

Kohli blitz makes Gujarat pay as Bengaluru win

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AFP
Bengaluru, India

Virat Kohli punished Gujarat Titans for dropping him on nought with a blistering half-century as Royal Challengers Bengaluru breezed to a five-wicket victory in the Indian Premier League yesterday.

Left-handed opener Sai Sudharsan's third IPL hundred was the cornerstone of Gujarat's 205-3 on being put in by Rajat Patidar at the Chinnaswamy Stadium.

But Kohli (81) and Devdutt Padikkal (55) tore into the bowling during a rollicking 115-run second-wicket stand to delight a full house in Bengaluru's final league match of the season at this venue.

Kohli was put down by Washington Sundar at mid-wicket off the first ball he faced from Mohammed Siraj, in the first over of the chase, and made Gujarat pay for their largesse with a thrilling exhibition of stroke-making.

Bengaluru lost Englishman Jacob Bethell, playing his first game of the season in place of injured compatriot Phil Salt, in the third over.

That was the cue for Kohli and Padikkal to put on a delightful exhibition of stroke-making, marked by timing and silken grace rather than raw power.

Rangy left-hander Padikkal did the early running with a stunning array of sixes as he used his long levers to great effect, with Kohli only marginally behind.

Padikkal was the first to his half-century, off 20 deliveries,



Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli in action during the IPL match against Gujarat Titans in Bengaluru, India, yesterday. (Reuters)

while Kohli took 30 balls to reach the landmark before the former was bowled by Afghanistan leg-spinner Rashid Khan. Kohli continued to make merry, going past Abhishek Sharma to become the tournament's leading scorer (328) and seize the Orange Cap.

His dismissal, bowled off the inside-edge by West Indian Jason Holder, sparked a mini collapse before Australian Tim David and Krunal Pandya got the job done with little fuss.

Gujarat's innings was dominated by the punchy Sudharsan, who hogged the bowling in the early stages with skipper Shubman Gill facing just three balls in the first five overs. Clearly the dominant partner in an opening alliance of 128, Sudharsan shrugged off a modest start to the tournament with boundaries galore.

The base was set for a total in the region of 220 but Bengaluru surged back towards the end through their experienced seam-

ers Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Australian Josh Hazlewood, and the impressive Rasikh Salam. They needed two sixes from Holder in the final over, off Pandya, to sneak past 200, which was competitive but far from adequate.

BRIEF SCORES

Royal Challengers Bengaluru 206 for 5 (Kohli 81, Padikkal 55, Rashid 2-49) **beat Gujarat Titans 205 for 3** (Sai Sudharsan 100, Gill 32, Bhuvneshwar 1-31) **by 5 wickets**