

Hazlewood-inspired RCB triumph in see-saw battle

Rajasthan Royals crash out of play-off race

PTI, BENGALURU: Josh Hazlewood delivered a match-defining penultimate over to power Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) to their first home victory of the IPL season, defeating Rajasthan Royals (RR) by 11 runs in a thrilling encounter at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on Thursday.

IPL The Australian pacer, returning to bowl with RR needing 18 off the final 12 balls, conceded just one run and took two wickets in as many deliveries, finishing with figures of 4 for 33. His efforts sealed a crucial win for RCB and eliminated RR from play-off contention, with the Jaipur-based franchise suffering their seventh defeat in nine matches and fifth on the trot.

Chasing 206, RR were bowled out for 194 in 20 overs despite a whirlwind start led by Yashasvi Jaiswal (49 off 19) and teenager Vaibhav Suryavanshi. Jaiswal launched a brutal assault, smashing Hazlewood for five boundaries and a six, but the bowler eventually had his revenge by having him caught at mid-wicket.

Suryavanshi, RR's impact player, scored 16 off 8 balls with two sixes before falling to a Bhuvneshwar Kumar knuckleball. RR raced to 72/2 in the powerplay



Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Josh Hazlewood (3L), along with teammates, celebrates the team's win against Rajasthan Royals at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru

but lost momentum as wickets tumbled.

Dhruv Jurel (47 off 34) mounted a late fightback, but the required run rate kept climbing. Shimron Hetmyer, Riyan Parag (22 off 10), and Nitish Rana (28 off 22) all got starts, but none could anchor the innings. Hazlewood's final spell swung the match decisively in RCB's favour.

Earlier, Virat Kohli (70 off 42) and Devdutt Padikkal (50 off 27) anchored RCB's innings with a 95-run stand for the second wicket on a tricky pitch. Kohli notched his fifth half-century of the season—his first at

home—with back-to-back boundaries off Sandeep Sharma.

Phil Salt (26 off 23) was dropped early by Parag, then punished the bowlers before falling to Wanindu Hasaranga. Jitesh Sharma (20* off 10) and Tim David (23 off 15) played vital cameos to lift RCB to 206 after a flurry of late boundaries.

There were early nerves for RCB, including a 149.8 km/h bumper from Jofra Archer that flew for four and a dropped catch in the second over, but Kohli's composure steadied the innings.

The Royals used Vaibhav Suryavanshi as their impact player and RCB deployed Suyash Sharma. RCB's win keeps their play-off hopes alive, while RR bow out of the tournament, unable to recover from a string of losses.

After being taken apart by Yashasvi Jaiswal earlier in the innings, Hazlewood returned with a stunning penultimate over—conceding just one run and claiming two wickets in two balls. This over decisively turned the match in RCB's favour and was the defining moment of the contest.

Jaiswal's explosive 49 off 19 balls, including a savage assault on Hazlewood, gave RR a

fast start and put them ahead in the chase. However, his dismissal, also by Hazlewood, came just as he looked set to take the game away—triggering a loss of momentum for RR.

TWISTS & TURNS

The 95-run partnership between Kohli and Padikkal laid a solid foundation, but it was the late cameos by Jitesh Sharma and Tim David that pushed RCB past 200—a total that proved just enough to defend under pressure.

SCOREBOARD

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Philip Salt c Hetmyer b Hasaranga 26, Virat Kohli c Rana b Archer 70, Devdutt Padikkal c Rana b Sharma 50, Tim David run out (Jurel) 23, Rajat Patidar c Jurel b Sharma 1, Jitesh Sharma not out 20. **Extras:** 15. **Total:** 205 for 5. **FOW:** 61-1, 156-2, 161-3, 163-4, 205-5.

Bowling: Jofra Archer 4-0-33-1, Fazalgha Farooqi 3-0-30-0, Tushar Deshpande 2-0-36-0, Sandeep Sharma 4-0-45-2, Wanindu Hasaranga 4-0-30-1, Riyan Parag 3-0-30-0.

Rajasthan Royals: Yashasvi Jaiswal c Shepherd b Hazlewood 49, Vaibhav Suryavanshi b Kumar 16, Nitish Rana c Kumar b Pandya 28, Riyan Parag c Sharma b Pandya 22, Dhruv Jurel c Sharma b Hazlewood 47, Shimron Hetmyer c Sharma b Hazlewood 11, Shubham Dubey c Salt b Dayal 12, Jofra Archer c Patidar b Hazlewood 0, Wanindu Hasaranga run out (Sharma) 1, Tushar Deshpande not out 1, Fazalgha Farooqi not out 2. **Extras:** 5. **Total:** 194 for 9. **FOW:** 52-1, 72-2, 110-3, 134-4, 162-5, 189-6, 189-7, 189-8, 190-9. **Bowling:** Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-50-1, Yash Dayal 3-0-33-1, Josh Hazlewood 4-0-33-4, Romario Shepherd 1-0-15-0, Suyash Sharma 4-0-31-0, Krunal Pandya 4-0-31-2

Man-of-the-Match: Josh Hazlewood

TODAY'S FIXTURE

Chennai Super Kings vs Sunrisers Hyderabad, at MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai, at 7.30 pm

Real win at Getafe to keep La Liga title hopes alive

AFP, MADRID: Arda Guler struck the only goal as Real Madrid won 1-0 at Getafe on Wednesday to claw back to within four points of La Liga leaders Barcelona.

The young Turkey international fired in from outside the area midway through the first half as Carlo Ancelotti's side stayed in title contention after Barcelona won by the same scoreline at Mallorca on Tuesday.

Arch-rivals Madrid and Barcelona will meet in the Copa del Rey final in Seville on Saturday, with Kylian Mbappe poised to return from injury for the weekend Clasico -- one of two remaining this season. The clubs are also due to meet in the league on May 11.

However, the win over Getafe may have come at a cost to Madrid with David Alaba and Eduardo Camavinga both forced off.

Inaki Williams fired Athletic Bilbao to a 1-0 home win over Las Palmas earlier on Wednesday to strengthen their chances of direct qualification for next sea-

RESULTS

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Williams 5) **Las Palmas 0**; **Celta Vigo 3** (Lopez 45, Iglesias 53, Aspas 87-pen) **Villarreal 0**; **Alaves 1** (Tenaglia 65) **Real Sociedad 0**; **Getafe 0 Real Madrid 1** (Guler 21)

son's Champions League.

The Basque side sit fourth with five games to go, eight points clear of fifth-placed Villarreal who suffered a 3-0 defeat at Celta Vigo.

Bilbao also have a Europa League semi-final against Manchester United to come, and should they win that they will play the final in their home stadium.

Five La Liga sides qualify for the Champions League this season. Sixth-placed Betis are a point behind Villarreal ahead of their encounter with rock-bottom Valladolid on Thursday.

Alaves climbed out of the bottom three at the expense of Las Palmas with a 1-0 victory over Real Sociedad.

AFP, LONDON: Mikel Arteta admitted Arsenal have to get their 'energy' back for the Champions League showdown with Paris Saint-Germain after a lacklustre 2-2 draw against Crystal Palace left Liverpool on the brink of winning the Premier League.

Arteta's side were hoping to warm up for their first Champions League semi-final appearance since 2009 with a victory over Palace at the Emirates Stadium.

But Jakub Kiwior's third-minute header for the Gunners was cancelled out by Eberechi Eze's volley in the 27th minute.

Leandro Trossard's strike put Arsenal back in front three minutes before half-time, only for Palace substitute Jean-Philippe Mateta to loft a brilliant lob over out of position keeper David Raya in the 83rd minute.

Second-placed Arsenal are 12 points adrift of Liverpool, and with only four matches left for the north Londoners, Arne Slot's team will seal the title if they avoid defeat against Tottenham at Anfield on Sunday.

Liverpool on brink of title after Arsenal held by Palace



Arsenal midfielder Leandro Trossard (3rd R) celebrates after scoring his team's second goal against Crystal Palace at the Emirates Stadium

RESULTS

Arsenal 2 (Kiwior 3, Trossard 42) **Crystal Palace 2** (Eze 27, Mateta 83); **Manchester City 2** (Silva 7, Nunes 90+4) **Aston Villa 1** (Rashford 18-pen)

Champions League for the first time.

But the sloppy display against Palace was hardly ideal preparation for the showdown with French champions PSG, who have eliminated Liverpool and Aston Villa en route to the last four.

Adding to Arteta's concerns is an injury to Mikel Merino that gave the Spaniard out of the Palace game and could sideline him against PSG.

Merino is a midfielder by trade but has been operating as an effective makeshift striker after Arsenal were hit by injuries to Kai Havertz and Gabriel Jesus.

Arsenal's repeated failure to kill off opponents has resulted in 13 draws from 34 league games, helping put Liverpool within touching distance of a record-equaling 20th English title.

Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Liverpool	33	24	7	2	75	31	79
Arsenal	34	18	13	3	63	29	67
Man City	34	18	7	9	66	43	61
Nottm Forest	33	18	6	9	53	39	60
Newcastle	33	18	5	10	62	44	59
Chelsea	33	16	9	8	58	40	57
Aston Villa	34	16	9	9	54	49	57
Bournemouth	33	13	10	10	52	40	49
Fulham	33	13	9	11	48	45	48
Brighton	33	12	12	9	53	53	48
Brentford	33	13	7	13	56	50	46
Crystal Palace	34	11	12	11	43	47	45

Their title hopes effectively over several weeks ago, Arsenal were already focused on winning the

Juventus out of Serie A's top four after defeat at Parma

AFP, MILAN: Juventus conceded their place in Serie A's Champions League positions on Wednesday after falling to a 1-0 defeat at Parma, one of four matches rescheduled from Monday following the death of Pope Francis.

Mateo Pellegrino's thumping header on the stroke of half-time was enough for Parma to earn a precious win in their fight for top flight survival and damage Juve's Champions League hopes.

Juve sit fifth after their first defeat of Igor Tudor's reign as coach, one point behind Bologna who are in the top four after beating

RESULTS

Cagliari 1 (Piccoli 7) **Fiorentina 2** (Gosens 36, Beltran 48); **Genoa 0 Lazio 2** (Castellanos 33, Dia 65); **Parma 1** (Pellegrino 45+1) **Juventus 0**; **Torino 2** (Adams 39, Dembele 85) **Udinese 0**

FIXTURES

Saturday: Atalanta v Lecce (12.15 am)
Sunday: Como v Genoa, Venezia v AC Milan (both 4 pm), Fiorentina v Empoli, Inter Milan v Roma (both 6.30 pm), Juventus v Monza (9.30 pm)
Monday: Napoli v Torino (12.15 am), Udinese v Bologna (10 pm)
Tuesday: Lazio v Parma, Verona v Cagliari (both 12.15 am)

Inter Milan on Sunday.

And Tudor will have to do without Dusan Vlahovic

against Monza on Sunday after the Serbia striker was substituted at half-time, re-

portedly for a thigh injury.

Parma moved six points above the relegation zone following their first win in two months, which came after six straight draws.

Defeat for Juve was great news for Lazio who moved level on 59 points with the "Old Lady" of Italian football following a comfortable 2-0 win at Genoa, a match which finished with both teams down to 10 men.

Eighth-placed Fiorentina are one of four teams -- alongside Juve, Lazio and Roma -- within four points of fourth-placed Bologna after coming from behind to win 2-1 at Cagliari.

Jovic shoots AC Milan into Italian Cup final

AFP, MILAN: Luka Jovic fired AC Milan into the final of the Italian Cup with a brace in Wednesday's convincing 3-0 derby win over Inter Milan which sent his team through 4-1 on aggregate.

Serbia forward Jovic doubled his goal tally for the season, with Tijjani Reijnders sealing the tie late on, as Milan fans were given something to shout about in what has been an awful season for the seven-time European champions.

Milan are unbeaten in all five of this season's local derbies, winning the Super Cup final against Inter in January, and Wednesday's win also ended Inter's

hopes of repeating the Serie A, Champions League and cup treble won under Jose Mourinho in 2010.

Conceicao's side, who sit ninth in Serie A and will almost certainly miss out on Champions League football next season, will likely face Bologna in next month's final in Rome.

Bologna lead Empoli 3-0 ahead of their second leg on Thursday and are set to reach a major tournament final for the first time since last winning the cup in 1974.

Semi-finals, second leg result: Inter Milan 0 AC Milan 3 (Jovic 36, 50, Reijnders 85). **AC Milan win 4-1 on aggregate**

sportspopup

'Greatest-ever' Vardy to leave Leicester at end of season

LONDON: Jamie Vardy will leave former Premier League champions Leicester at the end of the season, the relegated club announced on Thursday, describing the lightning-quick forward as their "greatest-ever player". The talismanic striker, a key member of the side that lifted the English league title against seemingly impossible odds in 2016, vowed to continue playing even at the age of 38. The former England international joined the Foxes in 2012 from non-league side Fleetwood for \$1.3 million and has scored 198 goals in nearly 500 appearances.



Superbet Rapid and Blitz: All eyes on Praggnanandhaa

WARSAW (Poland): Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa will be the cynosure of all eyes as he takes on a strong field sans Magnus Carlsen of Norway in the Superbet Rapid and blitz tournament, a part of the grand chess tour, that gets underway here on Saturday. With his buddy Aravindh Chithambaram as company, Praggnanandhaa is one of the front runners for the title as the absence of Carlsen after two winning triumphs has thrown the field wide open. Alireza Firouzja, the Iranian-turned-French, starts as the hot bubble waiting to be busted while his compatriot Maxime Vachier-Lagrave would like to live on the legacy built for the French players in the last decade. While there are only two Indian contestants among the ten players, it remains to be seen who will win the Grand Chess Tour this year -- a series of events that award points based on each performance. For the records, the total prize pool of the event is 175,000 USD with an added attraction of being part of the grand prize at the end of the season.

Alcaraz withdraws from Madrid Open because of leg injuries

MADRID: Home-crowd favorite Carlos Alcaraz withdrew from the Madrid Open because of leg injuries. The third-ranked Spaniard said he has not fully recovered from the upper leg ailment that bothered him during the Barcelona Open final last Sunday. He also said he has a left leg injury. His first appearance at the Caja Magica in the Spanish capital was scheduled for Saturday. Alcaraz is a two-time champion in Madrid, having won in 2022 and 2023. He was the second seed this week and in the same half of the draw as Novak Djokovic. Alcaraz needed treatment on his leg during his straight-set loss to Holger Rune in the Barcelona final. He had not practiced in Madrid yet, and said this week that he felt "fine" but was waiting on medical test results to determine whether he would play.



PSL in Jeopardy: Pakistan govt decides to send back Indian nationals in broadcast crew

KARACHI: The broadcast of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) could be in jeopardy in coming days with all the experienced Indian crew members in PCB roster set to be replaced after escalating cross-border tensions in the aftermath of Pahalgam terrorist attack. Pakistani terrorists are believed to be behind the killing of 26 Indian nationals, who were visiting Kashmir's Pahalgam area. A concerned PCB source said: "Since more than two dozen of the production and broadcast crew of the PSL, included Indian nationals. Steps are being taken to replace them. The broadcast and production crew includes engineers, production managers, cameramen, player-tracking experts (all Indian nationals), who ensure a smooth coverage of the PSL."

Newcastle manager Eddie Howe returns to work after illness

NEWCASTLE: Newcastle manager Eddie Howe returned to work on Thursday after recovering from pneumonia. Howe was hospitalized after falling ill this month and missed his team's games against Manchester United, Crystal Palace and Aston Villa. "Newcastle United are delighted to confirm that Eddie Howe has returned to his duties at the club's training centre," the Premier League club said in a statement. Newcastle is fifth in the standings and in contention to qualify for next season's Champions League. It plays Ipswich at St James' Park on Saturday.

Asian U-15 & U-17 Boxing C'ships: 5 more Indians advance to semi-finals

AMMAN (Jordan): Five Indian boxers, including three boys and two girls, advanced to the semifinals of the Asian U-15 Championships here. From the men's U-15 championship, Nelson Khwairakpam (55 kg) secured a Referee Stops Contest (RSC) win in the first round over Chinese Taipei's Wang Sheng-Yang on the fifth day of competitions on Wednesday. Abhijeet (61 kg) and Lakshay Phogat (64 kg) cruised to 5-0 victories against opponents from Kyrgyzstan and Jordan, respectively in their quarterfinal bouts. Among the girls, Princi (52 kg) delivered a strong 5-0 result over Ukraine's Yeva Kubanova. Samruddhi Satish Shinde (55 kg) wrapped up her bout with an RSC in the third round against Ukraine's Kseniia Savina. Six Indians had already made their way into the semi-finals on Tuesday.

Real Sociedad coach Alguacil to leave at end of season

MADRID: Real Sociedad coach Imanol Alguacil will leave the club at the end of the season after more than six years at the helm, the Spanish side announced on Thursday. Spaniard Alguacil took over in December 2018 and led the Basque outfit to the Copa del Rey title two years later as well as the Champions League last 16 in 2024. The 53-year-old's contract comes to an end this summer, with Sociedad in ninth spot in La Liga, four points outside the European places with five games to play.