

# THE BUSINESS LINE

Tropical Titans win the battle of the backwaters in Kerala

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## Tropical Titans win the battle of the backwaters in Kerala

Winners row away with ₹1.31 crore in the Champions Boat League inaugural edition

CHITRA NARAYANAN  
Kollam, November 24

An exhilarating photo finish between the top three snakeboat teams marked the grand finale of the first edition of the ₹6 crore prize money-Champions Boat League in Kerala. Tropical Titans rowed past Raging Rowers by just 11 milliseconds while the difference between the runner-up and the third placed team, Mighty Oars, was just 13 milliseconds.

Tropical Titans crested the finishing post in a time of 4:33:69, Raging Rowers clocked 4:33:80 and Mighty Oars

4:33:93. The over three-month-long Champions Boat League, conceived and organised by Kerala Tourism to promote viewership of snakeboat races, could not have asked for a better climax than this neck and neck race.

Cheered by local spectators and tourists who had lined up on the banks of Ashtamudi Lake at Kollam and spurred by the voluble and very theatrical live Malayalam commentary over the public address, it was a great display of sinew and skill by the oarsmen on the snakeboats. Sporting psychedelic coloured out-



It was a great display of sinew and skill by the oarsmen

fits the rowers lent a splash of colour to the picturesque backdrop of coconut palms and azure blue skies—but it was the yellow T-shirts of Tropical Titans that dominated the league throughout. They topped the league with 173 points finally. In the final moments, the pink-clad burly

cops from Kerala Police, who made up the Raging Rowers team, did put up a great fight. In terms of deciding the overall winners, the final race was actually of only academic interest as Tropical Titans had massed up an unassailable lead on the points table, though by winning here at

Kollam they stood a chance of increasing their prize money. In the event, they rowed away home with a total of ₹1.31 crore.

The format of the league was such that each of the nine teams got ₹4 lakh for participating in a race, top three teams in each race earned an additional ₹5 lakh, ₹3 lakh and ₹1 lakh. Organised across 11 venues in five districts of the State, the nine teams clashed over 12 races. Potentially the least a team could make was ₹48 lakh. Since snakeboat racing is an expensive affair, and it costs the teams a big amount to participate, the State government decided to underwrite expenses.

Second placed Raging Rowers earned ₹82 lakh, while third-placed Mighty Oars got ₹69 lakh.

### Emotional moment

While the winners were a foregone conclusion, there was intense interest on who would take third spot as coming into the finals Mighty Oars and Coast Dominators were tied at 69 points. The Oars edged ahead by just one point. Coast Dominators belonging to the very popular Chambakulam chundan, however, could take consolation in the fact that they were the only other team to have won a race from the Tropical Titans, beating them in the Kochi leg.

For Nadubhagam

Chundan, the kara or village that was represented by Tropical Titans, it was an emotional moment to collect the trophy. Narayana Kutty, the captain of the team, said hard work and practice paid off as well as the strategy of ensuring all the players were below 25 years of age and weighed under 75 kg. "We planned for over 10 months, practised for three months, putting in 35 to 40 sessions before the Nehru Trophy and executed our strategy perfectly," he said.

Next year's edition promises to be bigger and better with the two Kerala ministers present at the final race announcing mega plans for CBL 2020. Next year the league will be pan Kerala and include

the Malabar districts as well, said Finance minister TM Thomas Isaac. Tourism minister Kadakampally Surendran hinted there could be stronger sponsorships from corporate houses next year as well. "The CBL has lent a brand value to boat races and I am sure will evolve into a strong format in future editions," he said. The idea is to make into an IPL-style league owned by franchises.

With an estimated 22 lakh viewers watching the races across the five districts, and the event broadcast live over several channels, the state government is hopeful of making the business of boat racing more lucrative for the snakeboat owners.