**Asia Lions start strong, defeat India Maharajas by nine runs in Legends League Cricket (LLC) Masters Opener**

**Doha, Qatar, March 10, 2023: The first match of the Skyexch.net LLC Masters ended with Asia Lions coming out victorious over the India Maharajas by nine runs.**

**First Innings – Asia Lions:**

**Earlier, the Asia Lions won the toss and elected to bat first. India Maharajas’ opening bowling pair Ashok Dinda and Irfan Pathan struck early dismissing Tillakaratne Dilshan for 5 runs and Asghar Afghan for 1 run of 2 balls in quick succession. Misbah-ul-Haq walked onto the pitch following the two dismissals and added some momentum to the innings. Misbah got into the groove hitting Stuart Binny for six over mid-wicket and followed it up with a four in the following over off Dinda. At the end of the powerplay, the Lions stood at 45/2.**

**Upul Tharanga was struggling at the other end to find any timing whatsoever then he chipped one directly to Suresh Raina in the covers but to his respite, Binny overstepped and Tharanga got a lifeline. While on the other end, Misbah continued on his merry way scoring runs freely. At the halfway mark the score stood at 83/2.**

**The last 10 overs started with not much change. While Upul Tharanga struggled to score freely he was given another lifeline as Stuart Binny dropped a catch off Harbhajan’s bowling. At the beginning of the 13th over, Misbah brought up his first half-century off 35 balls.**

**With the advent of the 14th over, the Lions started switching gears as they took Harbhajan’s third over for 18 runs with two sixes in the same over. After a scratchy first over, Parvinder Awana who came in as the impact substitution for Dinda was again brought into the attack. This time a leg cutter did the job for him, as a struggling Tharanga mistimed another shot straight into the safe hands of Mohammad Kaif ending a 108-run partnership off just 77 balls. Tharanga scored 40 off 39 balls. Tharanga’s dismissal meant captain Shahid Afridi came into bat. Afridi looked dangerous as he tried to accelerate the scoring further but it was yet again Awana who struck as Afridi tried one scoop too many, looping a simple catch to Harbhajan. Afridi scored 12 off 8. Soon after Afridi, it was Misbah who perished to the gentle medium-pace of Binny holding out at long-on to Suresh Raina after scoring 73 off 50 balls. Awana who was the impact player for the Maharajas ended with figures of 2/31 from his four overs.**

**The final over was again given to Binny and he struck again as Razzaq top-edged one to Awana earning him his second wicket. The Lions ended with a score of 165/6. Binny also ended with two wickets while Dinda and Irfan Pathan got one each.**

**Second Innings – India Maharajas:**

India Maharajas got off to a disastrous start as Robin Uthappa scooped one off the bowling of Sohail Tanvir at the score of zero. The first over turned out to be a maiden over. After losing the first wicket it was up to Gautam Gambhir and Murali Vijay to consolidate. Gambhir started opening up first as he scored two fours of Tanvir’s second over and looked on-point with his timing. Gambhir and Vijay continued in style and at the end of the powerplay the score stood at 49/1.

Immediately after the powerplay Vijay gave away his wicket holding out in the deep off the bowling of Tillakaratne Dilshan. While Gambhir was playing some glorious shots, the new batsman Suresh Raina didn’t trouble the scorers and was caught behind on Thisara Perera’s bowling, scoring just three runs. Gambhir continued playing a Captain’s innings and brought up his fifty in the 13th over and immediately after in an attempt to hit Razzaq’s full-toss for a six was caught by Perera, scoring 52 off 39 balls. The following batsman Yusuf Pathan started his fireworks but it was cut short by Sohail Tanvir as he cleaned him up. To keep in touching distance of the required run rate Kaif also wanted to accelerate but was caught in the deep off Isuru Udana’s bowling. At the beginning of 16 overs, Maharajas looked in trouble at 126-6.

With just two overs left and 25 runs to get disaster again struck the Maharajas as Stuart Binny was run-out for just eight runs. After hitting a six, Irfan Pathan was bowled for 19 runs by Tanvir. It was finally too much to do for the tail and the Maharajas could only amass 156-8.

For the Lions, Tanvir was the star performer with the ball picking up 3/27 in his four.

The next match of the Skyexch.net LLC Masters will be between the India Maharajas and the World Giants from 8:00 p.m. IST and 5:30 p.m. AST on March 11, 2023. It will be broadcast live on the Star Sports Network and can be streamed on Disney+ Hotstar, and FanCode.