

# RCB BOOK QUALIFIER 1 SPOT

## Jitesh, Kohli make thrilling fifties as Bengaluru beat LSG

PTI, LUCKNOW: Stand-in skipper Jitesh Sharma conjured up a sensational unbeaten 85 to help Royal Challengers Bengaluru trump Rishabh Pant's exceptional 118 and seal the team's place in the IPL Qualifier 1 with a sensational six-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants, here Tuesday.

The Royal Challengers will now face Punjab Kings in the Qualifier 1 at Mullanpur on Thursday.

The RCB finished second on the table with 19 points, same as Punjab but finished behind them on net run rate — +0.30 against PBKS' +0.37.

The RCB started in a hurry chasing an imposing 228, as Virat Kohli (54, 30b, 10x4) and Phil Salt (30, 19b) added 61 runs in a mere 5.4 overs before Jitesh (85) and Mayank Agarwal (41) taking them

IPL PLAY-OFF FIXTURES						
■ May 29: PBKS vs RCB, at 7.30 pm						
■ May 30: GT vs MI, 7.30 pm						

FINAL STANDINGS						
Team	M	W	L	N/R	NRR	Points
Punjab Kings (Q)	14	9	4	1	0.372	19
Royal Challengers (Q)	14	9	4	1	0.301	19
Gujarat Titans (Q)	14	9	5	0	0.254	18
Mumbai Indians (Q)	14	8	6	0	1.142	16
Delhi Capitals	14	7	6	1	0.011	15
Sunrisers Hyderabad	14	6	7	1	-0.241	13
Lucknow Super Giants	14	6	8	0	-0.376	12
Kolkata Knight Riders	14	5	7	2	-0.305	12
Rajasthan Royals	14	4	10	0	-0.549	8
Chennai Super Kings	14	4	10	0	-0.647	8

home, making 107 runs for the impressive unbroken fifth wicket stand.

They eventually made 230/4 in 18.4 overs.

But it started with Kohli and Salt playing risk-free cricket even in the Power

Play, hammering 12 fours in that phase before Salt getting dismissed by pacer Akash Khan.

But Kohli continued to pierce the field for boundaries even after the Power Play, and a back foot punch that raced to the fence for a four off Akash was a treat to watch.

The shot also carried Kohli past the fifty-run mark off just 27 balls, but he could not convert that into something bigger.

The senior batter tried to bunt pacer Avesh Khan over long-off but could not clear Ayush Badoni in that position.

The Royal Challengers were 123 for four in 11.4

overs at that stage after losing out-of-form skipper Rajat Patidar and Liam Livingstone, who came in for injured Tim David, in the eighth over to pacer Will O'Rourke.

The RCB were still 103 runs away from victory and the asking rate was touching almost 13.

But Jitesh, who was saved by Digvesh Rathi's back-foot no-ball on 49, and Agarwal pulverised LSG bowlers in their own style to take RCB home.

Jitesh, who had another slice of luck when Pant withdrew an appeal for run-out off Rathi when the batter was on 57, targeted the 'V' down the ground and the fine leg area through sweeps.

Agarwal, on the other hand,

unboxed his trusted cut shots past the point fielder and covers to garner his boundaries with minimum risk.

The Karnataka batter was the aggressor in the beginning but settled into a far easier rhythm seeing the touch of his partner, also the stand-in captain as Patidar was used as an Impact Sub.

Fittingly, Jitesh brought curtains officially to the match, spanking O'Rourke for a hat-trick of sixes in the 18th over.

Earlier, Pant made a marvellous hundred (118 not out, 61b, 11x4, 8x6) and added 152 runs with Mitchell Marsh (67, 37b) for the second wicket to guide LSG to a massive 227 for three.

### SCOREBOARD

**Lucknow Super Giants:** Mitchell Marsh c Sharma b Kumar 67, Matthew Breetzke b Thushara 14, Rishabh Pant not out 118, Nicholas Pooran c Dayal b Shepherd 13, Abdul Samad not out 1. **Extras:** 14. **Total:** 227 for 3. **FOW:** 25-1, 177-2, 226-3. **Bowling:** Nuwan Thushara 4-0-26-1, Krunal Pandya 2-0-14-0, Yash Dayal 3-0-44-0, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-46-1, Suyash Sharma 3-0-39-0, Romario Shepherd 4-0-51-1. **Royal Challengers Bengaluru:** Philip Salt c Rathi b Singh 30, Virat Kohli c Badoni b Khan 54, Rajat Patidar c Samad b O'Rourke 14, Liam Livingstone lbw b O'Rourke 0, Mayank Agarwal not out 41, Jitesh Sharma not out 85. **Extras:** 6. **Total:** 230 for 4. **FOW:** 61-1, 90-2, 90-3, 123-4. **Bowling:** Akash Singh 4-0-35-1, Will O'Rourke 4-0-74-2, Digvesh Rathi 4-0-36-0, Shahbaz Ahmed 3-0-39-0, Avesh Khan 3-0-32-1, Ayush Badoni 0.4-0-9-0

**Man-of-the-Match: Jitesh Sharma**

## T Dilip is India's fielding coach for England tour

PTI, NEW DELHI: The BCCI has decided to reappoint T Dilip as the team's fielding coach for the upcoming tour of England after failing to zero in on a suitable replacement.

The BCCI had decided to part ways with Dilip, along with assistant coach Abhishek Nayyar, last month in a coaching staff jettison following India's poor outing in the 2024-25 Border-Gavaskar Trophy series against Australia.

"Dilip is a good coach, who served the team well for over three years (from 2021). He knows most of these cricketers very closely. So, to have him on board for a big series (vs England) will do the team only good," a source close to the development told PTI.

The BCCI was very keen to rope in a foreign name as the new fielding coach but the governing body could not do it at the required time.

Newly-appointed Test skipper Shubman Gill and reserve batter B Sai Sudharsan could miss India A's second four-day game against England Lions, beginning on June 6.

They are part of Gujarat Titans. If GT qualify for the final, which is scheduled on June 3 at Ahmedabad, it will be tough for both Gill and Sudharsan to join the India A ahead of the match.

## sportspopup

### Sindhu, Prannoy advance to second round of Singapore Open

SINGAPORE: Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and HS Prannoy moved to the second round of the Singapore Open Super 750 tournament with contrasting victories here on Tuesday. Sindhu made light work of Canada's Wen Yu Zhang to notch a 21-14, 21-9 win in just 31 minutes. A far tougher challenge awaits the former world champion in the next round, where she will face Tokyo Olympic gold medallist and current world No.5 Chen Yu Fei of China. World No. 34 Prannoy, meanwhile, had to dig deep for his win. The 32-year-old battled past Denmark's higher-ranked Rasmus Gemke, fighting back from a game down to triumph 19-21, 21-16, 21-14. He will lock horns with France's Christov Popov in the round of 16. Malvika and Priyanshu both let slip a one-game lead. Malvika lost 21-14, 18-21, 11-21 to Thailand's eighth seed Supanida Katethong, while Priyanshu fell 21-14, 10-21, 14-21 to seventh-seeded Japanese shuttler Kodai Naraoka in a match that lasted over an hour. Anmol was outclassed by Chen. The Indian showed grit in the second game before going down 11-21, 22-24.

### Five Indians set for quarterfinal clashes at Thailand Open

BANGKOK: India will have five boxers in action at the 4th Thailand Open International Boxing Tournament here on Wednesday, all aiming for semifinal spots. In the men's draw, Jugnoo (85kg) will face Kazakhstan's Bekzat Tangatar, while Deepak (75kg) is set to take on South Korea's Kim Hyeon-tae in two high-stakes quarterfinal bouts. In the women's category, Tamanna (51kg) will meet Liu Yushan of Chinese Taipei, Priya (57kg) goes up against South Korea's Park Ah-hyun, and Anjali (75kg) will square off with Japan's Naoka Kasahara. India has fielded a 19-member strong contingent in the prestigious tournament that has attracted talented boxers from powerhouse nations like China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, South Korea, and host Thailand.

### PCB won't have DRS for home series against Bangladesh

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has decided against using DRS technology during the three-match T20 home series against Bangladesh due to cost issues. A reliable PCB source said due to the lack of interest in the series which begins Wednesday the Board had decided against having the DRS technology. "It is not cost effective for the board or broadcasters to have DRS technology in the series," the source said.

Bangladesh are missing some key players due to various reasons including their experienced left arm pacer Mustafizur Rehman who injured his thumb while playing in the IPL. A few Bangladesh players and members of the support staff have also opted out of the tour because of security concerns with Liton Das leading them in the three matches. Bangladesh reached Lahore after suffering an embarrassing 2-1 loss against UAE in Sharjah in a T20 series. The PCB and broadcasters also didn't have DRS technology for the second phase of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) which was held after the recent border conflict with India.

### Maradona death trial in peril with judge under microscope

SAN ISIDRO: More than two months after it started, the trial of seven Argentine health professionals accused in the death of football legend Diego Maradona hangs in the balance over questions about a judge's impartiality. The trial was suspended last week after defense lawyers said the judge's involvement in a documentary related to the case constituted a possible breach of her duty, influence peddling and even bribery. The possible removal of Julieta Makintach, one of three judges presiding over the case, risks nullifying the proceedings. Maradona died on November 25, 2020, at age 60, while recovering at home from brain surgery for a blood clot after decades battling cocaine and alcohol addictions. He died of heart failure and acute pulmonary edema two weeks after going under the knife, and was found dead in bed by his day nurse. Maradona's medical team is on trial in the Buenos Aires suburb of San Isidro over the conditions of his convalescence at a private home.

### Euros-winning England goalie Mary Earps retires from international duty

LONDON: England goalkeeper Mary Earps surprisingly retired from international soccer on Tuesday, just five weeks before the Women's European Championship. Earps was in goal when the Lionesses won Euro 2022 and reached the Women's World Cup final in 2023. She was facing increased competition for her place from Chelsea's Hannah Hampton but was due to join England this week for Nations League group games against Portugal and Spain.

## Asian Athletics: Gulveer wins gold in men's 10,000m

PTI, GUMI (South Korea): National record holder Gulveer Singh snared India's first gold with a top finish in the men's 10,000m event while Servin Sebastian clinched the 20km race walk bronze on a reasonably good opening day for the country at the 27th Asian Athletics Championships here on Tuesday.

The 26-year-old Gulveer, a bronze-medallist at the 2023 Hangzhou Asian Games and a pre-race favourite, clocked 28 minutes 38.63 seconds to win his maiden Asian Championships gold.

Japan's Mebuki Suzuki (28:43.84) took the silver while Bahrain's Albert Kibichi Rop (28:46.82) won the bronze. Another Indian in the fray, Sawan Barwal finished fourth with a time of 28:50.53.

At the end of the opening day, India stood at second place with one gold and one bronze, behind China (5 gold, 2 silver) and above Japan (3 silver, 2 bronze).

## Djokovic powers through opener

AFP, PARIS: Novak Djokovic made a clinical start to his latest pursuit of a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam title at the French Open on Tuesday, while women's contenders Coco Gauff and Mirra Andreeva successfully got their campaigns under way at a windy Roland Garros.

The 38-year-old Djokovic had little trouble in seeing off 98th-ranked American Mackenzie McDonald 6-3, 6-3, 6-3.

Djokovic is on the same half of the draw as world number one Jannik Sinner and last year's runner-up Alexander Zverev, who saw off American teenager Learner Tien 6-3, 6-3, 6-4.

Medvedev was dumped out in the first round for the sixth time in Paris, losing a dramatic clash with Cameron Norrie 7-5, 6-3, 4-6, 1-6, 7-5.

Grigor Dimitrov retired injured due to a leg injury when leading American Ethan Quinn by two sets to one. Ninth seed Alex de Mi-

naur, a quarter-finalist at each of the past four majors, started well with an accomplished 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) win over Serbia's Laslo Djere.

Miami champion Jakob Mensik came through an entertaining match against Frenchman Alexandre Muller, repeatedly taunting the home crowd during a 7-5, 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 6-3 victory.

In the women's draw, 2022 runner-up Gauff brushed aside Australia's Olivia Gadecki 6-2, 6-2. Gauff.

Rising Russian star Andreeva cruised to a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Spaniard Cristina Bucsa. Third seed Jessica Pegula also made serene progress with a 6-2, 6-4 success against Romania's Anca Todoni.

Victoria Azarenka hammered Belgium's Yanina Wickmayer, who will retire after Wimbledon, 6-0, 6-0 on Court 6, while Magdalena Frech knocked out three-time Grand Slam finalist Ons Jabeur.

## Norway Chess: Carlsen stuns Gukesh in 55-move thriller

PTI, STAVANGER (Norway): World No.1 Magnus Carlsen inflicted a huge blow to reigning World Champion D Gukesh's chances in the opening round of Norway Chess here, showing his end-game expertise to log three full points.

In what had been touted as the match of the tournament with the five-time world champion playing against an opponent half his age, Gukesh kept the Norwegian defending champion under pressure for most part of the over four-hour-long game of classical chess before the Indian made a losing mistake and lost in 55 moves.

Following the win, Carlsen earned three points and is in joint lead with American Grandmaster and world No.2 Hikaru Nakamura, who beat American GM Fabiano Caruana.

The second Indian in the fray, Arjun Erigaisi defeated China's No.1 Wei Yi in an exciting Armageddon game after the classical game had ended in a draw.

## Rathi won't tick Kohli in his 'notebook'

AGENCIES, LUCKNOW: Lucknow Super Giant Spinner Digvesh Rathi not only impressed with the ball in IPL 2025 but his unique 'notebook' celebration has also caught everyone's attention.

Ahead of LSG's final league match against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in Lucknow



on Tuesday, the leg-spinner interacted with fans at the Ekana stadium as part of a Q&A session.

When asked about the origin of the 'notebook' celebration, Rathi replied in full swing mode: "Whenever there is a tournament, I carry along a notebook and write down all the names." The crowd asked if the next name in his 'notebook' is Virat Kohli, to which Rathi just smiled and slightly nodded his head to signal a No.

Rathi's 'notebook' celebrations have been one of the big talking points of IPL 2025.

Rathi, who earns Rs 30 lakh this IPL season, has already paid fines totalling more than that, while also getting banned for a game.

His act drew comparisons to West Indies pacer Kesrick Williams, who popularised the celebration after dismissing opponents -- including a famous spat against Kohli during bilateral series in 2019.

## Ronaldo says Al-Nassr chapter 'over'

AFP, RIYADH: Questions swirled over Cristiano Ronaldo's future in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, hours after the superstar indicated he might be leaving Al Nassr in a social media post, just hours following the end of the Saudi Pro League season.

The 40-year-old Portuguese forward joined Al Nassr in 2022 from Manchester United and his contract with the Saudi club ends this summer.

A special transfer window runs from June 1-10 to allow the 32 clubs involved in the Club World Cup to sign players.

Al-Nassr are not at the Club World Cup unlike fellow Saudi side Al Hilal.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino last week said 'there are discussions' over the former United, Real Madrid, Juventus and Sporting Lisbon star playing at the enlarged tournament in the United States starting on June 14.

"This chapter is over," Ronaldo cryptically said on social media with a photo of him in an Al Nassr shirt.

"The story? Still being



written. Grateful to all."

Ronaldo's potential exit from Saudi Arabia will likely raise fresh questions about how the Saudi Pro League would fare in his absence, with rumours already circulating of other ageing football stars eyeing opportunities in the kingdom.

On Monday, Simone Inzaghi played down rumours he is set to leave Inter Milan after the Champions League final amid widespread reports of interest from Saudi Pro League club Al Hilal.

Ronaldo's announcement comes just months after

Brazilian star Neymar ended his injury-plagued 18 month stay in the kingdom, where he played just seven times with Al Hilal after joining the club in August 2023 -- despite a reported salary of around \$104 million a year.

The cryptic post from Ronaldo comes after Al Nassr lost in the semi-finals of the Asian Champions League last month to Japan's Kawasaki Frontale and finished third in the Saudi Pro League.

Ronaldo was the league's top goal scorer on 25.

Last year, the five-time

Ballon d'Or winner said he could end his career with Al Nassr.

Ronaldo's great rival Lionel Messi will play at the Club World Cup with Inter Miami.

During a recent interview with YouTube and streamer IShowSpeed, Infantino said: "And Ronaldo might play for one of the teams as well at the Club World Cup."

"There are discussions with some clubs, so if any club is watching and is interested in hiring Ronaldo for the Club World Cup... who knows, who knows." Saudi Arabia has shak-

en up football by spending heavily on stars from Europe, starting with Ronaldo's move in late 2022, and the desert nation will host the World Cup in 2034.

For nearly two years, Saudi football fans could watch the likes of Ronaldo and Karim Benzema, with six Ballons d'Or between them, on any given weekend during the football season in the kingdom.

However, the oil-fuelled Saudi football project has drawn comparisons with the Chinese Super League, which imported players on exorbitant salaries until team owners went bust as the Chinese economy fizzled.

But with Saudi Arabia set to host the 2034 World Cup, and desperate to re-model itself as a tourism and business magnet before global oil demand falls for good, there is probably more to come from the Pro League.

The Portuguese great appeared to trade an end-of-career payday for football obscurity when he moved to Riyadh's Al Nassr two years ago in a deal said to be worth \$250 million.

## Pope Leo busts myth as he meets Serie A champs Napoli

AGENCIES, VATICAN: Pope Leo XVI welcomed Italy's newly crowned Serie A champions Napoli to the Vatican on Tuesday, joking about his own soccer allegiances.

Napoli won their fourth 'Scudetto' on Friday with a 2-0 home victory over Cagliari, edging out Inter Milan by one point in a nail-biting end to the season.

The team, captained by Italian international Giovanni Di Lorenzo, arrived for their papal audience a day after a triumphant open-top bus parade through central Naples.

"The press says I am an AS Roma fan, but you are welcome! This is what the press says. Not everything you read in the press is true," the Pope said, according to a transcript.

Leo, the first pope to come from the US, follows and practices sports, including tennis. People who know him have described him to the media as an AS Roma supporter.

Napoli chairman Aurelio De Laurentiis gave him a



Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis hands Pope Leo XIV a souvenir at the Vatican

blue Napoli jersey signed by players, bearing the number 10 and his name in Italian, "Papa Leone XIV".

"You are a number 10, so you are a great striker", De Laurentiis said. Leo replied with a chuckle and a simple "thank you".

In a short speech, the pontiff stressed the importance of team spirit and collaboration, and sport's educational value, especially for young people.

Winning comes "at the end of a long journey, where what matters the most is not a one-time ex-

plot or the extraordinary performance of one champion", he said.

"The championship is won by the team, and when I say 'team' I mean the players, the coach with the whole squad, and the club," he added.

Leo ended his remarks giving his blessings to players and club officials, and offering congratulations, also on behalf of his personal cook.

"She is from Naples and she says: best wishes! She would like to be here too, Mrs Rosa, (she is) a big fan", the Pope said.