



KKR win a cracking final in IPL 7, Saha's ton goes in vain

Description

At the halfway stage of the IPL tournament, Kolkata Knight Riders were definitely not the favourites of this season. They had lost five out of seven league matches and were all set to make an early exit. Or so it seemed, but then they did a turn about, coming back into the race in style, winning 8 matches on the trot including a qualifier. They stormed into the finals defeating table toppers Kings XI Punjab by 28 runs. And today they have an unbeaten 9 match winning streak, again beating Kings XI by 3 wickets to claim the Pepsi IPL trophy, for the second time. The only other team to have won the cup twice is Chennai Super Kings. Chinnaswamy stadium at Bengaluru bled purple tonight with the chants of "Korbo! Lorbo! Jeetbo!" reverberating from all corners.



Wriddhiman Saha became the first batsmen to hit a ton in an IPL final

Winning the toss, Gambhir invited KXIP to bat first, keeping in mind the dry pitch, quick outfield and difficulties of defending any total. KXIP were only too happy to oblige, who were coming into this game with a winning momentum after thrashing Chennai Super Kings in the second qualifier. The architect of their previous win, Virender Sehwag walked amidst loud cheers, but soon returned to the pavillion after giving a thick top edge that was easily taken by the KKR skipper in the fourth over. In walked George Bailey, captain of KXIP, who had promoted himself up the order to take charge. The move didn't pay all that well, as Bailey was bowled out by mystery man Sunil Narine in his very first ball. At the end of the powerplay, KXIP had put on board 32 for 2 with two young Indian batsmen Saha and Vohra at the crease.

The two batsmen put on display some very sensible batting, sneaking singles, rotating strike and just adding runs in trickles. The first six of the match came off Vohra's bat only in the 8th over. And that was the trigger to kickstart two of the finest innings of this season. Vohra and Saha built a solid partnership and were lucky a couple of times too. Saha was dropped at 15 by Narine. Narine's bad luck didn't end there, Vohra was stumped by Uthappa in his delivery, but it was ruled as a no-ball. Amidst high drama at the pitch, slowly and steadily Vohra and Saha scored more than a 100 runs between them. The much needed breakthrough came in the form of Chawla for KKR who broke the partnership of Saha and Vohra.

KXIP did not seem to mind it much, as their star player was the next on crease. Maxwell walked into the pitch amidst loud cheers from the red sea of supporters, and was dismissed for a golden duck by a brilliant catch at short third man by Morkel. He walked back with disbelief written all over his face. On the other end, Saha was mercilessly taking all the bowlers for a ride. Nobody was spared, be it Narine, Chawla or Yadav any and every bad delivery was put over the rope. And in the 19th over, Saha created history by becoming the first batsmen to score a century in an IPL final. At the end of the first innings, KXIP put up a mammoth total of 199 on board with the supposed big hitters of the likes Sehwag, Miller, Maxwell and Bailey scoring only 9 runs among them.



Manish Pandey played an important knock of 94 runs to secure a win for KKR

The target looked imposing and KKR had to play out of their skins to reach past the finishing line. Out walked the skipper and the orange cap holder, on a mission to make possible what seemed impossible. The first shock came in the form of Uthappa's wicket, their most consistent player who had amassed 660 runs this season. Despite the wicket, right from the beginning the KKR batsmen kept up with the asking rate of 10 per over. Gambhir was the next to be dismissed, but KKR seemed to be in a much better position than KXIP having scored 59 runs in the power play. The star player for KKR tonight was Manish Pandey, who played a blinder of an innings. While at one end the wickets kept falling at regular intervals, at the other end Pandey made sure they never went below the asking rate. On three occasions Pandey hit a boundary right after a wicket was taken. Soon Pathan joined the party and the boundaries came pouring in.

But Pathan didn't last for long, a mistimed shot off Karanveer Singh saw the ball landing safely in the hands of Miller. That did not deter Pandey, he hit a six the very next ball. But his innings soon came to an end when he sliced up a delivery off Karanveer Singh over cover, only for Bailey to take an easy catch. Though he departed falling short of a century by 6 runs, his innings had carried forward KKR so very close to the finish line. And they did cross the finish line in style with a four by Chawla off Awana. KKR won the finals by 3 wickets with 3 balls remaining.

The final match of IPL 7 had all the right ingredients, a one of its kind century, a blazing counter innings,



Chawla celebrates after hitting the winning runs

dropped catches, missed run outs and a nail-biting end. It all boiled down to KKR keeping their calm, holding their nerves and pulling off the highest successful chase of any IPL final with a flourish to claim the Pepsi IPL 7 trophy. Manish Pandey was awarded Man of the Match ahead of Saha, for his 94 off 50 which thwarted the spirited attempt of KXIP to win their first trophy.

Photos courtesy: espncricinfo

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