

Robin not giving up

A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta: The Kolkata Knight Riders may have been outplayed by Mumbai Indians at the Eden, but the zeal and support shown by students at New Town School on Thursday is sure to leave them with renewed vigour to keep their spirits high in the ongoing IPL.

Dinesh Karthik's men are left with an almost must-win situation in their remaining three matches to make the play-offs. The team left for Indore in the afternoon where they meet Kings XI Punjab on Saturday.

Robin Uthappa, Shubman Gill, Shivam Mavi and bowling coach Heath Streak were there as part of The Telegraph presents Chat with the Champions along with Knight Riders CEO Venky Mysore.

Uthappa recalled a similar situation in 2014 as his most memorable at the franchise. "Personally, when we won the IPL in 2014 for the second time was something special. We were in a situation where we had to win every match to qualify for the play-offs.

"As a unit, we backed ourselves, believed and trusted each other. We ended up doing something special. That was most memorable," the Knight Riders vice-captain said.

Despite the tight corner they find themselves in, Uthappa was happy with the core unit. "We've evolved beautifully. I've been here since 2014 and to see the team grow has been fantastic.

"We've reached a stage where the average age of the players is 24-25... It's a young side and one which will stay together for years to come.

"So, we're in a very good space. The credit should be given to the management for bleeding youngsters and making sure that we have a consis-

tent team for the next five-six years," he said.

The Q&A session had the two U-19 World Cup winning players, Shubman and Mavi, blushing at times. Shubman was quizzed about his favourite actor Alia Bhatt and revealed that he had a "good experience" dancing with co-owner Shah Rukh Khan to the tune of *Chammak Challo* from the film *Ra.One* during an in-house party after the match against Chennai Super Kings in Chennai.

Mavi, though, tried to put up a brave face when asked about Brett Lee terming him as the future of Indian bowling. "I've always been a Brett Lee fan. For the last one year I've really worked hard on my game, on my weaknesses... Not too many parties for me..." he remarked. Mavi made it clear that he never passes the buck and prefers to take the blame upon himself.

Shubman also remembered his father's contribution during his formative years. "I've reached here because of my father. He was crazy about cricket and used to see a lot of matches.

"I inherited his craziness about the game. He has been an inspirational figure in my life and what I am today is all because of him."



Shubman Gill