

Albie Morkel Sensational Play in 2012

An account by Aditya Joshi of Albie Morkel's sensational batting for the Chennai Super Kings in a T20 game in 2012.

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The Morkel Moment : Morkel's sensational hitting against Virat Kohli

Always looked at as a cricketer who was destined for the big moments, Albie Morkel was perhaps the most tantalizing property in world cricket ever since debuting in the mid-2000s, an age he was perfectly built for. With the game seeing the most revolutionary change it ever saw in form of the advent of T20s, it did not serve just as an additional format, it had major implications on the other two formats as well.

Teams began looking for players with dynamic utility, someone who could win the games for them plying his trade from any position, be it an opening bowler, a pinch-hitter at the helm of the batting order, a lower order slogger or someone to deliver the goods of searing cramping yorkers or slower balls laden with deception at a time when the opposing batsmen looked to go bonkers.

Everyone needed the X-factor in their side. MS Dhoni had Albie in his side and the skipper's shrewd employment of him became synonymous with the glory streak of Chennai Super Kings in the first six seasons before the emergence of Dwayne Bravo meant that they had to let go of him. Regardless, Morkel had many a moment of individual brilliance, but the one that will stand tall for years is when he won CSK a match from a seemingly impossible situation in 2012.



Happy Birthday to Chennai's perennial hero!

Batting first, RCB got to 8/205 in their allotted quota, riding on the back of a brutal 65 by Chris Gayle. Morkel was the lone standout bowler for most of the innings with figures of 3-0-20-1 at a time when Gayle, Mayank Agarwal, and Virat Kohli were going after everything. Set to chase what would then have been the second highest chase in the history of the IPL, CSK never looked like being able to get over the line despite all the top order sans Murali Vijay rallying around Faf du Plessis (71 off 46) with strike rates north of 150.

With two overs to go and a newbie in Albie Morkel with a struggling Bravo at the crease, it all looked over and nobody gave CSK a chance of gunning down the improbable 43 needed off the last two overs.

But then, Morkel in sheer moments of pure hysteria, played perhaps one of the best cameos in the format. Here is a ball by ball throwback to Morkel's moment at the summit.10

Full, outside off stump, Kohli who has been unexpectedly asked to bowl the penultimate over, starts well but Morkel's quick slash means that a thick inside edge beats wicket-keeper AB de Villiers to give CSK a much-needed boundary to start the over.

French cut, not the most attractive of ways to start your innings, but Morkel's might into that shot got him four. He jogs down the wicket casually to pump fists with Bravo. With the required run rate still well above 18 runs an over, even Morkel might not have given his team a chance but he did the more important thing and that was to back himself.

A year before David Miller announced his calibre to the world by evoking his father's now popular adage of "...if it is in the arc, it is out of the park," Morkel taught it to Kohli the hard way. With the game still in RCB's grasp, Morkel swung the second ball of the over in perfect compliance with the trajectory of its delivery and sent it sailing over the long on boundary.

"A clean strike," yelled an ecstatic Pommy Mbwanga in the commentary box as the home crowd got ecstatic at the exploits of their ol' reliable champion. Ten runs off the first two balls, this game could down the wire from here, a prospect entirely staved off at the start of the over.

But now, Chepauk believed. As did Morkel.

As a result of the last delivery, Kohli overcompensates and goes short without any third man in place. Morkel knowing full well of the security he has in case of a mistimed shot, goes for the big heave and a thick outside edge rolls away to the boundary. Could this be the momentum and an additional slice of fortune CSK needed to sway things in their favour out of nowhere?

The idea to take the pace off the ball by giving Kohli a go seems to be failing. He has been intimidated by Morkel's hitting prowess and in the course lost the plot to bowl simple tight lines instead of trying too many variations.

4,6,4 and now a change of an angle for Kohli. He goes over the wicket to take the ball away from the left-handed Morkel. A slight error in the length and the slow pace of Kohli allows Morkel to wait and pick the ball off the bounce and belt it over mid-wicket for another big six.

CSK are now inching towards an unlikely victory, the required run rate which was 21.5 at the start of the over has dropped down to a much more gettable 17.25. The

lanky boy from the suburbs of Vereeniging is making the MA Chidambaram a fortress of his own.

The RCB side, moments back all smiles, now exhibit grave concerns on their faces. Morkel's rollicking strike has sent the CSK dugout into a frenzy of high-fives and enthusiastic cheers.

Sanity restores to some extent as Morkel fails to pierce the full toss angled across him into the gap between long on and mid-wicket. Even though he has had an almighty muscle into the shot, his swift feet and Bravo's urgency make sure that they run two off it.

With half the runs churned with half the overs and a ball to go, Chennai certainly has grabbed the momentum with ruthlessness, the most integral element to win games in the T20 format. One ball to go in the over now, where will Morkel, who has so far batted with an imperious strike rate of 440, tonk this one?

With exactly three runs a ball required, Kohli had one final chance to wrestle his side back into the game. Once again over the wicket, he rolls his wrist in the final delivery stride in hope of some magic, but the ball never pitches, instead all the magic is accredited to the man in yellow wielding the long willow.

Morkel, not having the kind of day to miss out on a full toss, strikes it clean over cow corner into the top tier as everyone present, no matter belonging to which camp, is stunned into disbelief. Morkel has taken 28 runs off a single over to take his team into a winning position.

Although he got out in the next over, his 28 off 7 balls ensured that CSK did not have any further hiccups in chasing the total with Bravo and Jadeja taking them over the line in an adrenaline-heavy finish.

Thus became the legend of Albie Morkel picking his moments of heroism in an IPL career loaded with laurels and success.

