

Knight Riders dump Royal Challengers' challenge

[Kolkata](#) Knight Riders came back to winning ways, defeating [Bangalore](#) Royal Challengers by five runs in a pulsating rain-curtailed encounter of the Indian Premier League (IPL) at the Eden Gardens here Thursday night.

Sourav Ganguly's side restricted Royal Challengers to 124 for four after posting a challenging score of 129 for seven in their allotted 16 overs.

The match witnessed a keen tussle between the two sides fighting for their survival in the Twenty20 league. Though it was not a high scoring game, the highlight of the match was some eye-catching fielding and disciplined bowling from both sides.

J. Arun Kumar (22 off 17) and Shivnaraine Chanderpaul (7) gave a perfect start to Royal Challengers' run chase putting on 17 runs for the first wicket. However, a sensational direct hit from Brad Hodge cut short Arun Kumar's innings to bring the match at even terms at 33 for two in 4.5 overs. In his brief stay at the crease, Arun Kumar threatened to take the game away from the hosts.

Royal Challengers' captain Rahul Dravid (5) and Mark Boucher (50 off 40 balls) then shared 19 runs for the fourth wicket before Ganguly cleaned his counterpart to reel the visitors at 51 for three in 9.1 overs.

Australian Cameron White (30 off 16) accelerated Challengers' run chase, hitting Laxmi Ratan Shukla for a six and four in the 11th over.

Needing 62 off 30 balls, both Boucher and White launched an all-round attack. The duo picked up 15 runs in the 13th over from Umar Gul. However, it was followed by a brilliant over by Ishant Sharma (25/1), in which he gave just five runs.

In the first of ball of the 15th over, Murali Kartik outsmarted dangerman White with a clever piece of fieldwork of his own bowling. But Boucher was in no mood to give up the fight as he hit Kartik for two fours and a six to keep Challengers in the hunt at 111 for four.

Needing 19 off the last over, the South African wicketkeeper fought a lonely battle and hit Ishant for a boundary in the first ball to reduce the margin. That was all he could manage, as his valiant effort could not see his side through and they fell short by five runs.

Ganguly was adjudged the man of the match for his excellent bowling. He gave up just seven runs in his three overs in which he picked the important wicket of Dravid.

Earlier, Royal Challengers dampened the home crowd's spirit, restricting the Knight Riders to 129 for seven.

Opting to bat in a 16-over-per-side match that was delayed by rain, Knight Riders' top order once again faltered and their innings never really took off. A changed opening combination of Akash Chopra (2) and Brad Hodge (10) failed to provide the hosts a solid start.

Ganguly (20 off 22 balls) and David Hussey (26 off 12) tried to resurrect Knight Riders' innings and

shared a 26-run stand for the fourth wicket, but two crucial runouts and some disciplined work on the field from Challengers eventually led to their downfall.

Ganguly was first of the two runouts as White pulling off a spectacular direct hit from mid-on.

The going was slow for Knight Riders and it was Hussey who stepped up the gear and accelerated the innings. The Australian hit Kumble for two back-to-back sixes in the ninth over, but in the very next ball a sensational throw from Steyn from the fine-leg found Hussey short of the crease while he was running for a non-existent second run.

However, the hosts' lower middle order saved the day for them. Debutant Tatenda Taibu (15), Shukla (11), Wriddhiman Saha (unbeaten 17) and Kartik (17) made some valuable contributions down the order to set a challenging target before Royal Challengers.

Saha and Kartik made a quick 34-run stand for the seventh wicket, the highest partnership of the innings. Saha was lucky not to be caught off Zaheer Khan, with Dale Steyn losing the ball in the Eden floodlights.

Steyn was the pick of the bowlers for Royal Challengers, taking three wickets for 27 runs in his four overs, while Zaheer (27/1) and Praveen Kumar (36/1) were the other wicket takers.

With this victory, Knight Riders now have 2-0 win-loss record against Royal Challengers. Ganguly's men had thrashed the Bangalore side in the opening match of the IPL last month in Bangalore.

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