

# **Ee Sala Cup Namde: The Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Maiden Title in the Indian Premier League**

**By Aarav Dalal**

The Indian Premier League, IPL for short, evokes a unique sense of patriotism in every Indian's heart. The IPL, since its conception in 2008, stands as the most coveted and competitive domestic sports league in India. The cricket tournament features 10 teams, each representing a major city or state. Team owners range from Bollywood stars to high profile business leaders and private equity firms. According to GlobeNewswire, the 2025 edition of the IPL reports \$1.21 billion in revenue with a significant portion from broadcasting rights, which is no surprise given the fan following the league garners.

The Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) cultivates greatness. The team has given a stage to many of the greats of cricket and provided a platform for many rookie players to get noticed by the national team. The fabric of RCB's identity lies in the legacy of its players like Virat Kohli, Chris Gayle and AB de Villiers. But one player stands out as the talisman of RCB: Virat Kohli. Through all 18 years of the IPL Virat Kohli – whose iconic jersey number is also 18 – has anchored the RCB batting order with integrity and unwavering resolve.

The fan base of the team – affectionately the 12<sup>th</sup> man army – has supported Kohli and the men in red through all the ups and downs, rallying the chant *Ee Sala Cup Namde* (“This year the cup will be ours). From the 2024 season when the team qualified for the playoffs, proving

statisticians and prediction models like ESPNcricinfo's Forecaster's 0.3% to 1.5% wrong; to the crushing 2016 final where the team lost a winning game and their chance at their maiden title.



*Virat Kohli (left) celebrating with Chris Gayle (right)*

*Source: NDTV Sports*



*AB de Villiers Raising his bat after scoring Half a century*

*Source: Times of India*

The 2025 edition was no bed of roses. Led by captain Rajat Patidar, the Royal Challengers had a strong start to the tournament and stayed consistently among the top five teams points-wise. This year, things started to look up for the 12<sup>th</sup> man army! However, on April 22, 2025, the Pahalgam Terror attack led to a flare-up along the India-Pakistan border. Prompting the Board of the IPL to halt play for a week, redraw the match schedule and tighten security at venues. This one week hiatus had a deleterious effect on the overall competition. With the delay in matches, many high-profile international players like Mitchell Starc and Jos Butler had to leave due to their national duties. Other international players citing safety concerns left nearly every team in a pickle. Despite losing Lungi Ngidi and Jacob Bethell, RCB managed to rearrange its players and continue to exert dominance.

On June 3, 2025, the Punjab Kings faced the Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Two teams, neither of which had ever lifted the IPL trophy, prepared to face each other at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. 2025 so far has marked a year of firsts for many teams across the sporting sphere: Crystal Palace finally defeating Manchester United and winning its first FA Cup; Newcastle United defeating Liverpool F.C. to win its first major domestic trophy in 70 years. The aforementioned cricket matchup had many fans wondering about whose drought was about to end - the Royal Challengers or the Kings?

The final was a nerve-shredder, worthy of the wait. The Kings won the toss and decided to field. Steady contributions from Kohli (43 off 35) and Liam Livingstone (25 off 15), plus a late flourish by Jitesh Sharma (24 off 10) got RCB to a strong start. Punjab's bowlers struck consistently— Arshdeep Singh (3/40) and Kyle Jamieson (3/48). Leading the attack allowed the Kings to maintain pressure on the Challengers' batting order. Nevertheless, the depth in the

Challengers' batting order ensured a fairly strong finish, closing with a score of 190/9. The Kings, unnerved, began strongly too. Prabhsimran Singh (26 off 22) and Josh Inglis (39 off 23) kept the score board ticking. The turning point came in the middle overs through a match-defining spell from Krunal Pandya, whose 4-0-17-2 choked the flow of runs and shifted the game in RCB's favor. Still, the Kings' Shashank Singh held his own with an unbeaten 61 off 30 balls, keeping Punjab in the hunt deep into the chase. However, Bhuvaneshwar Kumar (2/38) and Yash Dayal (1/18) helped seal the deal in the final overs, restricting PBKS to 184/4. As the final ball was delivered, MG Road traffic froze under a storm of red smoke; autorickshaw roofs doubled as drums; local news counted nearly 300,000 fans between Chinnaswamy Stadium (RCB's home ground) and Cubbon Park; fireworks were set off as the city turned into a carnival!

RCB HAD DONE IT!



*Retired Chris Gayle and AB de Villiers, with Virat Kohli as RCB wins their maiden title Source: Cricket*

*Country*

With this win, Rajat Patidar’s leadership and a united team effort won RCB their maiden IPL trophy that included a record eight wins away from home, and an unforgettable night in Ahmedabad! The symmetry is cinematic: the 18<sup>th</sup> IPL, an 18-year wait for a trophy, and delivered by the talisman who dons the number 18.



*Teary Virat Kohli and Rajat Patidar lifting the trophy Source: Mint*

Kohli, now thirty-six years old, has already stepped away from Test cricket in May and gently hints, “the finish line sits in sight” for the shorter formats as well. When Patidar lifts the silverware and passes it straight to his senior, Bengaluru acknowledges a curtain call, written in golden ink. This breakthrough closes one of sport’s most discussed title droughts and gifts Kohli the only accolade missing from his star-studded resume.

Supporters know that auctions, age and player-form will reshape next year's squad, yet the chant no longer needs future tense. The cup stands in Bengaluru's cabinet, and the city savors every resonant echo of *Ee Sala Cup Namde Namdu*. (*This year the cup ~~will be~~ is ours*).