but by then RCB had all but pocketed the game.

Once he completed his 50 off 42 balls, Kohli

slashed Arshdeep deliberately behind point for a boundary. But undoubtedly the best shot was an inside out straight six off Yuzvendra Chahal.

Earlier, RCB spinners Krunal Pandya and Suyash Sharma bowled stifling spells to restrict Punjab Kings to an under-par 157 for six in 20 overs.

Left-arm spinner Krunal (2/25) and leg-spinner Suyash (2/27) were at their crafty best after Royal Challengers opted to field first on a pitch that had a hint of slowness.

In fact, the Punjab side made a good start to their innings with Priyansh Arya (22) and Prabhsimran Singh (33) adding 42 runs in 4.2 overs. There was no sign of an impending storm when Arya made his runs through those short-arm pulls and hit-through-line shots.



New Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli and Devdutt Padikkal give a fist bump during an Indian Premier League match against Punjab Kings, at Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium, in New Chandigarh, on Sunday

## SCOREBOARD

**Punjab Kings:** Priyansh Arya c David b Pandya 22, Prabhsimran Singh c David b Pandya 33, \*Shreyas Iyer c Pandya b Shepherd 6, Josh Inglis b Sharma 29, Nehal Wadhwa run out (Sharma) 5, Shashank Singh not out 31, Marcus Stoinis b Sharma 1, Marco Jansen not out 25. **Extras:** 5. **Total:** 157-6. **Fall of wickets:** 42-1, 62-2, 68-3, 75-4, 112-5, 114-6. **Bowling:** Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-26-0, Yash Dayal 2-0-22-0, Josh Hazlewood 4-0-39-0, Krunal Pandya 4-0-25-2, Romario Shepherd 2-0-18-1, Suyash Sharma 4-0-26-2.

**Royal Challengers Bengaluru:** Philip Salt c Inglis b Arshdeep 1, Virat Kohli not out 73, Devdutt Padikkal c Wadhwa b Brar 61, \*Rajat Patidar c Jansen b Chahal 12, Jitesh Sharma not out 11. **Extras:** 1. **Total:** 159-3. **Fall of wickets:** Philip 6-1, 109-2, 143-3. **Bowling:** Arshdeep Singh 3-0-26-1, Xavier Bartlett 3-0-28-0, Harpreet Brar 4-0-27-1, Marco Jansen 3-0-20-0, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-36-1, Marcus Stoinis 1-0-13-0, Nehal Wadhwa 0.5-0-9-0. **Man of the match:** Virat Kohli

## Rohit, Suryakumar guide MI to victory

**PTI, MUMBAI:** Skipper Rohit Sharma (76 not out) and Suryakumar Yadav (68 not out) tore apart Chennai Super Kings to hand Mumbai Indians a commanding nine-wicket win in an one-sided Indian Premier League match, here, on Sunday.

Chasing a below-par target, the hosts faced absolutely no difficulties on a batting-friendly surface in swatting away the challenge as they went over the line making 177 for one to win by more than four overs to spare, and take a leap to sixth spot in the points table.

Rohit capitalised on anything short from the pacers in the powerplay and swept with command against the CSK spinners to notch up his maiden fifty of the

season, which came off 33 balls.

On a six-hitting spree, Rohit finished at 76 not out off 45 balls with four fours and six hits over the fence.

MI's impact substitute Rohit laid the foundation with a robust 63-run stand for the first wicket in the powerplay -- their best start undoubtedly in this IPL -- and ensured the hosts remained on track for a big win keeping them at a scoring rate of 10 per over.

For CSK, it was a challenge stopping the former MI skipper in his tracks especially with their seamers failing to make any impact and seasoned spinners in Ravichandran Ashwin (0/25) and Ravindra Jadeja (1/28) not able to extract anything off the surface either.

## SCOREBOARD

**Chennai Super Kings:** Shaik Rasheed st Ricketton b Santner 19, Rachin Ravindra c Ricketton b Kumar 5, Ayush Mhatre c Santner b Chahar 32, Ravindra Jadeja not out 53, Shivam Dube c Jacks b Bumrah 50, \*MS Dhoni c Varma b Bumrah 4, Jamie Overton not out 4. **Extras:** 9. **Total:** 176-5. **Fall of wickets:** 16-1, 56-2, 61-3, 142-4, 156-5. **Bowling:** Deepak Chahar 4-0-32-1, Trent Boult 4-0-43-0, Ashwani Kumar 2-0-42-1, Mitchell Santner 3-0-14-1, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-25-2, Will Jacks 1-0-4-0, \*Hardik Pandya 2-0-13-0.

**Mumbai Indians:** Ryan Ricketton c Mhatre b Jadeja 24, Rohit Sharma not out 76, Suryakumar Yadav not out 68. **Extras:** 9. **Total:** 177-1. **Fall of wickets:** 63-1. **Bowling:** Khaleel Ahmed 2-0-24-0, Jamie Overton 2-0-29-0, Ravichandran Ashwin 4-0-25-0, Ravindra Jadeja 3-0-28-1, Noor Ahmad 3-0-36-0, Matheesha Pathirana 1-4-0-34-0. **Man-of-the-match:** Rohit Sharma

## Liverpool close in on title, Leicester relegated from EPL

**AFP, LEICESTER:** Leicester City were relegated from the Premier League as Liverpool moved to within one win of the title on Sunday with a 1-0 victory at the King Power.

Trent Alexander-Arnold came off the bench to score the only goal 14 minutes from time as the Reds moved to the brink of a record-equaling 20th English top-flight title. Liverpool could be crowned champions on Wednesday should Arsenal lose at home to Crystal Palace.

If the Gunners avoid defeat, Arne Slot's men have the chance to seal the deal when Tottenham visit Anfield next Sunday.

Leicester have not scored a single goal at home since December as nine consecutive defeats at the King Power have taken Ruud van Nistelrooy's men down.

A Liverpool cruise seemed in store when Mohamed Salah hit both posts with a glorious chance inside the first two minutes.

But after storming clear of the chasing pack in Slot's early months in charge to build a near unassailable lead, Liverpool have slowed in recent weeks as the finish line approaches. Wilfred Ndidi came close to ending Leicester's barren run with



Liverpool's English defender Trent Alexander-Arnold (second right) celebrates after scoring the opening goal of the English Premier League match against Leicester City at King Power Stadium in Leicester, England on Sunday

a low strike that came back off the post. Slot introduced Alexander-Arnold for the final 20 minutes on his re-

turn from a five-week absence due to an ankle injury. The right-back took just five minutes to score his

## ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS

**Fulham 1 (Iwobi 20) Chelsea 2 (George 83, Neto 90+3), Ipswich 0 Arsenal 4 (Trossard 14, 69, Martinelli 28, Nwankwani 88), Leicester 0 Liverpool 1 (Alexander-Arnold 76), Manchester United 0 Wolves 1 (Sarabia 77). Saturday: Aston Villa 4 (Watkins 1, Maatsen 64, Burn 73-og, Onana 75) Newcastle 1 (Schar 18), Brentford 4 (Mbeumo 9, 48, Wissa 58, Norgaard 90+5) Brighton 2 (Welbeck 45+3, Mitoma 81), Crystal Palace 0 Bournemouth 0, Everton 0 Manchester City 2 (O'Reilly 84, Kovacic 90+2), West Ham 1 (Bowen 47) Southampton 1 (Ugochukwu 90+3).**

23rd and potentially last goal for his boyhood club.

Salah and Diogo Jota somehow contrived to hit the woodwork rather than the net from point-blank range as Leicester struggled to clear a corner.

The loose ball broke to Alexander-Arnold, whose shot went straight through the grasp of Hermansen.

Alexander-Arnold ripped off his shirt in a wild celebration in front of the Liverpool fans.

## sportspopup

### Rudranksh-Arya pair, Babuta win silver medals in Peru World Cup

**NEW DELHI:** The pair of Rudranksh Patil and Arya Borse won the 10m air rifle mixed team silver, while Paris Olympian Arjun Babuta also clinched the second spot in the men's 10m air rifle event at the ISSF World Cup in Lima, Peru. The duo of Rudranksh and Arya went down 11-17 to the Norwegian pair of Jon-Hermann Hegg and Jeanette Hegg Duestad in the gold-medal match. These were India's second and third silver medals in the Lima World Cup to go with two gold and a bronze. Earlier, Rudranksh and Arya had shot a combined 632.5 to make it to the gold-medal match, finishing behind the table-topping Norwegian pair by 0.1 point. They could not overturn that supremacy in the final. The other Indian pair of Babuta and Narmada Nithin shot 630.0 to finish seventh in the 24-team competition.

### Visiting Zimbabwe in control after opening day of 1st Test against Bangladesh

**SYLHET (Bangladesh):** Visiting Zimbabwe took full control on the opening day of the first cricket test against Bangladesh after the home side put on a reckless batting performance to be all out for just 191, on Sunday. Zimbabwe, in reply, reached 67 for no loss before bad light brought a premature close of play. Brian Bennett was batting on 40 after hitting six fours in just 37 balls with Ben Curran on 17 as they dealt with Bangladesh's bowlers astutely to keep the side's advantage. A familiar wayward batting show caused Bangladesh's downfall yet again. Mominul Haque top-scored with 56 and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto made 40 but no other batters managed to make an impact against a side that hasn't won a test since 2021. Mahmudul Hasan and Shadman Islam began the innings watchfully after captain Shanto won the toss and elected to bat first but both openers failed to convert the start. Pacer Victor Nyauchu took both wickets and eventually finished with 2-74. He gave the side a breakthrough in the ninth over, dismissing Shadman for 12 and an over later took the wicket of Hasan who made 14.

### I will move court against Ombudsman's order, says miffed Azharuddin

**NEW DELHI:** Former India skipper Mohammed Azharuddin is planning to approach the Telangana High Court, seeking a stay on Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) Ombudsman's order to remove his name from North Stand at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium. Justice (Retd) V Eswaraiah, who is also HCA's ethics officer, made the decision on basis of a petition filed by Lords Cricket Club -- one of HCA's member units -- which alleged that Azharuddin misused his position as then HCA President by taking arbitrary decisions. The petition alleged that the veteran of 99 Tests and 334 ODIs violated HCA rules by sitting in the Apex Council meeting as former HCA president to get the resolution passed on naming the North Stand after him in December 2019, barely a month after he became association chief. According to HCA constitution, a resolution needs to be ratified by the General body. "I will definitely take legal recourse and will be appealing to the High Court to stay this order. It is a shame that an India captain's name is being asked to be removed," Azharuddin told PTI on Sunday. The former India skipper also questioned the validity of Ombudsman's order, saying his tenure has already ended.

### Liga leaders Barca make stunning comeback to beat Celta Vigo

**BARCELONA:** Barcelona pulled off a stunning comeback from two goals down to beat Celta Vigo 4-3 on Saturday and move seven points clear of Real Madrid in the La Liga title race. The Catalans trailed 3-1 inside the final half-hour after a Borja Iglesias hat-trick for the visitors, but Dani Olmo scored and then Raphinha equalised before he snatched victory with a 98th minute penalty to snatch three essential points for the leaders. "This attitude, this mentality of not giving up, is really great to see... we tried everything to get the three points and we did it," Barcelona coach Hansi Flick told reporters. However Flick said striker Robert Lewandowski needed tests after coming off with an apparent hamstring problem, making him a doubt for the Copa del Rey final next weekend against rivals Real Madrid, and putting a question mark over his involvement in the Champions League semi-final against Inter Milan. Results: Rayo Vallecano 1 (Tarrega 45-og) Valencia 1 (Sadiq 75), Barcelona 4 (Torres 12, Olmo 64, Raphinha 68, 90+8-pen) Celta Vigo 3 (Iglesias 15, 52, 62), Mallorca 0 Leganes 0, Las Palmas 1 (Munoz 90+3) Atletico Madrid 0.

### Lewandowski injury confirmed in blow to Barca quadruple bid

**BARCELONA:** Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski was diagnosed with a hamstring injury on Sunday and is set to miss the Copa del Rey final and Champions League semi-final according to Spanish media reports. The 36-year-old Polish forward, Barcelona's top goalscorer with 40 goals across all competitions, came off during his team's 4-3 La Liga win over Celta Vigo on Saturday. Tests carried out on Sunday have confirmed that first-team player Robert Lewandowski has a semitendinosus injury in his left thigh, said Barcelona in a statement, without specifying how long he would be sidelined for. Spanish media reported Lewandowski could be out for three weeks, meaning he would not be available next Saturday as Barcelona face Real Madrid in the Copa final in Seville.

# Divine force behind Churchill Bros' ISL qualification: Alemao

Club founder outlines vision for India's World Cup dreams after a historic promotion

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**MARGAO:** A jubilant Churchill Alemao, founder of Churchill Brothers, thanked God and Our Lady of Vailankanni for giving his football Club the best Easter gift following the news of Churchill Brothers qualifying for the Indian Super League (ISL).

The qualification came after the Appeals Committee of the All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Saturday night adjudged Churchill Brothers as I-League champions for the 2024-25 season, ending weeks of uncertainty and drama.

This verdict not only confirmed their championship status but also secured them the single coveted promotion slot to

the ISL for the 2025-26 season - marking a return to top-tier football after years.

While speaking to the media-persons on Sunday, Alemao also shared his thoughts about reforms needed in the country to help India qualify for the World Cup, which he described as his life-long dream. He confidently stated that if his proposals are implemented, then "102 per cent, India would qualify".

Reflecting on the ISL qualification, Churchill expressed, "I want to thank everyone in Goa and all those Goans living abroad. I was getting non-stop calls asking me what was going to happen, and I know that this is what the people of Goa wanted, to see our club in the ISL."

"Everyone knows that Churchill Brothers will change ISL as

"I want to thank everyone in Goa and all those Goans living abroad. I was getting non-stop calls asking me what was going to happen, and I know that this is what the people of Goa wanted, to see our club in the ISL. Everyone knows that Churchill Brothers will change ISL as we are a club that always competes for the top. Goans wanted a Goan club to be in the ISL and this has finally happened

— Churchill Alemao, patron, Churchill Brothers

we are a club that always competes for the top. Goans wanted a Goan club to be in the ISL and this has finally happened," Alemao stated with pride.

The former minister added that despite being in football promotion for 45 years and investing his money in the club rather than in ventures like starred hotels, he has had to face numerous difficulties along the way.

Alemao lamented that this season felt like his team of 11 players were competing against a team of 15-16 players, considering all the decisions being taken against his club both on and off the pitch.

He expressed his belief that it was divine intervention that finally delivered justice and helped them overcome the adversity they faced from those allegedly conspiring against them.



and a clear vision.

Alemao questioned how India, with the second-largest population in the world, cannot field a team in the World Cup when countries with much smaller populations are competing.

He highlighted the support that clubs in countries like Japan and Saudi Arabia receive from their governments to improve football quality and reach World Cup standards.

Alemao pointed out that presently there is no government support and better central schemes are needed.

He criticised the current selection process where a high-profile coach is hired who then chooses two players from each major club, describing this approach as flawed.

He affirmed that Indians

have football in their blood regardless of which State they come from, and there is a need to scout talent from across the country when players are at a young age.

He proposed that such players should spend five years in an academy where their education is completed and families are kept informed of their children's development.

Each year, Alemao suggested, a small pool of players who don't make the final cut can be removed so that in the final year, only the best remain. These elite players should then make it to the national team through further training and development to compete in World Cup qualifiers, ultimately helping to achieve his dream of seeing India on the world stage.