

Knight Riders snatch second IPL title in three years

THE Kolkata Knight Riders clinched their second Indian Premier League (IPL) title in three years by defeating the Kings XI Punjab by three wickets at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Banga-

lore yesterday.

Put in to bat, Kings XI were powered to a massive total of 199/4 by wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha, who hammered an unbeaten 115 from just 55 deliv-

eries which included 10 fours and eight sixes.

He was given good support in the middle by Manan Vohra (67 from 52 balls).

In reply, the Knight Riders man-

aged the victory with only three balls left to spare, after Manish Pandey hit 94 from 50 balls and Yusuf Pathan 36 from 22 balls, including four sixes.

— *Indo-Asian News Service*

Cronje breaks SA record

DAVID ISAACSON

JOHAN Cronje broke Johan Fourie's 27-year-old SA mile record when he clocked 3min 50.70sec in the US on Saturday.

Cronje, the 1500m world championship medallist from Moscow last year, was competing in the Bowerman Mile — a few strides longer than 1600m — at the Eugene leg of the Diamond League.

It was a star-studded field; nine of the 16 entrants boasted silverware from the Olympics, world champs and world indoors, while another three had medals from African and European championships.

Cronje was more than three seconds off the pace, finishing ninth in a lightning race where 10 of the 14 finishers clocked national records or personal bests.

"The guys were flying today," Cronje tweeted afterwards. "At least I managed to sneak in a [national record] ... at the back."

Ayanleh Souleiman, the reigning world indoor 1500m champion, won in a Diamond League and Djibouti record of 3:47.32.

Commonwealth Games 1500m champion Silas Kiplagat of Kenya ended second in a 3:47.88 personal best, and Aman Wote was third in an Ethiopian mark of 3:48.60.

Morocco's Abdalaati Iguider, James Kiplagat Magut of Kenya, his countryman Collins Cheboi, American Matthew Centrowitz and Taoufik Makhloufi of Algeria all posted career bests, while Henrik Ingebrigsten of Norway broke his national record.

Asbel Kiprop, Kenya's double world champion and 2008 Olympic champion, was one of the few not to achieve any form of a milestone, ending seventh in 3:50.26.

Fourie, one of SA's stars of the 1980s when local runners were barred from international competition because of apartheid, set the previous national mile record in Port Elizabeth in March 1987.

In the 100m, Simon Magakwe finished last in 10.13sec, while the top five all dipped below the 9.98 SA mark he posted in Pretoria in April. American Justin Gatlin won in a new world season's best of 9.76, ahead of his compatriot Michael Rodgers in 9.80.

Cheerio, Mr Humility

French Top 14 title caps career for Bok flank

CRAIG RAY

WHILE flyhalf Jonny Wilkinson received most of the plaudits by leading French club Toulon to the domestic league title against Castres at the weekend, one man stood quietly on the fringes where he accepted the gratitude of his team-mates.

Lock Danie Rossouw, like Wilkinson, played his last professional game in the 18-10 win for Toulon, crowning a remarkable career with yet another title.

Toulon had won the last two European Cups but the French Top 14 title remained elusive until Saturday. The star-studded team that includes Bryan Habana, Bakkies Botha, Matt Giteau, Juan Smith and Steffon Armitage fulfilled their ambition to be French champions.

Wilkinson contributed 15 points from four penalties and an almost regulation drop goal, but his job was made possible by the intense work of the tight five. And Rossouw was central to that contribution.

Rossouw, 35 (36 on Thursday), will ride off into the sunset after 62 Tests for the Boks, which included 10 tries. He has one of the most illustrious CVs in the history of the game.

His monumental trophy haul began with the modest Vodacom Cup in 2001, when he was an early member of the Bulls team that would go on to dominate provincial rugby for the next decade.

Three Currie Cups (one shared win) and three Super rugby titles followed. He was picked for the Boks in 2001, but never made it on to the field due to injury.

He was selected again in 2003 as part of Rudolf Straeuli's team for the World Cup, and by 2007 he was a key figure in Jake White's squad that went on to win the Webb Ellis Trophy.



SUNSET: After helping to win the French Top 14 Toulon's Danie Rossouw bows out of rugby with one of the most illustrious CVs in the game
Picture: GETTY IMAGES/DAVID ROGERS

He would win the Tri-Nations, a World Cup, and a British & Irish Lions series before a Japanese league and cup double at Suntory. Toulon brought more success

for Rossouw — the European Cup in 2013 and 2014.

Rossouw's value was that he could play No 8, blindside flank and in both lock positions.

"Danie spent a lot of his junior rugby as a flyhalf, so he understood good running lines," said former Bulls assistant coach John McFarland.

Nadal, Djokovic rivalry exposes hidden aspects of tennis

THE red clay of Paris is the focus of the tennis world's attention this week, as Rafael Nadal aims for a ninth Roland Garros title.

Remarkably, for a man who in on a 31-match winning streak at the venue, Nadal is not the outright favourite. He shares that distinction with Novak Djokovic, who has become to Nadal, of late, what the Spaniard has been to Swiss Roger Federer. Djokovic carries a four-match winning streak against Nadal into the tournament.

Tennis's intrigue is driven by specific match-ups, perhaps more than any other sport bar boxing. Strengths probe weaknesses, cancel out other strengths, and the result is often determined by the "fit" between opposing players' games. This is clearly evident in this golden era of tennis, where Nadal's strengths dovetail almost perfectly into the small weakness-

es offered by Federer's game.

The same is not true, however, for the Djokovic-Nadal rivalry, and how this plays out may determine whose name is inscribed onto the La Coupe des Mousquetaires on Sunday. In the case of the widely expected (and hoped for) Nadal-Djokovic final, listen to commentators talking about patterns of play that suit Djokovic's game, but not Nadal's.

Perhaps the most significant one is that Nadal usually relies on a heavily top-spun forehand, which he prefers to play cross-court to a right-handed opponent's supposedly weaker backhand.

This tactic is so effective because of Nadal's unrivalled ability to spin the ball — statistics show that Nadal generates around 3000 revolutions per minute on at least 50% of his topspin shots, with maximum spin in excess of 3500 revs per

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ROSS TUCKER



minute. By comparison, his rivals hover in the 1500 to 3000 rpm range two-thirds of the time.

The effect of this spin difference is significant. Nadal's heavily spun shots viciously rear up on his opponent, making for a very awkward and difficult to control return.

The spin difference means that opponents play Nadal's shots around 50cm to 80cm higher than any other opponents. This effect is amplified by the steeper, and often less predictable, bounce on clay,

partly explaining his dominance.

For Federer, this violently spinning, kicking ball on his elegant but fragile one-handed backhand has proved a conundrum almost impossible to solve, to the tune of a 23-10 lead (and 13-2 on clay) for Nadal.

In addition, Nadal's left-handedness allows him to slice his serve wide to Federer's backhand, moving Federer around, controlling the point, and probing the weakness until, simply put, it breaks down.

Nadal admits as much in his autobiography, when he talks about his default Federer tactic — "attack his backhand". When playing Djokovic, however, Nadal faces a completely different proposition.

Djokovic has two attributes that allow him to negate Nadal's heavily spun topspin forehand. The first is his exceptional mobility, borne of flexibility that allows him to cover the court aggressively and hit

strongly from stretched positions.

A highly-regarded international tennis coach told me that Djokovic changed the game because he covers the baseline in three, rather than four, steps and can hit powerfully even when off-balance.

Secondly, Djokovic uses his double-handed backhand to take the ball on the rise and cover Nadal's vicious spin. This allows him to be more proactive, taking balls earlier and thus controlling the baseline.

His ability to hit down the line means that Nadal's preferred tactic of camping on his forehand side and driving his opponent further back, leaves him vulnerable to attack on his backhand, something Djokovic does to great effect.

Look out for these patterns in the final, whether Nadal, Djokovic, or both, are playing in it. These are the hidden aspects of the sport, and they may decide the outcome.

#TO THE POINT

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