

IPL set to crown a new winner today

Royal Challengers Bengaluru to face Punjab Kings in summit clash at 7.30 pm; to witness thousands of fans to don jersey No. 18 to support King Kohli

PTI, AHMEDABAD: Virat Kohli's nearly two-decade long agonising wait to lay hands on an IPL Trophy with Royal Challengers Bengaluru will be up against Shreyas Iyer's resolve to make first-time winners out of the tenacious Punjab Kings when the 18th season finale of the world's biggest T20 league unfolds, here, on Tuesday.

The summit clash at the Narendra Modi Stadium, here, could witness a thousands of fans donning jersey No.18 to support Kohli, who is in an IPL final for a fourth time overall.

The sentiments of the fans would indeed run high given it will be Kohli's last appearance on the cricket field for a while, having recently retired from Test cricket and India's next ODI assignment a few months away.

Parting ways with issues that plagued their previous campaigns, RCB have been clinical all the way through, coming into the final with an eight-wicket hammering of Punjab in a one-sided Qualifier 1.

Kohli (614 runs) has gone about his business like every other year, piling up runs at the top and continuing to lay platforms but where it has made the difference for RCB is that there's a lot more substance to their batting beyond the superstar.

Kohli has not been the only one to carry the focus and attention this year, rather he has quietly gone about his business in fortifying for RCB.

Phil Salt is a perfect foil for the Indian superstar who goes all-out in his attack, while Mayank Agarwal, skipper Rajat Patidar and Jitesh Sharma are the trusted lieutenants of that batting line-up.

Since he has missed RCB's last two games, it remains to be seen if Tim David is fit for this contest as he forms a vital death overs batting pair with another burly hitter in Romario Shepherd.

Like Kohli in their batting, the calm and composed Josh Hazlewood (21 wickets) has been at the helm of RCB's rise and the fourth highest wicket-taker and the Australian would want to add more to move up the ladder in one last game.

On their part, stung by that crushing defeat in their home ground at Mullanpur, Iyer's Kings showed no scars from that defeat as they knocked out five-time winners Mumbai Indians in Qualifier 2 to reach their first final after 11 years.

It's only fitting that PBKS and RCB, who finished at the top two positions respectively after a gruelling 70-match league round, have a crack at the trophy which has eluded them from the time the competition began.

Perennial finishers in the second half of the 10-team points table, Punjab Kings have staged a sensational turnaround with two dogged personalities in captain Iyer and coach Ricky Ponting at the helm.

For Iyer (603 runs), a



Royal Challengers Bengaluru captain Rajat Patidar and Punjab Kings captain Shreyas Iyer pose with the Indian Premier League trophy during a press conference on the eve of the IPL 2025 final in Ahmedabad, on Monday

second consecutive appearance in an IPL final after winning it last year with Kolkata Knight Riders speaks volumes about his

capabilities as a leader who marshals his troops as good as any other in the format.

It is, therefore, not a surprise to see Iyer being the

only cricketer in the 18-year history of the tournament to have led three different teams in IPL finals, with Delhi Capitals being the third.

Iyer's perseverance is not the only quality that stands out for the 30-year-old Punjab captain but also the fact that he remains as hungry to win this IPL as he was when he began the journey with the franchise a few months ago.

In Prabhsimran Singh, Josh Inglis, Priyansh Arya and Shashank Singh, Iyer has adequate support to hold his fort staunchly and even lead aggressive attacks on the opposition camp.

Punjab's bowling, without Marcus Jansen, did look a little depleted but having managed to keep a lid on Mumbai Indians' for the entirety of an innings on a batting-friendly wicket tells that there is more to it than what has been perceived.

Yuzvendra Chahal is still dealing with a hand injury and was not at his absolute best in the Qualifier 2 but Punjab would need him to fire against his former franchise.

While there are no predictions of rains impacting the contest, an additional hour to the playtime extending the duration to 120 minutes and having a reserve day in the final are the measures in place to ensure the contest is completed.

Punjab Kings have been setting themselves up to win the Indian Premier League and not settle for third place, asserted bowling coach James Hopes.

"We'd been setting ourselves up for a couple of months the way that we were playing not to come third. We wanted to be in there with the chance to come first and we've given ourselves that chance now," Hopes told the media on Sunday.

He acknowledged while the group will be excited knowing they are one step away from lifting the trophy, he added they will have to brace for a huge "pro-Kohli" crowd here in the world's largest stadium.

"It's just a short turn around for us, we've finished at 2 am which is pretty late so tomorrow will be just about the guys recovering and getting mentally prepared for what I imagine is going to be a pretty big crowd and a pretty big pro Kohli crowd as well."

Virat Kohli will be gunning for RCB's maiden title but irrespective of the outcome, the tournament will have a new winner.

Hopes also backed the 30-year-old Iyer to make his way back into the Indian Test team.

"He's played well in the last 12 months in his time in the Indian short form teams. I know he's not in the Test tour to go to the UK, but I'd imagine his name would have been spoken about pretty heavily, and that's just the way some selections go. He'll find his way back there, I'm sure," he said.

TEAMS

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Rajat Patidar (c), Virat Kohli, Phil Salt (wk), Jitesh Sharma (wk), Devdutt Padikkal, Swastik Chhikara, Liam Livingstone, Krunal Pandya, Swapnil Singh, Tim David, Romario Shepherd, Manoj Bhandare, Josh Hazlewood, Rasikh Salam Dar, Suyash Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Nuwan Thushara, Lungi Ngidi, Abhinandan Singh, Mohit Rathee, Yash Dayal

Punjab Kings: Shreyas Iyer (c), Nehal Wadhwa, Vishnu Vinod (wk), Josh Inglis (wk), Harnoor Pannu, Pyla Avinash, Prabhsimran Singh (wk), Shashank Singh, Marcus Stoinis, Harpreet Brar, Azmatullah Omarzai, Priyansh Arya, Aaron Hardie, Musheer Khan, Suryansh Shedge, Mitch Owen, Arshdeep Singh, Yuzvendra Chahal, Vysakh Vijaykumar, Yash Thakur, Kuldeep Sen, Xavier Bartlett, Pravin Dubey, Kyle Jamieson

Glenn Maxwell retires from ODIs to focus on T20

Marks second significant retirement of an Australian member following Stoinis' decision to quit ODI cricket earlier this year

PTI, MELBOURNE: Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell on Monday retired from ODIs to focus on next year's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, saying that he did not want to "play for selfish reasons" given how his body has been struggling to hold up.

The 36-year-old explosive batter and often underestimated off-spin bowler played 149 ODI matches for Australia including what is regarded by many the greatest one-day innings of all-time.

Maxwell came in against Afghanistan at the 2023 World Cup with his side reeling at 7-91. In a high-pressure situation and battling severe cramps in searing heat, he smashed 201 off just 128 balls to snatch victory from jaws of defeat. Australia went on to win the World Cup, beating favourites India in Ahmedabad.

"I felt like I was letting the team down a little bit with how body was reacting to the conditions. I had a good chat with (Chair of Selectors) George Bailey and I asked him what his thoughts were going forward," he told the 'Final Word Podcast'.

"We talked about the 2027 World Cup and I said to him 'I don't think I am going to make that, it's time to start planning for people in my position to have a crack at it and make the position their own'."

Maxwell had recently



returned from an IPL stint with Punjab Kings that was cut short by a broken finger.

"I always said I wasn't going to hand my position over if I felt like I was still good enough to play. I didn't want to just hold on for a couple of series and almost play for selfish reasons," said the explosive batter.

Maxwell's strike rate of 126 is the second highest in ODI cricket, behind only the West Indian heavy hitter Andre Russell. He has four hundreds and 23 half centuries along with 77 wickets.

"Maxwell has made the decision to prioritise his preparation for the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, the Big Bash League and his other global commitments," Cricket Australia said in a statement.

Maxwell played many incredible games across his decorated one-day career which included two ODI World Cup wins. The announcement marks second significant retirement of an Australian team member following Marcus Stoinis' decision to quit ODI cricket earlier this year.

"I think back to right at the start I was picked ahead of my time and out of the blue. I was just proud just to be playing a couple of games for Australia. I thought I was just going to have that," said Maxwell reflecting on his ODI career.

"Since then, I have been able to go through the up and downs of being dropped, being brought back, playing in a few World Cups and being a part of some great teams."

FACT FILE

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— Glenn Maxwell, Australian all-rounder

Klaasen calls time on all forms of cricket



PTI, CAPE TOWN: South African power-hitter Heinrich Klaasen on Monday announced his retirement from all forms of international cricket with immediate effect as he aims to strike a work-life balance, prioritising his commitments in franchise leagues across the globe.

The 33-year-old Klaasen had announced his retirement from Test cricket in January last year and has now also decided to quit the white ball formats having represented the Proteas in 4 Tests, 60 ODIs and 58 T20Is in which he scored 2764 runs.

"It is a sad day for me as I announce that I have decided to step away from international cricket. It took me a long time to decide what's best for me and my family for the future. It was truly a very difficult decision but also one that I have absolute peace with," Klaasen announced on his Instagram.

One of the most sought after batters in the T20 leagues, Klaasen had recently represented Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL and scored a ton in the concluding league game. His next assignment will be Major League Cricket in the United States for Seattle

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— Heinrich Klaasen, South African power-hitter

Orcas later this month.

Klaasen, who played in the T20 World Cup final against India, termed playing for the national team as his "biggest privilege".

"From the first day, it was the biggest privilege representing my country and it was everything that I have worked for and dreamed about as a young boy," Klaasen said in his emotional statement.

Someone who is known for his towering sixes and game-changing knocks as a finisher in the T20 universe, the decision is hardly surprising as the hectic international calendar is taking a toll on physical and mental health of the players.

"I look forward to spending more time with my family as this decision will allow me to do so."

shorttakes

Jurel scores second 50, Jaiswal, Easwaran make merry

CANTERBURY: India A batters enjoyed their time on a placid batting track with all the top four batters helping themselves to half-centuries as the first unofficial 'Test' against England Lions ended in a draw here on Monday. After England Lions ended their first essay on a healthy 587, 30 runs more than India A's first innings score of 557, Yashasvi Jaiswal (64 off 60 balls), skipper Abhimanyu Easwaran (68 off 87 balls), Dhruv Jurel (53 not out) and Nitish Kumar Reddy (52 not out off 47 balls) got some runs and confidence before the second 'Test' in Northampton, starting June 6. The match was called off after India A raced to 241 for 2 in 41 overs with 25 overs remaining on the final day. India A coach Hrishikesh Kanitkar rightly promoted Reddy to No. 4 and allowed him to belt a few blows as he is almost certain to play at Leeds in the first Test against England. Brief scores: India A 557 and 241/2 in 41 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 64, Abhimanyu Easwaran 68, Dhruv Jurel 53 not out, Nitish Kumar Reddy 52 not out). England Lions 587 (Tom Haines 171, Max Holden 101, Dan Mousley 113, Mukesh Kumar 3/92). Match Drawn.

Iyer, Pandya fined for slow over rate

AHMEDABAD: Punjab Kings captain Shreyas Iyer and Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya have been fined for their respective teams' slow over-rate during the IPL Qualifier 2 here. While Iyer was fined Rs 24 lakh as it was his team's second offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct, Pandya was docked Rs 30 lakh for third time offenders MI. "As it was his team's second offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over-rate offences, Iyer was fined Rs 24 lakh," an IPL statement read. "Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya has also been fined after his team maintained a slow over rate. As it was his team's third offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over-rate offences, Pandya was fined Rs 30 lakh," it added.

India junior women's hockey team loses 2-4 to Argentina at Four Nations Tournament

ROSARIO (Argentina): The Indian junior women's hockey team ended its campaign at the Four Nations Tournament with a 2-4 defeat to hosts Argentina here. Kanika Siwach (11', 45') struck twice for India, continuing her impressive run of form in the competition. The game began at a quick pace, with four goals scored in the first quarter alone. Argentina got off to a flying start as Sol Guignat Gunazu (5') opened the scoring. Just minutes later, Sol Ollala De Labra (7') doubled the lead, putting the home side firmly in control. India pulled one back in the 11th minute through Kanika, who showed sharp awareness to reduce the deficit. However, Argentina responded quickly, with Milagros del Valle Alastrá restoring the two-goal cushion in the 13th minute. Following a quiet second quarter, Argentina added a fourth through Maxima Duportal in the 37th minute. Kanika netted her second of the game in the 45th minute, giving India a glimmer of hope, but Argentina managed the final quarter and seal the match.

Shukla set to become acting BCCI president as incumbent Binny hits age cap

NEW DELHI: Veteran cricket administrator Rajeev Shukla is set to replace Roger Binny as BCCI president in an interim capacity after the latter turns 70 next month, BCCI sources told PTI on Monday. Binny, who had replaced Sourav Ganguly as the Board president in 2022, turns 70 on July 19, crossing the age-limit threshold for a BCCI office-bearer. Shukla, 65, is currently serving as the BCCI vice-president, a post he has held since 2020. He would be the active BCCI chief until fresh elections are held during the body's AGM in September.