

Hazlewood leads RCB into IPL final

AFP, Chandigarh

Australia's Josh Hazlewood returned figures of 3/21 to help Royal Challengers Bengaluru storm into the Indian Premier League final with an eight-wicket thrashing of Punjab Kings on Thursday.

Bengaluru bundled out Punjab for 101, and overhauled that target with 10 overs to spare in the first qualifier at Mullanpur in New Chandigarh.

Punjab will have another shot at making the final on June 3 when they face the winner of the Eliminator between Gujarat Titans and Mumbai Indians.

Opener Phil Salt made an unbeaten 56 not out as Bengaluru made their fourth IPL final in the hunt for a first title.

Star batter Virat Kohli fell caught behind for 12 off New Zealand quick Kyle Jamieson, who took a wicket without giving a run in the over.

Salt put on 54 runs with Mayank Agarwal (19). Skipper Rajat Patidar made 15 and hit the winning six.

Bowlers set up victory after Bengaluru elected to field and got a Hazlewood boost as the fast bowler returned after a shoulder injury.

Hazlewood struck two key blows, including skipper Shreyas Iyer, to rattle Punjab's batting.

Left-arm seamer Yash Dayal drew first blood to send back Priyansh Arya caught out for seven in the second over and soon fellow opener Prabhsimran Singh fell for 18.

Hazlewood then struck twice to get Iyer caught behind in his first over and then Punjab's previous match hero Josh Inglis, for seven, in his next.

Wickets kept tumbling and Punjab lost half their side in 6.3 overs when Dayal bowled the left-handed Nehal Wadhwa.

Australia's Marcus Stoinis attempted to hit back as wickets fell at the other end as he made 26 off 17 balls with the two fours and two sixes.

Leg spinner Suyash Sharma took two wickets in one over and when he dismissed Stoinis as his third victim, the Punjab crowd fell silent. He was named man of the match.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Cumilla Modern High School cricket team celebrate as luck smiled on them and handed them the title of the Prime Bank National School Cricket Tournament 2024–2025. The final between Cumilla Modern and Police Lines School & College Bogura was scheduled to be held at the Bashundhara Sports City Cricket Ground yesterday but persistent rain forced the outcome to be decided by a coin toss after the minimum required 20 overs and a Super Over decider got ruled out. The champions were awarded a cash prize of Tk 1.5 lakhs, while the runners-up received Tk 1 lakh.

Cracks apparent, what can Tigers do about it?

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

If Bangladesh's recent T20I showings suggest anything, it is that the Tigers are far from meeting the demands of the shortest format – particularly the ability to seize the initiative and shift momentum in their favor.

Litton Das and Co suffered a 37-run defeat in the first T20I of their three-match series against hosts Pakistan at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Wednesday – a result that added to the misery of a side that had endured a humiliating 2-1 defeat to an ICC associate nation, UAE, just a few days earlier.

Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium is known for producing run-fests, the type seen during the recently concluded Pakistan Super League (PSL). The 10th edition of the tournament featured several high-scoring contests at this venue, including the final in which the Lahore Qalandars chased down a 202-run target against the Quetta Gladiators to clinch their third league title.

The venue lived up to its reputation in the first innings when Pakistan batted, as the hosts posted 201 for seven.

However, Bangladesh fell flat in the very aspect where Pakistan thrived – getting bundled out for 164 runs, largely due to a lack of intent shown by the Tigers.

The Tigers faltered early, managing only 45 for two in the Powerplay, before the situation worsened as the innings progressed. The visitors scraped together just 81 runs for four wickets in the next 10 overs, effectively handing Pakistan the upper hand.

"Intent in T20Is has to be there. When you are chasing 200 runs, you can't let the required run rate go over 13. If you take the average to 13, it will be tough for you. If you lose one wicket, then there will be a new batter, and it will be tough for him," Bangladesh's spin coach Mushtaq Ahmed said after the opening match.

The lack of intent was clearly visible in the

mindset with which some batters approached the big run chase. Tawhid Hridoy managed only 17 runs from 22 deliveries, despite coming in during the fifth over of the innings – a contrast to how Pakistan skipper Salman Agha, Mohammad Haris, Hasan Nawaz, and Shadab Khan regained momentum with quickfire knocks in the middle after early setbacks.

Not only Hridoy, but even Litton and Tanzid Tamim threw their wickets away after settling at the crease. All of these point to one thing – the deficiency lies more in the Tigers' execution and ability than anywhere else.

"Tactically, we were less smart today," Mushtaq also admitted.

"The way Litton started, it seemed the game would be on our side. But [having to score] 13-14 runs per over is too much. So, as coaches, we need to speak to them and hopefully help them show better intent in the middle overs," he added.

It's probably unrealistic to assume that Bangladesh can bring changes in these areas overnight, but if they are to turn their fortunes around in this format and stay alive in this series with a win in the second T20I today, Mushtaq's words must get through to the Tigers.



Sinner thrashes retiring Gasquet at French Open

World number one Jannik Sinner sent Frenchman Richard Gasquet into retirement with a 6-3 6-0 6-4 hammering in the battle of generations at the French Open on Thursday to ease into the third round.

It was the second time in as many years in Paris that the 23-year-old beat local hero Gasquet, who said he would end his career that started over two decades ago and yielded 16 tour-level singles titles after his home Grand Slam.

"I'd like to thank Jannik for his kindness and the player that he is and I know he'll have a great career."

"I have great memories with all of you. You all supported me in defeat and victory. I'd like to thank the federation. Tennis finishes for me today."

GASQUET



Cole Palmer showed his quality, changing the complexion of the game with two assists, as Chelsea roared back after conceding first to beat Real Betis 4-1 to win the UEFA Conference League in Wroclaw on Wednesday. After a dismal first-half in which an early goal from Abde Ezzalzouli gave Betis the advantage, Chelsea turned things around in the second-half, with goals from Enzo Fernandez, Nicolas Jackson, Jadon Sancho, and Moises Caicedo. Chelsea are now the first club to win the full set of five UEFA club tournaments -- the Champions League, Europa League, Conference League, Super Cup and the now-defunct Cup Winners' Cup.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Nat'l Junior Athletics begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) is mulling over selecting athletes for the 3rd Asian Youth Games from the 39th National Junior (Age-Group) Athletics Championships, set to get underway at the National Stadium today.

Athletics is one of 13 disciplines in which Bangladesh will participate at the upcoming Asian Youth Games from October 22-31 in Bahrain, and BAF has decided to pick the athletes from the U-16 group, as the junior athletics championships will also feature another category – U-18.

"We have decided to pick the best performers of the championships for the upcoming Youth Asian Games and then train them with the help of the Bangladesh Olympic Association," BAF general secretary Shah Alam told reporters at a press conference yesterday.

Some 500 athletes from different districts, divisions, educational boards and BKSP are expected to vie for 42 events – 14 events for U-16 boys and girls, and 28 events for U-18 boys and girls.

However, the throwing events of the championship will take place at the outer stadium in a bid to preserve the newly laid grass ground of the National Stadium ahead of Bangladesh's Asian Cup Qualifiers tie against Singapore on June 10.

BAF also decided to provide cash awards to the gold, silver and bronze winners – Tk 3,000, Tk 2,000 and Tk 1,000, respectively – while each athlete will also receive an additional Tk 10,000 for setting a national record under the electronic timer.



Mirra Andreieva showcased her claycourt prowess once again at Roland Garros, battling past Ashlyn Krueger 6-3, 6-4. The 18-year-old Russian, a semifinalist last year, overcame an early deficit with smart shot selection and composure. Avenging a US Open loss, she said, "I suffered, but stayed calm. I pushed myself to fight until the end."

PHOTO: REUTERS

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