

## SAURASHTRA PREMIER LEAGUE Another accomplished Chapter of SCA



The first edition of SPL (Saurashtra Premier League) was inaugurated by none other than the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Vijaybhai Rupani on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2019 alongwith former Hon. Secretary of BCCI & Saurashtra Cricket Association Shri Niranjnabhai Shah in presence of other dignitaries. There was a kind of buzz, enthusiasm and also some nervousness at the beginning of SPL. The players, the officials and the people of this region had got something of their own like an IPL version and everyone was looking forward to it.

SPL Season 1 has had five teams consisting players of all age and repute from this very land. All teams had accomplished and qualified support staff. Playing under lights on SCA stadium in presence of thousands of spectators was going to be a great challenge for young cricketers of Saurashtra. Rubbing shoulders and sharing dressing rooms with the renowned players like Cheteshwar Pujara, Jaydev Unadkat, Sheldon Jackson, Arpit Vasavada, Dharmendra Jadeja, Kamlesh Makvana and Sagar Jogiani was in fact another huge advantage for the generation next. The kind of platform required to showcase the talent at the global level was in front of all the aspiring cricketers of Saurashtra. Addition to it, it was to be live telecast on Star Sports 1 as well as Hotstar.

There was a nerve and excitement in each team and the owners of the team to do well and make a mark in the first ever SPL. The tournament's Governing Council under able guidance of Mr Niranjn Shah made no stones unturned to make SPL a brand of pride, prestige and glory. Mr. Niranjn Shah with his admin team was churning the idea to start one of the most popular and important tournaments of Saurashtra. And SPL season 1 made his and the team dream fulfilled. Televising live on Star Sports and Hotstar, apt commentators and having top professionals to run the show was the masterstroke. Updating the SPL website with scores, news, player's profiles, point table, strike rate, net run rate in real-time was a commendable effort and achievement. The word started spreading and the turn up on the stadium started increasing with each game passing. Having no gate money for the people to come and watch SPL encouraged people to come with their families and friends. The teams and its players also lived to the expectations as the games got to close finish. All the keenly fought league games with notable performances from the players of each team generated lots of interest and pride not only in franchise but also in fan following of each team.

It has been proudly noted that SPL has the largest number of people watching the final game live on the ground in comparison to other state run T-20 premier league tournaments. More than 21000 people were present in SCA stadium when Chetan Sakariya of Sorath Lions in a nail biter finish of the final game of SPL, bowled that unforgettable spell with hattrick to clinch the title for his team in the dying moments. He was rightly declared Man of the tournament for his outstanding performance throughout the SPL. Without a doubt, the final game between Sorath Lions and Zalawad Royals will remain in the memories of all who witnessed that game on 22<sup>nd</sup> May night. When Sagar Jogiani, the captain of Sorath Lions received the beautiful SPL trophy from Shri Vajubhai Vala- the Hon'ble Governor, Karnataka State; the SCA stadium erupted in cheers and joy. People with smile and tears of joy could be seen from the dressing rooms, the ground, the stands and the SCA office.

SPL Season 1 had offered everything: remarkable performances, great sportsman spirit, abled match officials, electrifying atmosphere, stunning music, superb live coverage, exceptional administration and above all great enthusiasm of sporty spectators.

The task was accomplished, a memory created and legacy been formed. The brand SPL can only get bigger and better with times, and so is the responsibility of us all.

**- By PRAKASH BHATT**

**(Former Player and Captain of Saurashtra Ranji trophy team)**

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