

# RCB book final berth after 9 yrs

Royal Challengers Bengaluru, who are yet to win the IPL despite reaching three finals (2009, 2011, 2016) since the league's inception in 2008, gunned down the small target in 10 overs courtesy a belligerent 50 from opener Salt (56 not out off 27); with a near perfect performance, RCB marched to the title clash scheduled in Ahmedabad on June 3



Royal Challengers Bengaluru players are being greeted after they won the Indian Premier League 2025 Qualifier 1 cricket match against Punjab Kings, in New Chandigarh, on Thursday

**PTI, MULLANPUR:** Royal Challengers Bengaluru raced to their first Indian Premier League final since 2016 with an eight-wicket pounding of Punjab Kings in a lopsided Qualifier 1, here, on Thursday. Punjab Kings' ultra-aggressive approach backfired on the day as RCB skittled out the home team for 101 in 14.1 overs.

RCB, who are yet to win the IPL despite reaching three finals (2009, 2011, 2016) since the league's inception in 2008, gunned down the small target in 10 overs courtesy a belligerent fifty from opener Phil Salt (56 not out off 27). With a near perfect performance, RCB marched to the title clash scheduled in Ahmedabad on June 3.

Punjab Kings, who reached the play-offs for the first time since 2014, will get another shot at reaching the final in Qualifier 2 in Ahmedabad on June 1. The home team batters found it difficult to hit through the line but it seemed Salt was batting on a different surface, collecting boundaries for fun. He ended up smashing six fours and three sixes in-

cluding a crisp pull off pacer Arshdeep Singh. The match ended prematurely when RCB skipper Rajat Patidar slog swept Musheer Khan for a maximum. Punjab Kings were blown away by RCB but Kyle Jamieson got the home crowd going for a brief period by bowling a stellar wicket maiden that included the wicket of Virat Kohli (12 off 12).

Number three Mayank Agarwal was left clueless in the same over with Jamieson getting the ball to swing away. We need to go back to the drawing board. We have lost the battle but not the war, said Punjab Kings skipper Shreyas Iyer after a rather heavy loss.

Earlier, the all-out attack strategy of the Punjab

Kings contributed to their downfall after they were put in to bat. Their innings lasted just 14.1 overs. The RCB pace trio of Josh Hazlewood (3/21), Bhuvneshwar Kumar (1/17) and Yash Dayal (2/26) exploited the conditions well before leg-spinner Suyash Sharma (3/17) made it worse for the opposition.

## SCOREBOARD

**Punjab Kings:** Priyansh Arya c Pandya b Dayal 7, Prabhsimran Singh c Sharma b Kumar 18, Josh Inglis c Kumar b Hazlewood 4, \*Shreyas Iyer c Sharma b Hazlewood 2, Nehal Wadhwa b Dayal 8, Marcus Stoinis b Sharma 26, Shashank Singh b Sharma 3, Musheer Khan lbw b Sharma 0, Azmatullah Omarzai c Sharma b Hazlewood 18, Harpreet Brar b Shepherd 4, Arshdeep Singh not out 0. **Extras:** 11. **Total:** 101-10. **Fall of wickets:** 9-1, 27-2, 30-3, 38-4, 50-5, 60-6, 60-7, 78-8, 97-9, 101-10. **Bowling:** Bhuvneshwar Kumar 2-0-17-1, Yash Dayal 4-0-26-2, Josh Hazlewood 3.1-0-21-3, Suyash Sharma 3-0-17-3, Krunal Pandya 1-0-10-0, Romario Shepherd 1-0-5-1. **Royal Challengers Bengaluru:** Philip Salt not out 56, Virat Kohli c Inglis b Jamieson 12, Mayank Agarwal c Iyer b Khan 19, \*Rajat Patidar not out 15. **Extras:** 4. **Total:** 106-2. **Fall of wickets:** 30-1, 84-2. **Bowling:** Arshdeep Singh 2-0-20-0, Kyle Jamieson 3-1-27-1, Azmatullah Omarzai 1-0-10-0, Harpreet Brar 2-0-18-0, Musheer Khan 2-0-27-1. **Man-of-the-match:** Suyash Sharma

## IPL eliminator: Gill's fumbling Titans up against MI's might

**PTI, MULLANPUR:** Among the title favourites but battling a loss of momentum, Shubman Gill's Gujarat Titans will be up against the mighty Mumbai Indians, who also have issues to be addressed, in the winner-takes-all IPL Eliminator, here, on Friday.

### PREVIEW

It is a knock-out game but both sides are used to the stage with Mumbai Indians being the five-time champions. Titans have made the play-offs thrice in the last four seasons, including the trophy-winning run on their debut in 2022.

However, both Shubman Gill and Hardik Pandya, have a point to prove. Gill, the newly appointed India Test captain, would build up his leadership credentials immensely if Titans go

all the way. Hardik has got the love of the fans back after being booed on his return to the team last year and an IPL trophy will cement his place in the list of the fabled greats of the franchise. But in their pursuit of glory, both leaders must find a way to address the issues at hand.

Titans have more to be worried about as they have lost momentum going into the play-offs. Having conceded 465 runs in their last two defeats, they need to up their game with the ball. Mohammed Siraj, the de facto leader of the pace battery, will need to provide breakthroughs in the powerplay. The struggles of left-arm pacer Arshad Khan with the new ball has been the Titans' trump card

this season with 23 wickets. In addition to the shortcomings in the pace department, the ineffectiveness of spin all-rounder Rashid Khan has aggravated their bowling woes. On the bat-

ting front, the top three, including Sai Sudharsan, Gill and Jos Buttler contributed massively to their play-off journey. Considering that, the absence of Buttler, who left for national duty after

the league stage, is bound to be felt. Kusal Mendis has been roped in as Buttler's place but it remains to be seen if he can inspire the same level of confidence.

The middle-order comprising Shikhar Dhawan and Sherfane Rutherford is not the most reliable, making Titans vulnerable against Mumbai Indians who would have that at the back of their mind.

Like Titans, Mumbai Indians too have been impacted by the loss of foreign players. Ryan Rickelton had done a fine job for them at the top of the order alongside Rohit Sharma but the South African has now reported for national duty. The same goes for English batter Will Jacks.

Out of favour England batter Jonny Bairstow is one of the replacement players for Mumbai Indians

alongside Richard Gleeson and Charith Asalanka.

Bairstow could open alongside Rohit Sharma at the top of the order.

The Englishman would surely be expecting to start the game, having agreed to join the franchise in the middle of the domestic season back home. The quiet run of Titak Varma is another concern facing the team.

Suryakumar Yadav has been doing the heavy lifting in the batting department with a record 640 runs in a season. In case he fails, Mumbai Indians will have a real talk at hand.

Batting first, the pace at which Mumbai batters score has also been questioned and that is another area Hardik will have to focus on. However, their strong bowling attack always poses a bigger threat to the opposition.

## SQUAD

**Gujarat Titans:** Shubman Gill (captain), Sai Sudharsan, Kumar Kushagra, Anuj Rawat, Rashid Khan, Rahul Tewatia, Shikhar Dhawan, Nishant Sindhu, Ravishrinivasan Sai Kishore, Gerald Coetzee, Jayant Yadav, Arshad Khan, Karim Janat, Sherfane Rutherford, Mahipal Lomror, Washington Sundar, Manav Suthar, Gurnoor Brar, Ishant Sharma, Kagiso Rabada, Prasidh Krishna, Kulwant Khejroliya, Mohammed Siraj, Dasun Shanaka, Kusal Mendis, Jos Buttler.

**Mumbai Indians:** Hardik Pandya (captain), Suryakumar Yadav, Rohit Sharma, Tilak Varma, Bevon Jacobs, Robin Minz, Krishnan Shrijith, Naman Dhir, Raj Bawa, Mitchell Santner, Jasprit Bumrah, Arjun Tendulkar, Ashwani Kumar, Reece Topley, Karn Sharma, Trent Boult, Deepak Chahar, Satyanarayana Raju, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Raghu Sharma, Jonny Bairstow, Richard Gleeson, Charith Asalanka.

Match starts: 7.30 pm

## Yarraji, Sable & women's 4x400m relay team bring glory to extend India's dominance

Sable clocked 8:20.92sec to claim the top honour; Jyothi produced a late burst to clinch her second straight gold medal in this competition with a new championship record of 12.96 sec; the quartet of Jisna, Rupal, Kunja and Subha clinched the gold medal in the women's 4x400m relay event after clocking their season-best time (3:34.18sec)

**PTI, GUMI (South Korea):** It rained gold for India at the Asian Athletics Championships on Thursday as the country's fastest woman hurdler Jyothi Yarraji, seasoned steeplechase runner Avinash Sable and the 4x400m women's relay team delivered stupendous performances to finish on top here.

After Jyothi and Sable set the tone, the quartet of Jisna Mathew, Rupal Chaudhary, Kunja Rajitha and Subha Venkatesan clinched the gold medal in the women's 4x400m relay event after clocking their season-best time (3:34.18sec) to extend India's dominance on the third competition day of the continental championship. Vietnam took silver with 3:34.77sec, while Sri Lanka settled for the bronze with 3:36.67sec.

This was the 10th gold overall for India in the event and first since 2013. Overall, India snared three gold, two silver and a bronze medal on Thursday taking their overall tally to 14 after proceedings were disrupted by a massive thunderstorm.

India are currently placed second in the overall standings behind China, who have 21 medals including 12 gold. The men's 4x400m relay team of Jay Kumar, Dharmveer Choudhary, Manu Thekkinailil Saji and Vishal TK also looked to be on course for a gold medal before settling for silver with a timing of 3:03.67sec



India's Avinash Sable celebrates after crossing the line in 3000m steeplechase event of the Asian Athletics Championships in Gumi, South Korea, on Thursday. (Right) Jyothi Yarraji has become only the fifth athlete to defend the 100m hurdles gold medal at the Asian Championships

which was their best performance so far.

Qatar (3:03.52sec) won the gold medal, while China (3:03.73sec) ended the race with bronze in the men's 4x400m relay.

Earlier, on his way to victory with a season-best performance, Sable became the first Indian man in 36 years to win a gold medal in steeplechase at the Asian Championships.

"I was confident of winning gold as I was best in the field," said Sable, who has already qualified for the World Championships in September.

Soon after, Jyothi produced a late burst to clinch her second straight gold medal in this competition with a new championship record of

12.96 seconds. The previous record was 12.99 seconds, achieved by China's Su Yiping in the 2000 edition of the tournament.

"It was a good day. I am happy to break the 13 second barrier this season," she said after winning the gold medal.

Ram finished on top. Harbel Singh was the first Indian to fetch a men's steeplechase gold at the showpiece back in 1975.

In the 2023 edition, Jyothi won the gold medal with an effort of 13.09. But her personal best timing, which is also the national record,

Su Yiping of China (2003, 2005) and Sun Yawei of China (2009, 2011).

Moments before Jyothi's triumph, Sable lived up to the favourite tag with some ease to consolidate the country's position in the 26th edition of the continental tournament.

Japan's Yutaro Niinae, who clinched the silver with 8:24.41sec, was leading at the start of the final lap but the Indian ace produced a brilliant effort to go past him and claim the top prize.

The Hangzhou Asian Games gold-medallist continued to stay ahead of the pack with four laps to go but he had two Japanese athletes following him closely. Niinae overtook Sa-

ble with three laps remaining, but the Indian had the last laugh. Qatar's Zakaria Elahlaami took the bronze after clocking 8:27.12sec.

After Jyothi and Sable's exploits, the quartet of Jisna, Rupal, Kunja and Subha ensured a hat-trick of gold medals for India on the day. The was Rupal's third medal, having won a mixed team gold and an individual 400m silver in the championship. For Subha, it was her second gold after her podium finish in the mixed relay event.

Later, long jumpers Anji Sojan Edapilly (6.33m) and Shaili Singh (6.30m) fetched a silver and bronze respectively, finishing behind Iran's Reihaneh Mobini Arani, who covered 6.40m. It was a poor show by Shaili, whose personal best is 6.76m. However, she might have been hampered by the wet track. Another top finish awaits India on Friday as Nandini Agasara leads the standings after four events with an accumulated score of 3610.

In the women's 10,000m final, India's Sanjeevani Jadhav clocked a season's best of 33:08.17sec, finishing fifth, followed closely by Seema in sixth at 33:08.23sec.

The event was dominated by Daisy Jekemei of Kazakhstan (30:48.44), ahead of Japan's Rirak Hironika (30:56.32) and Mikuni Yada (31:12.21).

## shorttakes

### Naman, Anshul down Uzbek heavyweights to enter Thailand Open finals

**BANGKOK:** India's heavyweight boxers Naman Tanwar (90kg) and Anshul Gill (90+kg) progressed to the finals of the Thailand Open International Boxing Tournament after securing hard-earned wins against their respective opponents from Uzbekistan here on Thursday. Naman overcame Juraboev Elyorbek 4-1, while Anshul edged past Rustamov Abdurakhmon 3-2 in two tightly contested bouts. The two Indians started on the back foot, but responded with greater control and sharper execution in the second round. In the final round, the duo took charge in their respective clashes with well-timed counters and sustained pressure, earning split-decision victories and booking their places in the finals, which will take place on June 1. In the women's semi-finals, Tamanna (51kg), Priya (57kg), and Lalpakmawii (80kg) exited the competition after battling through competitive bouts, each settling for a bronze.

### Norway Chess: Gukesh beats Nakamura to get campaign back on track

**STAVANGER (Norway):** World champion D Gukesh brought his campaign back on track on his 19th birthday, defeating world No.2 Hikaru Nakamura of the USA in the third round to open his account even as Arjun Erigaisi suffered his first defeat in the Norway Chess Tournament here on Thursday. Gukesh, who suffered back-to-back defeats to world No.1 Norwegian Magnus Carlsen and compatriot Arjun Erigaisi in the first two rounds, put Nakamura -- one of the best Rapid and Blitz players -- under time pressure to win the game in 42 moves and collect three points. Results (Round 5): Open: Fabiano Caruana (USA 6) bt Arjun Erigaisi (Ind 4.5); D Gukesh (Ind 5) bt Hikaru Nakamura (USA 4.5); Magnus Carlsen (Nor 5) lost to Wei Yi (Chn 2.5 in Armageddon tie-break). Women: Koneru Humpy (Ind 6) bt Sara Khadem (Esp -2); Ju Wenjun (Chn 4) bt R Vaishali (Ind -2) in Armageddon tie-break.

### Indian men's hockey team leaves for European Leg of FIH Pro League

**BENGALURU:** Eyeing fruitful outings against some of the top hockey nations, the Indian men's team departed for the European leg of the FIH Pro League 2024-25 on Thursday. The European segment of the competition will take place at Amstelveen, the Netherlands, and Antwerp, Belgium between June 7 and June 22. "This European leg is crucial for us as we face some of the world's best teams. We had a few mixed results in the Bhubaneswar Leg, but we are in a good position in the standings and we will build on this," captain Harmanpreet Singh said ahead of the team's departure here. India are currently third in the standings with 15 points in the Pro League behind England and Belgium (16 points each). India will kick off their European leg with back-to-back matches against the Netherlands on June 7 and 9, followed by a double-header against Argentina on June 11 and 12 at the Wagener Stadium in Amstelveen. The team will then head to Antwerp to lock horns with Australia on June 14 and 15 before ending their campaign with two crucial matches against hosts Belgium on June 21 and 22.

### World Cup Tune-up: India Women to host Australia Women for three ODIs in Sept

**NEW DELHI:** India Women will play their counterparts from Australia in a three-match ODI series at home in September as part of the preparations for the ICC World Cup which the country is hosting later this year, the BCCI said on Thursday. The Board also said the men's 'A' teams from Australia and South Africa will be touring India for a series featuring two four-day matches and three One-day games. The tour will begin with a four-day match in Lucknow from September 16-19 with the second game also being scheduled at the same venue from September 23-26. The three one-day matches will be held from in Kanpur on September 30, October 3 and 5. The contests against the Aussies will be followed by matches against the visiting South Africans in October-November.

### Hasan, Agha lead new-look Pakistan to 37-run win over Bangladesh in T20

**LAHORE:** Fast bowler Hasan Ali grabbed a 5-30 and led a new-look Pakistan T20 cricket team to a thumping 37-run win over Bangladesh in the opening game of their three-match series. Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha made a career-best 56 as Pakistan posted a competitive 201-7 after Agha won the toss and elected to bat in Mike Hesson's first assignment as Pakistan's new white-ball head coach. Hasan, playing only his second Twenty20 international in more than 2-1/2 years, dismissed both openers with the new ball and claimed three more wickets in the death overs to bowl out Bangladesh for 164 in 19.2 overs. Pakistan dropped seasoned batters Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan in a bid to look for youngsters, who could bat aggressively -- especially in the power play. The selectors also overlooked fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi for the home series despite the left-arm fast bowler leading Lahore Qalandars to their third Pakistan Super League title in four years last Sunday. Lahore will also host the remaining two games on Friday and Sunday.

### Yes, definitely: Jadeja on captaincy dreams

**NEW DELHI:** He may not be among the names considered for the job but veteran all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja says he would love to be India's Test skipper at some point, having understood the role under different captains throughout his long career. Young batter Shubman Gill was recently appointed as India's Test captain for the tour to England with wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant designated to do the duty of his deputy. "Yes, definitely! Over the years, I have played under different captains. I know the mindset of every single captain whom I have played under and I also understand what players need and their mindset," the 36-year-old Jadeja told his former India teammate Ravichandran Ashwin in a YouTube chat when asked whether Test captaincy was among his ambitions.

### Argentine court declares a mistrial in the case over the death of soccer star Maradona

**BUENOS AIRES:** An Argentine court on Thursday declared a mistrial in the case of seven health professionals accused of negligence in the death of soccer legend Diego Maradona, the latest dramatic twist in a trial that has captivated the nation and the soccer world for more than two months. The whiplash decision comes after one of the three judges overseeing the trial stepped down over criticism surrounding her participation in a forthcoming documentary about the case.