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Title : ISL PREVIEW - ATK not to take foot off pedal

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It wasn't the best way to prepare for either team as Mumbai City FC, Atletico de Kolkata's opponents for their final ISL-2 league engagement, could not reach the city on the eve of the match.

Mumbai City FC, who are out of contention for a semifinal berth following their loss to Chennaiyin FC, remained stuck in Chennai, which is reeling under the heaviest rainfall in over a century . With the Chennai airport shut down till Sunday , ISL organisers on Thursday had to make special arrangements to take Nicolas Anelka and Co out of the rain-ravaged city by road to Tirupati airport, from where they were flown back to Mumbai late in the evening.

With an air of uncertainty hanging over the match, the organizers postponed ATK coach Antonio Lopez Habas' customary pre-match news conference at the eleventh hour.

It was only in the evening that ISL confirmed Mumbai City FC will land in the city on Friday , barely a few hours before taking on the defending champions at the scheduled time of 7 pm.

While Mumbai City FC have nothing but pride to play for, the stakes are quite high for the home team in their final group match.

Having emerged as the first team to seal a knockout berth, ATK may have achieved their preliminary goal in style, but for coach Antonio Lopez Habas there is still work to be done.

Habas, known for his no-nonsense approach, has made it clear to his players that a win against Anelka's side is top priority as he wants the team to maintain the momentum. Moreover, victory will ensure ATK finishing as toppers, which will give them the advantage of playing the semifinal's return leg at home.

Habas is likely to tinker with his side and rest a few regulars. That would give domestic players like Mohammad Rafique, Baljit Sahni and Sushil Singh the chance to start. Influential midfielder Borja Fernandez, who has appeared in all the 13 matches so far, may also get a rare break.

Anelka, on the other hand, has seen his side slide downhill following their early promise, during which they posted a hat trick of wins. But since ATK punctured their pride with a 4-1 humiliation in the first leg at the DY Patil Stadium on November 1, Mumbai City FC have remained winless in seven matches. That particular match marked the beginning of a turnaround for the defending champions. Sunil Chhetri, in his first season in ISL, was on fire initially as he led the scorers' chart with six goals. But the India captain has failed to replicate his goal-scoring form in the second phase of the group campaign, as Mumbai City FC gradually lost their way. As both teams look to end the group campaign on a high, ATK are favourites to do a `double' on Chhetri and Co.



Atletico de Kolkata players during a practice session on Thursday

ISL POINTS TABLE

Pos	Teams	M	W	D	L	Gf	Ga	Gd	Pts
1	Atlético De Kolkata	13	7	2	4	24	14	10	23
2	FC Goa	13	6	4	3	26	18	8	22
3	Delhi Dynamos FC	13	6	4	3	16	17	-1	22
4	NorthEast United FC	14	6	2	6	18	23	-5	20
5	Chennaiyin FC	13	6	1	6	24	15	9	19
6	FC Pune City	13	4	3	6	17	22	-5	15
7	Kerala Blasters FC	14	3	4	7	22	27	-5	13
8	Mumbai City FC	13	3	4	6	13	24	-11	13