

Rajasthan Royals take revenge on Daredevils

Rajasthan Royals took a sweet revenge on Delhi Daredevils beating them by three wickets in the return leg in the Indian Premier League (IPL) here Sunday night.

Royals restricted Daredevils to 156 after deciding to field and then surpassed the target in 19.1 overs. Shane Watson blasted 74 off 40 balls that included five four and as many sixes and Graeme Smith added 24 as Royals kept their winning record at home intact.

Daredevils had thrashed Rajasthan Royals in their first encounter in Delhi but since then the Royals have been a completely changed outfit and now lead the IPL standings with seven wins in nine games. They are almost sure of their semifinal berth now.

Royals did not get a good start to their run-chase and two run-outs put them on the backfoot.

Yusuf Pathan fell short of his crease as a diving AB de Villiers hit the stumps in a flash in the second over. After Mohammad Kaif and Smith were involved in a bad mix-up and were stranded in the middle, Kaif decided to sacrifice his wicket in favour of in-form Smith. Royals lost their first two wickets with just 18 runs on the board when Watson came in the middle.

Smith and Watson hardly got any scoring opportunity with Glenn McGrath keeping them in leash. Farvez Mahroof (1-22), operating at the other end with Mcgarth, also bowled a tight spell. The duo did well not to take any risk against McGrath, who gave just 12 runs in four overs, and Mahroof before taking on young pacers Yo Mahesh and Pradeep Sangwan.

Watson hit Mahesh for two sixes and one four in the ninth over but also survived a dropped catch when skipper Virender Sehwag failed to grab the ball at mid-wicket. The dropped chance proved costly for Daredevils as Watson clobbered the bowlers with some clean strikes. In the next over, Watson hit Sangwan for another six and four.

Leg-spinner Amit mishra (2-27), playing his first IPL match, got rid of Smith in the 11th over with Mahesh holding a spectacular catch at the deep mid-wicket. Mishra also removed Ravindra Jadeja in his next over and brought Delhi back into the match.

Dmitri Mascrenhas fell to Sehwag in the 16th over. In the meanwhile, Watson continued to keep the run rate going. Shane Warne was dropped by Tilekratne Dilashan in the next over at long-on boundary.

Mahroof's 19th over saw a bit of drama with Sehwag and the umpires engaged in a heated debate over a run-out call of Watson which was not referred to the third umpire.

Warne got out on the first ball of Mahroof and in the very next ball Watson was in danger of run-out. But Umpire Steve Davis thought Watson was home and did not ask for a replay. A confident Sehwag spoke to the other umpire, Rudi Koertzen, and finally they called for the third umpire and Watson had to go as he was clearly short of his crease.

Royals survived some anxious moments as they needed seven runs of 12 balls but Niraj Patel hit Mahroof's last ball for a boundary and sealed the match in the first ball of the final over.

Earlier, Warne stuck to his strategy of chasing after winning the toss.

The Royals bowling attack maintained a disciplined line and choked the opposition. They were backed by some excellent fielding. Daredevils batsmen had given in some strong performance in the tournament but they had no answers to Royals' bowling. The dual-paced pitch made the job of bowlers easy.

Watson (2-21) used the short ball to good effect and beat the bat of Gautam Gambhir (31) and Sehwag (17) more often. Both openers were not given any room to free their arms and had to contend with occasional boundaries.

Sehwag tried to cut over point but was caught by Kaif for 17. After Sehwag's fall Shikhar Dhawan was run-out, Gambhir's stumps were rattled and Delhi did not score any boundaries in six overs.

Mascarenhas (2-29), who went for 12 runs in his first over, came back in his second spell to get the wickets of de Villiers (20) and Dinesh Karthik.

Delhi crossed the 100-run mark with Mahroof (39) taking the charge in the final overs. The last three overs fetched 47 runs with Mahroof hitting Warne for four sixes in one over.

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