

Rajasthan Royals thrash Bangalore Royal Challengers; enter semi-finals

Rajasthan Royals continued their winning spree and became the first team in the Indian Premier League (IPL) to enter the semi-finals as they thrashed bottom placed [Bangalore](#) Royal Challengers by 65 runs at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium here Saturday.

Chasing an imposing target of 198, Royal Challengers made 132 for the loss of nine wickets at the end of 20 overs.

Rahul Dravid's decision to bowl first backfired as the Rajasthan Royals openers tore apart the Royal Challengers bowling attack.

The century opening stand between Graeme Smith (75 not out) and Swapnil Asnodkar (50) put the match beyond the Challengers as the hosts made 197 for one in 20 overs. Shane Watson was not out on 46.

With the temperature soaring to 48 degrees Celsius, the Royal Challengers were always going to have a tough time while fielding and the wayward bowling by their bowlers did no good either.

Smith was in full force as he cut, drove and pulled with elegance, spanking the bowlers to all parts of the ground. In contrast, Asnodkar's half-century was an unconvincing knock. He slashed, missed and edged repeatedly over the wicketkeeper and slips. He was lucky to get a life early on in the innings after umpire Suresh Shastri turned down a lbw appeal in Praveen Kumar's first over. The replays suggested the ball would have crashed into leg stump.

Smith also had fortune going his way. His 75 came off 49 deliveries. It included eight boundaries and a couple of sixes.

The openers added 109 runs when Anil Kumble dismissed Asnodkar.

In came the dashing Shane Watson and he did not waste much time in getting into the groove, pulling Kumble twice. In the same over Smith got to his fifty smashing the India Test captain for six over midwicket.

Royal Challengers's rout started in the very first over when opener Arunkumar (0) tried to loft a Sohail Tanveer delivery and got caught by Trivedi at mid-off. Misbah ul-Haq (0), who came after the fall of Arunkumar was soon to follow leaving Royal Challengers struggling at a paltry score of 2. Thereafter none of the Bangalore team batsmen showed heart to fight as they fell in quick succession.

Skipper Rahul Dravid's knock (75 not out) was the lone bright spot in the Royal Challengers' innings. But it was too little too late.

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