

IFA Shield: Real Kashmir FC wins thriller for back-to-back title triumphs

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KOLKATA: Real Kashmir FC showed tremendous resilience to pull off a stunning 2-1 win over a spirited Sreenu Deccan FC and lift their second successive IFA Shield title here on Wednesday.

The David Robertson-coached side endured a below-par outing in the first half as the I-League debutants from Vizag dominated with their superior tactical and technical display, with a 30th-minute strike by their Colombian centre-forward David Castaneda Munoz.

Deccan FC staved off some valiant attacks by RKFC in the second half and all they had to do was to see through the final three minutes to cap their dream journey with a maiden title on debut.

But their inexperience came to the fore as RKFC made a dramatic turnaround riding on their dependable Spaniard and Scottish duo of Fran Gonzalez and Mason Lee Robertson who struck one each to help their side emerge winners.

In the last edition too, RKFC had pulled off an identical 2-1 win over George Telegraph with their goalkeeper Mithun Samanta saving a penalty in the clos-



REAL KASHMIR FC
124th IFA SHIELD 2021

CHAMPIONS

ing minutes.

The club's elated owner, Sandeep Chattoo, dedicated the win to the die-hard fans and supporters of RKFC in the valley.

"The boys have made Kashmir proud. Indeed it's a glory that will bring lots and lots of cheers to the supporters of RKFC back in the valley," Chattoo told PTL.

"Three local boys were playing in the squad. It gives me immense pleasure and all kudos to the team for keeping the flag of Snow Leopards high and flying despite all odds."

"A team as young as five years old has made history after a decade by clinching the IFA shield twice in a row. I would also like to

thank coach David and must say that my belief in my coach is impeccable."

The Fernando Santiago Varela-coached outfit, which was the latest entrant in this year's I-League and was launched less than six months ago, dominated the proceedings early on.

Their attacking midfielder Girik Kholas set it up from the left as David tapped the ball brilliantly and turned it around to fire in a powerful right-footer to give Deccan the early advantage and score his fourth goal of the tournament.

In the second half, RKFC stepped it up but could not convert their chances with Thoi Singh missing two sitters in front of the goalmouth.

In the 66th minute, Thoi squandered a fine opportunity when he was set up brilliantly by a Mason throw-in but Thoi's shot hit the upright.

Time was fast running out

for RKFC with the match getting into the second-half stoppage time as Sanchez brought up the equaliser in the 90+3rd minute to take the match into the extra time.

It was Mason who set it up with a clinical centre from the right as Sanchez chested the ball before shooting from an acute angle.

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