

# Punjab Win opening IPL win over Kolkata

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**Online Desk:** Sri Lanka's Bhanuka Rajapaksa smashed 50 to set up a seven-run win for Punjab Kings in their rain-hit opening Indian Premier League match against Kolkata Knight Riders on Saturday. The left-handed Rajapaksa's 32-ball knock and a late charge by big-buy Sam Curran, who hit an unbeaten 26, powered Punjab to 191-5 after being invited to bat first in Mohali. Left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh led the bowling charge with three wickets to restrict two-time champions Kolkata to 146-7 in 16 overs when rain stopped play and Punjab won by the DLS method.

Rajapaksa set the tone for the team's domination with skipper Shikhar Dhawan, who made 40, in an 86-run second-wicket stand before the Sri Lankan big-hitter departed. Curran, a left-handed all-rounder who became the most expensive IPL player when Punjab paid \$2.23 million in the December auction, proved his worth with a 17-ball blitz including two sixes. Punjab replaced Rajapaksa with fast bowler Rishi Dhawan under the new "impact player" rule among other innovations in the T20 tournament.

The impact player, who can only be an Indian unless the team has fewer than four overseas players in their XI, is chosen from one of five substitutes listed with the team. Other new rules include captains being allowed to announce their XI after the toss and teams being able to review umpires' decisions on no-balls and wides using the Decision Review System. A nearly 30-minute floodlight failure delayed the start of the Kolkata innings, which was soon hurt by a double strike in one over by Arshdeep.

Afghanistan's Rahmanullah Gurbaz and skipper Nitish Rana also departed before Venkatesh Iyer and Andre Russell, who hit 35, attempted to take charge of the chase in a 50-run stand. But Curran took down the big-hitting Russell with his left-arm pace and Arshdeep got his third when he sent back Iyer for 34 to derail the chase.

The 16th edition of the money-spinning league, which began in 2008 and has risen to become the world's richest cricket tournament, runs till May 28 with 74 matches.