

CHALLENGERS TROUNCE KINGS!

KOHLI LEADS RCB TO MAIDEN WIN

Top-scores with 43 as Bengaluru triumph over Punjab by 6 runs in tense final

PTI, AHMEDABAD: Battering legend Virat Kohli top-scored for Royal Challengers Bengaluru as they beat Punjab Kings by six runs on Tuesday to win their first Indian Premier League T20 title.

Kohli's 43 from 35 balls at the top of the order set up Bengaluru for an imposing total of 190-9 which was one big blow too many for a Punjab side that battled until the end, finishing on 184-7.

More than 91,000 fans packed into the 132,000-capacity stadium in Ahmedabad, a sea of Bengaluru's red and Kohli's jersey number 18 dominating the stands as chants of "Kohli, Kohli" rang out.

They celebrated noisily when Kohli and RCB clinched victory for the first time in the 18 years of the IPL, their three previous finals having all ended in defeat.

The 36-year-old Kohli,

one of India's all-time greats in all formats of the game, collapsed on the ground after the win and then got up to be hugged by his teammates as the crowd celebrated their hero.

Punjab faltered in their chase after left-arm spinner Krunal Pandya took 2-17 from his four overs.

Shashank Singh hit a valiant 61 not out and finished with three sixes and a four off Australian fast bowler Josh Hazlewood who defended 29 runs in the final over.

Hazlewood, who took 3-21 against Punjab in last week's qualifier win after recovering from a shoulder injury, struck first to send back left-handed Priyansh Arya for 24 with Phil Salt taking a stunning catch at the ropes.

Impact substitute Prabhsimran Singh was the next to go off Pandya but the Bengaluru crowd went wild when Romario Shep-



herd had skipper Shreyas Iyer caught behind for one.

Pandya stuck again to cut short Australian wicketkeeper-batter Josh Inglis' stay on 39 and Bengaluru seized momentum and Shashank's late blitz was not enough.

Bengaluru had the perfect start as 'King Kohli' dug in. Far from his fluent best, he only struck three fours during his innings but in the end it turned out to be key.

He lost opening partner Salt for 16 when New Zealand quick Kyle Jamieson

struck in his first over to have the England batter caught in the deep off Iyer.

Kohli anchored the innings, sharing important partnerships with Mayank Agarwal, who made 24, and then skipper Rajat Patidar, who hit 26.

But Punjab kept chipping away with wickets as leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal got Agarwal and Jamieson trapped the captain Ibw.

Kohli's vigil ended when he mistimed a rising delivery from Afghanistan pace bowler Azmatullah

Omarzai for a caught and bowled, the disappointment etched across his face mirrored by his fans.

Jamieson took his third wicket to cut short Liam Livingstone's rampant 25 off 15 balls.

Wickets kept tumbling

as wicketkeeper-batsman Jitesh Sharma fell for a 10-ball 24 and Romario Shepherd for 17 off nine balls.

Left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh took three wickets including Shepherd in the 20th over and gave away just three runs.

AWARDS

Royal Challengers Bengaluru winners': Rs 20 crore
Punjab Kings runners-up: Rs 12.5 crore
Sai Sudharsan (Gujarat Titans): Orange Cap
Prasidh Krishna (Gujarat Titans): Purple Cap
Nicholas Pooran (Lucknow Super Giants): Most Sixes
Fairplay award: Chennai Super Kings

SCOREBOARD

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Philip Salt c Iyer b Jamieson 16, Virat Kohli c and b Omarzai 43, Mayank Agarwal c Arshdeep b Chahal 24, Rajat Patidar lbw b Jamieson 26, Liam Livingstone lbw b Jamieson 25, Jitesh Sharma b Vyshak 24, Romario Shepherd lbw b Arshdeep 17, Krunal Pandya c Iyer b Arshdeep 4, Bhuvneshwar Kumar c Arya b Arshdeep 1, Yash Dayal not out 1. **Extras:** 9. **Total:** 190 for 9. **FOW:** 18-1, 56-2, 96-3, 131-4, 167-5, 171-6, 188-7, 189-8, 190-9. **Bowling:** Arshdeep Singh 4-0-40-3, Kyle Jamieson 4-0-48-3, Azmatullah Omarzai 4-0-35-1, Vijaykumar Vyshak 4-0-30-1, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-37-1

Punjab Kings: Priyansh Arya c Salt b Hazlewood 24, Prabhsimran Singh c Kumar b Pandya 26, Josh Inglis c Livingstone b Pandya 39, Shreyas Iyer c Sharma b Shepherd 1, Nehal Wadhwa c Pandya b Kumar 15, Shashank Singh not out 61, Marcus Stoinis c Dayal b Kumar 6, Azmatullah Omarzai c (sub) Bhandage b Dayal 1, Kyle Jamieson not out 0. **Extras:** 11. **Total:** 184 for 7. **FOW:** 43-1, 72-2, 79-3, 98-4, 136-5, 142-6, 145-7. **Bowling:** Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-38-2, Yash Dayal 3-0-18-1, Josh Hazlewood 4-0-54-1, Krunal Pandya 4-0-17-2, Suyash Sharma 2-0-19-0, Romario Shepherd 3-0-30-1

Man-of-the-Match: Krunal Pandya
Most Valuable Player: Suryakumar Yadav (Mumbai)

KOHLI: TEST CRICKET STILL THE ULTIMATE HONOUR

You know, this moment is right up there with the best moments I've had in my career. But it still marks five levels under Test cricket. That's how much I value Test cricket. And that's how much I love Test cricket. So I would just urge the youngsters coming through, to treat that format with respect. Because if you perform in Test cricket, you walk around anywhere in the world, people look you in the eye and shake your hand and say, well done, you played the game really well. So if you want to earn respect in World cricket all over, take up Test cricket, give your heart and soul to it

- Virat Kohli



Virat Kohli breaks down in tears after leading Royal Challengers Bengaluru to victory in the IPL 2025 T20 final against Punjab Kings

18 years a loyal Royal: Kohli's RCB fairytale ends in glory

PTI, AHMEDABAD: 11.20 pm. The chiselled, sweat-glistened face of Virat Kohli was filled with impatience. The maiden IPL title for him and the Royal Challengers Bengaluru was a good over away.

He was desperate for that famous Kohli run — fingers pointed heavenwards with a wide grin plastered across the face.

11.25 pm: Josh Hazlewood successfully defended 29 runs in the 20th over. But all Kohli could do

was to hide his face in his palms with tear-filled eyes and baulk. Teammates soon enveloped him as their endearing No. 18 met his destiny after 18 years.

Was it the credit-rolling moment of an extraordinary relationship between a player and franchise that lasted 18 years through mind boggling highs and heartbreaking lows?

It's a weird thought at this moment of personal and collective

glory. But it could not be avoided as the journey came to its much-desired full circle.

The first chapter of the Kohli and the RCB series began in 2008, and it has transformed into a long-drawn TV drama like the "Young and Restless".

Kohli was young and restless 18 years back — an irreverent, chubby South Delhi dandy who just wanted to take on the whole world in pursuit of victory.

An anomaly in the dressing room that then contained Rahul Dravid, Anil Kumble, Jacques Kallis etc.

But RCB trusted Kohli, and their former owner Vijay Mallya, a horse lover, let him be his own and allowed him time to mature into a thoroughbred.

Perhaps, he fitted seamlessly into the upmarket and bold image of the franchise. It was a soap opera.

But the relationship took a new turn in 2011. The Royal Challengers

trusted a 22-year-old with the leadership role.

Many 22-year-olds could have wilted in the high-pressure environment, but not this 22-year-old.

An innate love for camera, headlines, and the will to fight and learn helped him embrace the job wholeheartedly.

Kohli was in the hot seat for 12 years and 143 matches, and he remained firm there too even when the team failed to bag a trophy.

Swiatek, Sabalenka set up semi-final clash

AFP, PARIS: Three-time defending champion Iga Swiatek set up a blockbuster French Open semi-final clash with world number one Aryna Sabalenka on Tuesday, with men's holder Carlos Alcaraz also chasing a last-four berth.

Swiatek, the fifth seed, got past 13th-seeded Ukrainian Elina Svitolina 6-1, 7-5 in Paris after top women's seed Sabalenka won a nervy quarter-final against Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen, 7-6 (7/3), 6-3.

Both players have shared the number one ranking between them since April 2022.

Sabalenka ended Swiatek's 11-month reign as world num-



ber one last October but the Pole leads 8-4 in their previous meetings.

Swiatek is aiming to become the first woman to win four straight Roland Garros crowns since Suzanne Lenglen 102 years ago.

Earlier, reigning US Open champion Sabalenka defied the windy conditions and Zheng to avenge her recent loss to the Chinese star in Rome.

Sabalenka once again got the upper hand on Zheng, who had been on a winning streak of 10 matches on the Paris clay after her run to Olympic gold last year.

B'ton: Sindhu, Satwik-Chirag enter 2nd round

PTI, JAKARTA: Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and the men's doubles pair of Satviksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty battled their way into the pre-quarterfinals but it was curtains for Lakshya Sen in the very first round of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here on Tuesday.

Sindhu overcame long-time rival Nozomi Okuhara of Japan 22-20, 21-23, 21-15 in an absorbing one-hour and 19-minute clash in the women's singles.

Sen fought valiantly before falling 11-21 22-20 15-21 to world number two Shi Yu Qi of China.

HS Prannoy also bowed out 17-21, 18-21 to Indonesia's Alwi Farhan.

Later, Satwik and Chirag made it to the round of 16 after beating the Indonesian duo of Leo Rolly Candano and Bagas Maulana 18-21 21-18 21-14 in their opening-round match that lasted 67 minutes.

Gukesh overcomes Erigaisi challenge to jump to second spot in Norway Chess

PTI, STAVANGER (Norway): Reigning world champion D Gukesh continued to turn adversity into opportunity as he wriggled out of a virtually intractable position to beat compatriot Arjun Erigaisi for the first time ever in a classical game and jump to sole second position after round 7 of the Norway Chess.

As has been the trend in Gukesh's campaign in this elite six-payer double round-robin tournament, the teenager, playing with white, showed nerves of steel to secure his second consecutive win, without going through the rigmarole of an Armageddon tie-break, to take sweet revenge for his loss to Erigaisi earlier in Round 2.

The win, which came after a nerve-wracking victory against defending champion and world No.1 Magnus Carlsen, saw Gukesh, 19, overtake the 34-year-old Norwegian on the points table with 11.5 points.

This was also Gukesh's first win in three attempts against Erigaisi, who had beaten the world champion at the Tata Steel Chess tournament in Wijk Aan Zee to spoil his title-winning chances, and then again in Round 2 here.

With three more rounds to go, pole sitter American Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana, who defeated Wei Yi of China, is on 12.5 points.

Carlsen is third with 11 points following his Armageddon win against another American Grandmaster and world No. 2 Hikaru Nakamura, who is fourth with 8.5 points.



Mandhana nominated for ICC Women's Player of the Month for May

AGENCIES, DUBAI: India's vice-captain Smriti Mandhana has been nominated for the ICC Women's Player of the Month for May due to her outstanding performance in the ODI tri-series in Sri Lanka. Also nominated in the women's category are West Indies captain Hayley Matthews and South

African all-rounder Chloe Tryon for their remarkable performances in limited-overs formats.

In the men's category, all-rounders Brendon McCullen of Scotland, Milind Kumar of the United States, and United Arab Emirates opener Muhammad Waseem have been

nominated for their impressive displays in white-ball formats.

Rodrigues accumulated 204 runs in three matches of the tri-series in Sri Lanka, including a valuable 44 in the final against the hosts. Her standout performance was scoring 123 from 101 balls against

South Africa, significantly contributing to India's victory in the tournament.

West Indies captain Matthews, currently ranked No. 1 all-rounder in T20Is and second in ODIs, demonstrated her prowess by scoring 48 runs and taking two wickets in the first ODI against England at Derby.

shorttakes

Williamson again turns down a central contract

WELLINGTON: Ex-captain Kane Williamson has again rejected a central contract with New Zealand Cricket and likely will miss the Black Caps two test tour to Zimbabwe next month. Williamson also decided not to accept a central contract last year, to leave himself free to play in Twenty20 and other leagues around the world. He is expected again to sign a casual contract.

Sancho to leave Chelsea after loan spell: Reports

LONDON: Chelsea have rejected the chance to sign Jadon Sancho permanently from Manchester United after the winger failed to agree personal terms at Stamford Bridge, reports said Tuesday. The 25-year-old joined Chelsea on loan in August last year in a deal that featured an obligation to buy him for up to \$34 million. The Athletic reported that the club and Sancho had failed to agree a deal and Chelsea must now pay a £5 million penalty charge to United.

West Brom hire Spurs asst Mason as manager

LONDON: West Brom appointed former Tottenham midfielder and caretaker manager Ryan Mason as new boss on Monday. Mason, 33, has signed a three-year deal at the Hawthorns and is tasked with getting West Brom promoted back to the Premier League. Mason was part of Ange Postecoglou's coaching staff as Tottenham ended a 17-year wait to win a trophy by lifting the Europa League last month.

Chelsea sign Essugo in time for Club World Cup

LONDON: Chelsea announced the signing of Portuguese midfielder Dario Essugo on Monday from Sporting Lisbon in a deal worth \$25 million. The 20-year-old, who spent last season on loan at Spanish side Las Palmas as they were relegated from La Liga, will be available to feature for the Blues at the Club World Cup later this month. Essugo came through Sporting's academy and became the youngest player to appear for the club's first team at the age of 16 in March 2021.

Fernandes rejects Saudi move to stay at Man Utd

LONDON: Bruno Fernandes has reportedly rejected a huge offer to leave Manchester United for the Saudi Pro League, opting to be part of Ruben Amorim's rebuild at Old Trafford. Reports said Al Hilal were willing to pay United up to \$135 million for the 30-year-old Portugal international but had not made an official approach. United endured their worst finish of the Premier League era, finishing 15th.

Kahn backs out of Bordeaux deal

BORDEAUX: Former Germany and Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn said on Monday he has backed out of a potential deal to buy struggling fourth-tier French club Bordeaux. Kahn sent an open letter to local newspaper Sud Ouest explaining he was not willing to pay the 50 million euros (\$57.2 million) to fulfil the deal.

Inzaghi resigns as coach of Inter Milan

MILAN: The 5-0 rout by Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League final was Simone Inzaghi's final match in charge of Inter Milan. "The time has come for me to say goodbye to this club after a run of four years during which I gave everything," Inzaghi wrote in a letter to Inter fans on the club website Tuesday.