Super Kings' night out against Knight Riders

Chahar, Harbhajan and Tahir set up an emphatic win for the hosts; Russell wages a lone battle for the Kolkata side

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

Kolkata Knight Riders had three matches of footage and a skipper from Chennai to learn from on how to play on a slow-turning Chepauk wicket. But its top-order batsmen, in their infinite wisdom, decided that playing across the line was a prudent strategy.

The result: the visitors were reduced to 108 for nine and Chennai Super Kings chased it down with ease, to go to the top of the table, at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium here on Tuesday. This was Super Kings' fourth win in as many matches at home in IPL-12.

Poor shot selection

Asked to take strike, KKR lost its way right in the first over. Deepak Chahar trapped Chris Lynn leg-before when the batsman tried to pull a length delivery. Nitish Rana and Robin Uthappa then fell to similar shots, both caught while pulling the seamer and finding the fielder.

Skipper Dinesh Karthik looked comfortable during his brief stay, but the first time he attempted to play across resulted in his downfall. He hit Imran Tahir to short mid-wicket where Harbhajan Singh pulled off a smart, reflex catch.

On a wicket where the ball was holding up, the top-order had imploded and the visitors were tottering at 29 for four after the PowerPlay, with Chahar picking up three.

Tahir then foxed Shubman Gill with a googly, the batsman over-balancing and Dhoni doing the rest.

Lucky Russell

It could have been worse for KKR had Harbhajan held on to a skier inside the ring when Andre Russell top-edged a slog sweep off the South African leg-spinner when he was on eight.

However, the off-spinner completely misjudged the catch and the ball fell behind him.

It needed Russell's experience and form to bring some respectability to the total, though this innings was not anything like the previous swashbuckling efforts this season.

The West Indian made an unbeaten 50 off 44 balls (5x4, 3x6) but struggled to find his timing and also seemed to have an issue with his left wrist, leaving him wincing in pain and hampering his batting.

By the 17th over, Russell was running out of partners and had to farm the strike before hitting Scott Kuggeleijn for 14 runs in the last over (or 15 in total), with one six and two fours, the last one a brutal hit straight back past the bowler to reach a well-deserved half-century.

Spinners impress again

As in the previous games, the spinners continued the good work. Harbhajan led the charge once again with a brilliant spell, returning figures of two for 15 in his four overs.

During Super Kings' chase, Faf du Plessis saw the team home with an unbeaten 43. Shane Watson, Suresh Raina and Ambati Rayudu chipped in with useful contributions before throwing their wickets away.

Imran Tahir (two for 21) and Ravindra Jadeja (one for 17) provided him solid support.

CSK's merry run continues

4 Super Kings' fourth consecutive win in Chennai in IPL-12. The team has won 16 of its last 17 games at the venue, the lone defeat coming against MI in 2015

4 Number of KKR batsmen who failed to get off the mark against CSK. Not a single KKR batsman was dismissed for zero in its first five matches this season

20 Dot balls bowled by Chahar against KKR, a tournament record, eclipsing Nehra's 19 (DD vs KXIP, 2009)

25 Russell's sixes count in this IPL. Rana (12) is second followed by Gayle, de Villiers and Warner (11 each). It has taken just 121 balls for Russell to hit 25 maximums, taking just 4.84 deliveries per six

99 Number of wins by Dhoni as captain in 165 matches at the helm (CSK and Rising Pune Supergiants)

193 Russell's run-tally against CSK in his last three outings (112b, 10x4, 18x6). He has also not been dismissed during these knocks

Top of the charts

ORANGE CAP
David Warner (SRH)
Matches: **6** | Runs: **349**
HS: **100*** | S/R: **146.63**

PURPLE CAP
Kagiso Rabada (DC)
Matches: **6** | Wickets: **11**
BB: **4/21** | Econ.: **7.55**

*after the CSK-KKR match on April 9

Innings scan

	KKR		CSK
75	Dots		47
10	Fours		9
4	Sixes		2
29/4	PP		40/2
5.40	RR		6.40

Next assignment

CSK: April 11: vs RR
Jaipur, 8 p.m.

KKR: April 12: vs DC
Kolkata, 8 p.m.

Dream start: Deepak Chahar broke the back of the Knight Riders line-up, picking up three top-order wickets. • B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Our batsmen were unlucky: Chawla

S. PRASANNA VENKATESAN
CHENNAI

Kolkata Knight Riders' Piyush Chawla said his team "didn't misread" the pitch but that a few batsmen were unlucky that their shots found the fielders.

He added that the team could've done without losing three wickets in the powerplay. "135-140 would've been ideal on this wicket," he added.

Asked if the team had planned to go after Chahar and it backfired, he said it was not the case.

Man-of-the-match

Deepak Chahar said he's now accustomed to bowling effectively when the ball isn't swinging and that he's grown in confidence as a bowler.

He said it was a plan to bowl a lot of yorkers and off-spin slow bouncers with the wet ball.

SCOREBOARD SUPER KINGS VS KNIGHT RIDERS

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

Chris Lynn lbw b Chahar 0 (5b), Sunil Narine c Chahar b Harbhajan 6 (5b), Robin Uthappa c Jadhav b Chahar 11 (9b, 2x4), Nitish Rana c Rayudu b Chahar 0 (3b), Dinesh Karthik c Harbhajan b Tahir 19 (21b, 3x4), Shubman Gill st. Dhoni b Tahir 9 (12b), Andre Russell (not out) 50 (44b, 5x4, 3x6), Piyush Chawla st. Dhoni b Harbhajan 8 (13b, 1x6), Kuldeep Yadav run out 0 (1b), Prasidh Krishna c Harbhajan b Jadeja 0 (2b), Harry Gurney (not out) 1 (5b); Extras (lb-1, w-3): 4; Total (for nine wkts. in 20 overs): 108.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-6 (Lynn, 0.6 overs), 2-8 (Narine, 1.5), 3-9 (Rana, 2.3), 4-24 (Uthappa, 4.4), 5-44 (Karthik, 8.4), 6-47 (Gill, 10.1), 7-76 (Chawla, 15.3), 8-76 (Kuldeep, 15.4), 9-79 (Prasidh, 16.3).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING
Chahar 4-0-20-3, Harbhajan 4-0-15-2, Jadeja 4-0-17-1, Kuggeleijn 4-0-34-0, Tahir 4-0-21-2.

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS
Shane Watson c Chawla b Narine 17 (9b, 2x4, 1x6), Faf du Plessis (not out) 43 (45b, 3x4), Suresh Raina c Chawla b Narine 14 (13b, 1x4, 1x6), Ambati Rayudu c Rana b Chawla 21 (31b, 2x4), Kedar Jadhav (not out) 8 (8b, 1x4); Extras (nb-2, w-6): 8; Total (for three wkts. in 17.2 overs): 111.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-18 (Watson, 2.2 overs), 2-35 (Raina, 4.6), 3-81 (Rayudu, 14.4).

KNIGHT RIDERS BOWLING
Chawla 4-0-28-1, Prasidh 4-0-23-0, Narine 3.2-0-24-2, Kuldeep 4-0-16-0, Gurney 2-0-20-0.

Toss: Chennai Super Kings
Man-of-the-match: Deepak Chahar

Super Kings won by seven wickets with 16 balls remaining.

Points table

Team	M	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
Chennai Super Kings	6	5	1	0	10	0.310
Kolkata Knight Riders	6	4	2	0	8	0.614
Kings XI Punjab	6	4	2	0	8	-0.061
Sunrisers Hyderabad	6	3	3	0	6	0.810
Mumbai Indians	5	3	2	0	6	0.342
Delhi Capitals	6	3	3	0	6	0.131
Rajasthan Royals	5	1	4	0	2	-0.848
Royal Challengers	6	0	6	0	0	-1.453

*after the CSK-KKR match on April 9

Bailing out the batsmen!

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
JAIPUR

Someone planning an adhesive advertisement can take inspiration from this IPL season. What with all those visuals of the ball hitting the stumps, zing bails flashing, but just refusing to come off?

It has happened thrice this season, within a week, in fact. The first was in Chennai when M.S. Dhoni got an inside edge off Jofra Archer but the bails stayed intact despite the ball hitting middle and leg stumps.

Dhoni hadn't opened his account and Chennai Super Kings was 28 for three. Captain Cool went on to make 75 not out and led his team to an eight-run win over Rajasthan Royals.

"It would have been game over for Chennai," Archer told The Hindu. "Only the second time such a thing has happened to me."

Stubborn

In the second incident, Dhoni was at the receiving end. Against Kings XI Punjab his direct hit caught K.L. Rahul short but the bails refused to budge. Rahul was on 41 and went on to make 55. However, Super Kings won the match by 22 runs.

Kolkata Knight Riders' win over Royals here on Sunday was even more emphatic (by eight wickets).

But, the game could have been a little more interesting if opener Chris Lynn had to depart in the fourth over, after playing Dhawal Kulkarni onto the stumps.

Kolkata was 37 for no wicket at the time, with Lynn on 13. The Australian went on to make 50 and put on a match-winning 91 for the opening wicket.

"It is already tough on bowlers in the T20 format," Royals captain Ajinkya Rahane said at the post-match press conference. "In such situations, I feel those balls could be called dead."

Former England captain Michael Vaughan went a step further. "If the bails flash... it has got to be out," he said in a panel discussion after the match. "That is got to be where the line is."

Shiver me timbers! Rajasthan Royals' Jofra Archer can't believe the bails haven't fallen off despite the ball hitting M.S. Dhoni's stumps. • SPORTZPICS/BCCI

Shift matches from Mohali: Kings XI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Kings XI Punjab has requested its games to be shifted out of Mohali. The matches are scheduled for April 13, April 16, May 3 and May 5.

The Committee of Administrators (CoA) chairman Vinod Rai, while confirming the request from Kings XI, informed that a decision would have to be made after taking into account the security arrangements at the alternate venue. Kings XI is keen to host the final two matches in Lucknow.

It's Kings' bowlers vs Mumbai batsmen

Malinga's return adds more potency to the home team's pace attack

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

At the start of this IPL season, Mumbai Indians had to deal with a dearth of overseas pace bowlers.

A fortnight later, ahead of a mini home-leg that starts with a face-off against R. Ashwin's Kings XI Punjab, the three-time champion is facing a problem of plenty in the same department.

While the team would be hoping to continue its two-match winning streak on Wednesday, Jasprit Bumrah, the leader of the pace attack, would heave a sigh of relief with the strong back-up options Mumbai has.

As if the form of Jason Behrendorff, the Australian left-arm pacer who joined the team last week, and lanky Caribbean Alzarri Joseph, who registered the best figures by a bowler on his IPL debut in Hyderabad over the weekend, wasn't a good sign, Mumbai Indians has received a boost with the return of Lasith Malinga.

The Lankan slinger missed the last two matches due to commitments in Sri Lanka for a provincial tournament.

With Malinga joining the squad for Tuesday's training, it would be interesting to see MI's pace bowling attack against an in-form Kings batting line-up.

While Kings would bank on K.L. Rahul, Mayank Agarwal and the big unit of Chris Gayle to fire, it would be the battle between the Kings XI bowlers and the home team's batsmen that could turn out to be decisive at the Wankhede Stadium.

Top-order concern

Despite the team having resurrected its campaign, thanks to the bowlers getting into a rhythm and late-order consistently finishing the innings with a flourish, the top-order form has emerged as a concern for MI.

Quinton de Kock, the highest run-getter for Mumbai with 133 runs in five matches, is placed a lowly 21st in the list of top-scorers in this IPL edition.

MI will be hoping for de Kock and Rohit Sharma, who had an issue with his hamstring during practice, to finally give the team a sizzling start, it would be interesting to see if the duo can tackle the wily Mujeeb Ur Rahman at the start of the innings.

Today's match

MUMBAI, 8 PM
MUMBAI INDIANS Vs KINGS XI

HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played : 23
MI **12** | KXIP **11**

*Live on Star Sports 1, 2 &
Select 1 (SD & HD), 8 p.m.*

Pumped up: Mumbai pacer Jason Behrendorff will be raring to take on the Kings XI batsmen after acquitting himself well in his previous outing. • PTI

Rohit hurts hamstring

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Less than a week before the selection of India's World Cup squad, vice-captain Rohit Sharma hurt his right hamstring on the eve of Mumbai Indians' IPL clash against Kings XI Punjab.

The Mumbai Indians captain appeared to have pulled his muscle while training in the outfield at the Wankhede Stadium on Tuesday.

When the 'Hitman' went down writhing in pain, team physiotherapist Nitin Patel rushed to tend to him.

After being back on his feet in a while, Rohit hobbled his way back to the change room and did not return for the remaining session.

While there was no official word on his injury from the MI management, fans will hope the injury isn't serious, considering the countdown for the World Cup has already started.

What is good for Royal Challengers may not be ideal for India

Kohli has two choices — throw everything into the remaining matches and hope to see RCB through, or decide to pull out as captain

BETWEEN WICKETS
SURESH MENON

When a captain loses six straight matches in a tournament, questions are bound to be asked regardless of his international pedigree. Virat Kohli has been leading Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) for seven years now, and in over 100 matches (44 wins, 53 losses), yet his team, regularly seen as one of the favourites haven't won a single title so far. Gautam Gambhir, for one, thinks Kohli has been lucky to keep his job at the top despite his record.

If nothing succeeds like success, nothing succeeds like failure too, and Kohli has two choices before him – throw everything into the remaining matches and hope the points permutations and combinations somehow see RCB through. Or decide quickly to pull out as captain (in India, the powerful decide when they play, lead, or take a blame; selectors and management have little to do with it), maybe even as player with the World Cup just round the corner.

This will ensure he gets a break and appear fresher and baggage-less for the bigger tournament in England. But he will have to be convinced that taking a break isn't the same as running away, for he is a proud man and loves to prove people wrong. What is good for RCB may not necessarily be what is good for Indian cricket right now.

In Test-match cricket, Kohli is just one win away from equalling Mahendra Singh Dhoni's Indian record of 27 wins; his victories have come in 46 Tests, Dhoni's in 60. In ODIs, his 49 wins in 68 matches give him a high percentage (74) of wins, while in T20Is, he has a respectable 12 wins in 22 games. In all formats combined, among those who have led in over 100 matches, Kohli's record of wins (64 percent) is bettered only by Hansie Cronje, Steve Waugh and Ricky Ponting. So why does he struggle with the IPL?

This year, part of the problem is with his players' astonishing fielding and bowling. RCB, according to one calculation, has dropped 14 catches, converting just 58 percent of their chances from the simple to the difficult. They have also bowled the most no-balls. "We should not be bowling three no-balls and eight wides in an innings," said A.B. de Villiers.

New statistical matrices have been able to pinpoint fielding lapses, batting issues and bowling drawbacks. But captaincy mistakes are yet to find similar conversion to easily digestible figures. This, partly because you can only judge a captain by what he does and not by what he ought to have done, and also because converting psychological impact is well nigh impossible.

I suspect that what makes Kohli a good Test captain is the very quality that makes him less than successful in the IPL. It is his intensity. Over a five-day period, his teammates know how to absorb it and handle it without falling apart or letting it affect their performance. Over the shorter game, there is no place to hide. It is the exact reverse of Mahendra Singh Dhoni's style. He is better focused in the shorter game, able to concentrate over the 20 overs each innings takes – while in the five-day game his mind tended to wander and he missed some tricks.

Is Kohli putting pressure on his own players with his unrelenting style, or is that an exaggeration? After all, most of his team have experience of international cricket and the pressure situations that crop up regularly. Why would the captain's intensity affect them adversely? Perhaps it doesn't affect every player. But it must affect the batsmen he is at the crease with, and it seems to distress the bowlers who then make basic mistakes.

Imran Khan, a very good captain (he once won Man-of-the-Match in an international for his captaincy alone), had a similar affect on his players. It took his team a while to find their rhythm under him, and once they did they were good enough to beat the best in the world.

The national team have worked out how to react to Kohli, and let his style stimulate rather than dampen them. Over a period, a team learns how to adjust to its captain's style and make something positive out of it. It is a little more difficult for a team that comes together for a few weeks every year.