

Time to celebrate: Molina

A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta: More than a thousand fans were waiting for their heroes at the airport for over an hour. And as soon as they caught the first glimpse of Atletico de Kolkata team members with the ISL trophy, their joy knew no bounds.

The atmosphere was no different when the two-time champions assembled at a city mall with the trophy.

Barring marquee player Helder Postiga, Sameehg Douthie, Ofentse Nato and Henrique Sereno who have headed home, all the others were present at the mall.

"Thank you very much for the support," said coach Jose Molina, clicking groupie with the fans.

Molina dedicated the triumph to his family. "I dedicate it to my family. They were in Spain without me for so long..."

"It's time now to enjoy and celebrate. As for the future, we will decide later," the Spaniard said.

All Molina is looking forward to now is spending quality time with family. "When is the ISL next year? Nobody knows, so let's not think about it now.

"I will just go home and spend time with my family in Spain. Yes, I enjoyed a lot

here and I am blessed to be the coach of ATK," he added.

Molina revealed he had told his players after extra time that he believes that ATK can win the title for the second time. "After extra time, we talked for a while. I told the players to keep calm and tell themselves that we have the confidence and will win," he said.

Asked whether it was his decision to let Sheikh Jewel Raja take one of the five spot-kicks, Molina said: "Jewel came up to me and said, 'I want to take the fifth penalty' and I told him, 'Go ahead.'"

Captain Borja Fernandez, with the team for all three seasons so far, feels it was a different experience altogether. "I don't want compare this win with the one in the inaugural edition.

"We were confident from the beginning of the season and everybody in the team played their part. I feel proud to be a part of this team," Borja told **The Telegraph**.

ATK's highest goal scorer Iain Hume looked disappointed after missing the first penalty in the shoot-out, but he was much relieved on Monday. "We now have two stars on our shirts as we have won the tour-

namment twice," Hume said.

"It wasn't easy, but we did it winning a second title inside three years. The key has been our involvement and togetherness from the first till the very last match of the tournament," Hume added.

Meanwhile, ATK principal owner Goenka claimed the team now has more support than city giants Mohun Bagan and East Bengal. "Have you ever seen this much frenzy for any other team in Calcutta? We are now much more popular than any other club in the city," Goenka said.

"Why should Calcutta sacrifice? Every city has one team, then why Calcutta? Whom will the city support if there would be more than one team," Goenka said, indicating that he would like ATK to be the only team representing the city.

"This is a Christmas gift to the city," he added.

For co-owner Sourav Ganguly, both the titles are pretty special. "Both the triumphs are special," Sourav said.

"Congratulations to the boys. They have shown great determination to come from behind and win the match."

Sourav also thanked ISL chairperson Nita Ambani for organising the tournament. "She has taken Indian football to a different level. I would like to thank her for the initiative," Sourav added.



ATK players and coach Jose Molina with principal owner Sanjiv Goenka at a city mall on Monday. A Telegraph picture