

Hosur youth to represent KKR in IPL



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R. Sanjay Yadav discovered the leather ball by chance. Until then, Sanjay wielded his cricket bat on a tennis ball. There's a suppressed giggle as he recounts that time. Born in Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh and raised in Hosur in Tamil Nadu, Sanjay will represent Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the IPL.

On February 20, Sanjay was bid by the KKR for the IPL. He was selected at a base price of Rs. 10 lakh. Over night, Sanjay found himself part of the team with the global and

national sports icons that he had seen only on TV. But, like all successes, the road to here was an arduous one.

Sanjay's father Ram Singh Yadav was employed in Hosur. So, he found it fit to move his family - wife Maya Devi, five-year-old Sanjay and other three siblings to Hosur from Gorakhpur. Theirs was a modest upbringing on the earning of Mr. Singh. "But, my mother and father never discouraged us," says Sanjay. His younger brother is a league player representing Karaikudi Kallais.

"Unlike his brother, who has represented the State under various levels, Sanjay had never really seen success. But his game was so good and he was so disciplined that he was chosen," says M. Premnath, who ran the Future India Cricket Academy in Hosur.

"To be playing alongside the icons, both global and national, who he had seen only on TV must be a great feeling," he adds.

"I used to play on the school ground and then with my brother with tennis ball."

But, when he moved to Maharishi Vidya Mandir School here, his way with the bat was spotted by his PT teacher. He invited Sanjay to join him for leather ball practice. "That's when I discovered the leather ball," says Sanjay.

Providence is drawn by hard work, it is said. With Sanjay, that held true. Somewhere in his pre-teens, he was once again spotted during a tournament by Mr. Premnath. Sanjay religiously took to his coaching, but dropped off for a few months after he could not pay the fee. "Premnath sir came home and asked me to come for free and I did," he says.

The Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL) came as a boon for him, says Mr. Premnath. Today, a II year B.Sc (Statistics) student of Loyola college, Chennai, Sanjay represents Tiruvallur Veerans and has been II division player for TI Cycles.

"Usually, the IPL selections are made from first division players. But, Sanjay's game was so good, that he made to the Ranji Probables camp," says Mr. Premnath. The TNPL had asked Premnath and Sanjay to apply for IPL.

"We just filled the form and quoted a base price of Rs. 10 lakh," says the coach. Soon after, of the 799 players, 351 were short-listed and Sanjay's name was 351st on the list.

Then came the final auction, where Sanjay figured among the 66 players bid by teams. This league player, who had never represented the State, was picked up by the KKR for the base price of Rs. 10 lakh. It was his individual performance in leagues that had drawn him towards the attention of the KKR team.

"What is unique about Sanjay is his character. He could have given up after not really seeing success and never having represented the State. But he plodded on, and that's the take away for other players. Even for us coaches, he has shown that level hardly matters and only the game matters," says Mr. Premnath with elation.

"What can I say, my parents never once discouraged, and they are with me all through," says the young lad with a stubble and some new found confidence.