

**Bangalore**

England players attracted megabucks bids in the Indian Premier League auction Monday, with all-rounder Ben Stokes setting a new record for a foreigner by joining the Rising Pune Supergiants for more than \$2 million.

England pace bowler Tymal Mills was the big surprise as he went to the Royal Challengers Bangalore for \$1.8m, even though he has only played four Twenty20 internationals.

The winning bids for Stokes and Mills dwarfed the \$300,000 shelled out by the Kings XI Punjab to secure the services of England's limited-overs captain Eoin Morgan for the T20 tournament, which begins in April.

Stokes attracted multiple bids from the rival franchises competing in the eight-team tournament before the gavel finally came down after Pune put in a bid of 145m rupees (around 2.16m US dollars).

The winning bid shattered the previous record paid for a foreign player, which was set in 2014 when the Delhi Daredevils shelled out 90m rupees for former England captain Kevin Pietersen.

But it is still short of the 160 million rupees that the Royal Challengers Bangalore paid for the Indian batsman Yuvraj Singh in 2015.

While a percentage of the auction fee goes to the player's national board, Stokes, England's newly anointed Test vice-captain, is now in line to make more in just seven weeks than he would in a whole year of cricket for the England

# Stokes sold for record \$2.16m at IPL



England's Tymal Mills

team. It was not immediately clear whether Stokes will play the whole tournament or leave towards the end, which would result in a reduced pay cheque, as England are due to play two ODI matches against Ireland in May.

Pune coach Stephen Fleming admitted it was something of a "gamble" to pay so much for a player with a history of injury problems, but that Stokes will add extra flair to a team that already has Australia captain Steve Smith and ex-Indian skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni in its ranks.

**Afghan first**

While Stokes had been expected to attract big bids, the fee for Mills was unexpected but underlines his form on England's recent tour of India, when he was his side's most economical fast bowler.

Bangalore have no shortage of batting talent with Indian skipper Virat Kohli and South Africa's AB de Villiers already on board.

But Mills' signing should address the lack of a top-quality fast bowler for last year's beaten finalists.

Other players to hit

the jackpot included New Zealand seamer Trent Boult and South Africa's Kagiso Rabda who were both sold for around 50 million rupees each for Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Daredevils respectively.

The auction also saw the first Afghan players to be signed up to the tournament, with Rashid Khan and Mohammad Nabi going to Sunrisers Hyderabad for 40 million and three million respectively.

While most of India's big name players are already attached to franchises, several

newcomers bagged lucrative deals such as Karn Sharma (Mumbai Indians - 32 million rupees) and T. Natarajan (Kings XI Punjab - 30 million rupees).

The IPL, which was first held in 2008, begins on April 5 and runs until May 21. (AFP)



Ben Stokes playing a shot

## Merida merchandise on sale

**Manama**

Fans of the Bahrain Merida Pro Cycling Team can now buy the official apparel and merchandise of the team online, thanks to the collaboration with All4cycling.com, which is a benchmark for cycling lovers due to the large variety of items available.

To access the page reserved to the team, visit the official website [www.teambahrainmerida.com](http://www.teambahrainmerida.com), click in the button "SHOP" in the list at the top and be automatically redirected to the official store of BAHRAIN MERIDA Pro Cycling Team.

Fans of the team, that is lead by captain Vincenzo Nibali, can find a large variety of authentic items, identical to the apparel worn by pro cyclists: the official Sportful racing kit, accessories like the Rudy Project gold helmet and



A screen shot of the webpage displaying Merida merchandise sunglasses, lifestyle clothing by Joma and merchandising with special gadgets like a pin with the team logo and the original jersey shaped cushion. you won't miss steep discounts and get your dream products to distinguish yourself during riding or free time.

Entering the store, fans can immediately and easily access different segments and see new items and offers. On the first page are the special offers, so

## Alpha Fire thrash Sprite

**DT News Network Manama**

Alpha Fire Bahrain overwhelmed Sprite CC by 132 runs in the latest matches of the BCL 25 Overs Golden League at the Busaiten Grounds in Muharraq.

Batting first, Alpha Fire scored 190 for eight in 25 overs with the main scorers behind Ruvinde Kelly (53) and Ruvinde (34) with Aswaq (three for 39) the best of the bowlers.

Sprite were then bowled out for a measly 58 with Zeeshan (12) the only one offering resistance as Lalith (three for six) emerged as the pick of the bowlers.

In another match, Fateh Curtain beat Kordal CC by five wickets with the latter dismissed for just 111 as Ali (35) top scored and Nadeem (three for 33) being the best of the bowlers.

In reply, Fateh Curtain reached the target scoring 113 for five in 18.1 overs thanks to fine knocks by Arslan (34) and Zahid (27) with Farzan (two for 17) the best of the bowlers.



Ruvinde Kelly

### Other results:

- 1) **Safetech Matrix** 178/8 in 25 (Priyesh 48, Jegan 44, Slok 2/21) bt **Young Blaster** 78/10 (Siddharth 21, Arun 4/13, Nithin 3/19) by 100 runs.
- 2) **Union Group** 126/10 (Javed 25, Irshad 3/22, Shafi 2/21) bt **Rock Star** 112/9 (Deepu 21, Sadkath 21, Touseef 2/9) by 14 runs.
- 3) **Tornado A** 66/8 in 16.1 (Nithin 19, Vijayn 3/14) bt **Friends XI** 65/10 (Vijayan 12, Gigin 4/6) by 2 wickets.
- 4) **Tornado Riders** 130/10 (Vijesh 44, Manu 34, Sanju 3/9) bt **Rising Star** 105/10 (Sanju 20, Manu 4/19, Ashok 3/14) by 25 runs.
- 5) **Royal Blaster** 65/1 in (Manas 34no) bt **Karnataka Strikers** 64/10 (Pradeep 24, Mahbub 5/16, Joby 4/15) by 9 wickets.
- 6) **Bulls** 174/9 in 25 (Sanjay 31, Chandrasekar 30, Aamir 3/31) bt **GT Abdulaal** 46/10 (Aamir 16, Joel 5/3, Vinoy 3/9) by 128 runs.
- 7) **Riffa Arabian Oryxes** 262/7 in 25 overs (Salman 64, Irfan 45, Imran 30) bt **SNB** 124/10 (Fateh 27, Ashiq 5/24, Riaz 3/29) by 138 runs.
- 8) **Muharraaq Eagles** 172/10 (Ahmed 29, Waqas 28, Sanjay 4/12) bt **Thunder Bolt** 150/8 (Dhawal 48, Waqas 3/19, Imran 3/26) by 22 runs.
- 9) **Titans** 103/8 in 23.1 (Zeeshan 35, Juzer 3/17) bt **Lions XI** 102/10 (Mahir 23, Rameez 3/19 Shiji 3/30) by 2 wickets.
- 10) **G4S Legends** 94/6 in 19.1 (Prashanth 33, Sameer 2/17) bt **BMMI** 93/10 (Samar 19, Arif 4/30, Manu 2/6) by 4 wickets.