



IPL: RCB to play 5 home matches at Chinnaswamy Stadium, two at Raipur

NEW DELHI: Ending months of suspense, Royal Challengers Bengaluru have confirmed that they will play their home fixtures at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, a venue which saw 11 people lose their lives a day after the franchise won its maiden IPL title last year. However, the defending champions will play only five matches at the venue and will play their remaining two matches at Raipur.

With the IPL season around the corner, there were concerns whether RCB will commit to playing its home matches in Bengaluru. Although the Karnataka state government had given its permission pending security clearance, the onus was on the franchise to stick to the venue which has been its home since its inception in 2008. Being the defending champions RCB will get to host the IPL opening fixture and with the franchise confirming the venue as its home, there is a strong chance that the new season will commence at the Chinnaswamy Stadium.

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In a statement the franchise said: "RCB extends its sincere gratitude to the Government of Karnataka, the Karnataka State Cricket Association and the Karnataka Police for their unwavering guidance, co-operation and support in facilitating the hosting of matches in Bengaluru. The collective efforts to ramp



up infrastructure and safety measures in time for the IPL season have ensured that the defending champions will play the majority of their home games in their home ground."

Since the stampede outside the Chinnaswamy Stadium, the venue hasn't hosted any mainstream cricket. Even with regards to domestic fixtures, the venue has remained out of bounds for the home team Karnataka and after the new regime

led by Venkatesh Prasad took over as the president, the Karnataka State Cricket Association has been co-ordinating with the state government to bring IPL back to the iconic stadium. Since it didn't meet the security standards, the venue wasn't able to host the ICC Women's World Cup as well as the ongoing men's T20 World Cup.

Rajesh Menon, CEO, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, said, "The M. Chin-

naswamy Stadium is more than just our home ground it is where our identity as a team truly comes alive. The energy our fans bring to Bengaluru has always been a driving force for our players, inspiring them through every phase of the game. Our fans have stood by us unconditionally, and they deserve the opportunity to watch their team compete at home. After detailed discussions and completing the necessary due process

around permissions, we are pleased to confirm that RCB will play five matches in Bengaluru. We sincerely thank the Government of Karnataka, the KSCA, and the Karnataka Police for their support in making this possible."

The franchise, which also operates a team in the Women's Premier League, will have new owners after the current ones decided to end their long-standing association with the team.

'You expect more from this Arsenal team': Patrick Vieira after Gunners' scrappy win vs Chelsea



ARSENAL: Arsenal legend Patrick Vieira has said that while he understands the need for Arsenal to score goals from set-pieces in the Premier League as they close in on their first title in 22 years, he was "expecting more from this Arsenal" team. Arsenal are five points ahead of Manchester City (who have a game in hand) as the title race reaches its final third. The two teams will face off in a Premier League clash at the Etihad on April 18. The Gunners managed to overcome Chelsea 2-1 at the weekend to stay in the lead. But the game saw all three goals from both teams being scored off corner kicks, which has come under some scrutiny.

"From the Arsenal point of view, what really matters is the three points. It is really important for them and of course, when you look at the game a little bit more deeper, scoring two goals on the set pieces... it wasn't really an open game as you would have expected. Obviously, Chelsea had a massive part in the game because they were quite well organized defensively. So, it was quite difficult for Arsenal to create chances. But of course, when you are on top of the Champions League table, you are top of the Premier League table, you are in a final in the League Cup and you're still in a FA Cup competition, the expectation is higher and you expect more from this Arsenal football club. On the (attacking) side of the game, creating chances, going forward, and taking risks, I am a little bit disappointed, but what matters for them is to win taking the three points and

I think they did it well today," Vieira said on the Sky Sports Football podcast where he was joined by Manchester City legend Yaya Toure. Vieira played 406 games for the Gunners between 1996 to 2005 and scored 33 goals for them despite being a midfield general. That Invincibles Arsenal team had once gone unbeaten for a whole season and impressed even rival fans with flashy, eye-catching football.

Talking about the current Arsenal team's playing style, Vieira added: "It's not about the style because I think the style is (influenced) by the fact that they didn't win the title for so long. Maybe there is a little bit of exasperation and stress because you want to do well so badly that you are not taking the risks that you were taking at the start of the season. So looking at where they are, a little bit of nervousness, stress, pressure can have an impact on their games. But I believe that there is enough experience, quality, and personality for them to go on the field and to go to win the game."

"There's a pressure—the pressure as a team you want to do well, but there's outside noise as well that you have to manage, you have to control. I think when you're looking at Pep (Guardiola, Manchester City manager) talking about Arsenal and saying that Arsenal are the best team at the moment, that is as well putting a pressure on the shoulders of Arsenal football club and that is part of the game as well.

India women's national cricket team nominated for Laureus World Team of the Year Award

MADRID: The India women's national cricket team have been nominated for the Laureus World Team of the Year Award, becoming the first women's cricket team to earn a place on the prestigious shortlist.

The nomination, confirmed by Laureus Sport on Tuesday, follows a landmark campaign in which India scripted the highest successful run chase in women's ODI history, 339 against Australia in the World Cup semi-final, before clinching their maiden global title with victory over South Africa.

They are joined on the shortlist by a formidable group of teams, including the Oklahoma City Thunder, who claimed their first NBA title

while matching the 1996/97 win tally of the Chicago Bulls (84 wins); Paris Saint-Germain FC, who lifted their maiden UEFA Champions League trophy with a 5-0 win over Inter Milan and completed a six-title haul in 2025; the England women's national football team, who defended their European Championship crown; the McLaren Formula One Team, who retained the Constructors' Championship; and the European Ryder Cup Team, who secured their 16th Ryder Cup title.

The winners will be decided by members of the Laureus World Sports Academy and announced at a gala ceremony at the Palacio de Cibeles in Madrid on April 20.

Among the individual nominees, pole vault world record holder Armand Duplantis, Olympic champion Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, and swimming great Katie Ledecky headline the shortlist across categories.

Duplantis is nominated again for World Sportsman of the Year alongside tennis stars Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner, Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembélé, MotoGP champion Marc Marquez, and Tour de France winner Tadej Pogacar.

In the World Sportswoman of the Year category, McLaughlin-Levrone and Faith Kipyegon are joined by Melissa Jefferson-Wooden, Ledecky, football star Aitana Bonmati, and tennis World No.1 Aryna Sabalenka.

England have better spinners than India: Vaughan

LONDON: Former England captain Michael Vaughan says England have a better spin attack than India and he has a "funny feeling" Harry Brook's side will win Thursday's T20 World Cup semi-final in Mumbai.

India came into the tournament as overwhelming favourites but were beaten by South Africa in the Super 8s phase and stuttered in the group stage. England are yet to produce a complete performance but have progressed to the last four with five successive wins, having come through a series of tight finishes, according to BBC sport.

"They seem to have found a way of winning," Vaughan told the Test Match Special podcast.

rate of 143.82, including a century.

"He obviously wants more runs, but I certainly would rather have Jos Buttler in my team than coming up against him on Thursday night," Curran said. "He's done so well for us over many, many years and he's done well at this ground many, many times as well. So, hopefully, Thursday night is his night, but if it's not, there's no question he's one of the best in the world."

The second semi-final will be played on the central pitch, on the same strip where England lost against West Indies and newcomers Italy beat Nepal to register their maiden win at a World Cup. Significantly, though, the pitch was spin-friendly: spinners took 14 wickets at an economy of 7.19 while fast bowlers took eight wickets at 10.35. While the red-soil pitch will continue to have good bounce, it is understood the degree of turn would not be as much as in the two previous matches played on it, and the ball is likely to skid more. Two days before the semi-final, the pitch was raw mango green.

Curran backs England to play the 'perfect game' and 'silence' Wankhede crowd

MUMBAI: November 10, 2022. Jos Buttler and Alex Hales thrashed the Indian bowlers to mow down a target of 169 with 24 deliveries still in the bank in Adelaide and help England make the final of the T20 World Cup. Buttler's England would go on to win the tournament with Sam Curran bagging the Player-of-the-Tournament award.

Two days out from the third straight semi-final between the teams (the second one was in Guyana in the 2024 T20 World Cup), to be played in Mumbai on March 5, Curran said he hoped England could do an encore of the Adelaide semi and play the "perfect" match and "silence" the Wankhede crowd.

"Everyone's saying when are England going to play the perfect game, that's (Adelaide semis) our perfect game," Curran said on Tuesday afternoon before the team's training session. "So if we can get anything close to that, that'd be great. You kind of look back on fond memories. Jos was our man that day, Jos and Halesy (Alex Hales) and that's just the perfect game. If you want to defend, take

down someone by 10 wickets, we bowled really well, that was a massive Indian crowd as well. So we take a lot of positives. To be honest, I don't care if we play a perfect game or not. I just want to win and get to another World Cup final."

Harry Brook's England have been far from fluent in all the seven matches they have so far played this World Cup. Still, despite having lost the group match in Mumbai against West Indies, they have managed to score wins including three straight victories in the Super Eights.

While Will Jacks, who has won a record four Player-of-the-Match awards, has been their best all-round player, Brook himself is not far behind as the leading run-maker, including scoring the match-winning century against Pakistan in the Super Eight.

"Everyone worries about each individual's form so much," Curran said. "The fact is we have been winning. So I don't think the guys are actually too fussed about personal form. World Cup cricket's so different to bilateral cricket. Everyone worries about individuals

and all this kind of stuff. It's exciting as a group that we haven't fired.

"Everyone's going to be saying on Thursday night, if someone comes off, it's at the end of the day, if England win, everyone's going to be happy. So maybe we just focus on the whole team, which I think we're doing as players."

Despite Curran exuding positivity and confidence in the England dressing room, one important player who has had a miserable World Cup is Buttler, who has scored 62 runs in seven innings including a duck in the last match against New Zealand. On Tuesday, Buttler spent nearly two hours doing batting drills - starting with not moving his feet while facing throwdowns to work on his hand movement, bat swing and head not falling over, followed by the normal batting both facing throwdowns and the bowlers.

Buttler has close affinity to Wankhede having started his IPL career at Mumbai Indians where he played in 2016 and 2017. In 31 T20 innings at the venue, Buttler has scored 901 runs at average of 32.46 and strike

Tanisha Crasto-Dhruv Kapila register India's first win at All England

MALAYSIA: India's top mixed doubles pair of Tanisha Crasto-Dhruv Kapila registered India's first win at the All England Open with a 21-17, 21-19 win over Malaysians Hoo Pang Ron-Cheng Su Yin to progress to the second round at the Utilita Arena on Tuesday.

India's top pairing having slipped to World No 21, were up against one of the five promising Malaysian pairs who have mushroomed in the wake of the iconic Chen-Toh winning the world title. Hoo-Cheng are World No 23, but considered one of the emerging talented pairs. However Dhruv Kapila, who has been nursing niggles for some time now, burst out of the blocks and used the long flat drives to go on a 6-point rally in the opening

set that scripted the tone for the rest of the match.

Tanisha, at times error prone, however was scythe when she went across at the net, but both Indians moved well to cross the first hurdle at an arena that played slow on the day.

The Indians kept things compact, but allowed errors to creep in as the Malaysians went from 12-20 to 17-20, and the Indians couldn't finish off the first set. But having finally put it across, the Indians settled into rhythm - making peace with the chaos of their own up-and-down game.

In the second, things remained tight, and a 14-11 lead didn't amount to much, as the Malaysians caught up, but Dhruv was finding winners down the middle

and Tanisha followed with her pecking prods.

The Indians were in danger of being dragged into a decider, at 17-19, after a couple of mis-hits. But the drive game served the Indians well, before Dhruv fanned out to the back and even brought the shuttle back into play with a pirouette and forced a wide error from the Malaysians to get match point. A Tanisha push though sealed it for India.

Earlier, Malvika Bansod lost 21-11, 21-7 to Chen Yu-fei.

Lakshya Sen was battling World No 1 Shi Yuqi in a thriller, having taken the opening set 23-21, and narrowly missing out on sealing the second making the Chinese toil for 21-19 in the second.

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