

Lion City Sailors Clinch Back-to-Back SPL Titles Despite Dramatic Final Day Defeat to Tampines

Description

default watermark

The Lion City Sailors have done it again. Despite a pulsating 3-2 defeat to BG Tampines Rovers on the final day of the 2025/26 **Singapore Premier League** season, the Sailors were crowned **SPL champions 2026** at Our Tampines Hub on Saturday, 17 May â?? sealing back-to-back titles and a third league crown in just six seasons of existence. It was a night of high drama, heartfelt celebration, and the kind of bittersweet victory that only football can produce.

A Final Day of Five Goals and One Trophy

The scoreline flattered the occasion â?? or perhaps perfectly captured it. The first 45 minutes were a cagey, title-night affair. Both sides knew exactly what was at stake, and neither was willing to give anything away cheaply. It was only in the second half that the game came truly alive.

The Sailors drew first blood when Song Ui-young rifled a piledriver from the edge of the box in the 50th minute, after excellent work by Bart Ramselaar to wriggle free of a pair of challenges. Seven minutes later, Tampines levelled through Jacob Mahler, who nodded home Koya Kazamaâ??s corner with a well-timed run.

The Sailors restored their advantage almost immediately. Nur Adam Abdullah delivered a teasing left-wing cross for Lennart Thy to power home his 15th goal of the season in the 59th minute â?? a thumping, decisive header that suggested the champions were not done yet. But Tampines had different ideas. With qualification for next seasonâ??s AFC Champions League Two on the line, the hosts surged back into the contest. Former Japanese international Yuki Kobayashi lashed home a stunning strike from outside the box in the 75th minute, before compatriot Hide Higashigawa pounced at the far post three minutes later to complete the comeback.

The Sailors threw everything at an equaliser â?? substitute Shawal Anuar went close twice, and Bailey Wrightâ??s goal-bound header was tipped over by goalkeeper Syazwan Buhari. But it was not to be on the night. The 3-2 defeat brought the curtain down on the season, and the Sailors accepted it with the

composure of a side that already had what they came for.

Back-to-Back Champions: Records, Resilience and What Comes Next

The numbers behind this title are remarkable. The Sailors collected 51 points from 21 matches â?? a points-per-game average of 2.43, the best in the clubâ??s history. Their previous best of 2.29 was set during their maiden title-winning campaign in 2021. For a side that navigated a mid-season managerial change, having parted ways with Aleksandar RankoviÄ? in late February before JesÃºs Casas took the reins, retaining domestic supremacy was no small achievement.

default watermark



Source: Lion City Sailors FC official website (lioncitysailorsfc.sg)

The trophy presentation itself was tinged with absence â?? Casas, who led the Sailors to this success over just three months in charge, was unable to be present, having flown home for Achilles surgery. In his place, assistant coaches Salva Romero and Alejandro Varela led the celebrations on the touchline. â??This team has been very receptive,â?• said Romero. â??There has been a lot of effort, hard work

and difficult moments along the way, so full credit to them. They deserve this title.â?•

The squad then changed into their specially designed Champions Tees â?? now a club tradition â?? before lifting the 15kg, 67.5cm SPL trophy high into the Tampines night sky. Families and friends joined the players on the pitch for photographs that will remain long in the memory.

SPL Season in Review: The League That Got Tighter

This was a vintage SPL season. Tampines Rovers pushed the Sailors all the way, finishing second with 49 points, having themselves produced one of their strongest campaigns in recent memory. Albirex Niigata (S) were the third force, ending the season impressively after famously ending the Sailorsâ?? unbeaten run with a 2-0 win on 10 May. The three-team title race ran deep into the final fortnight, and it was only the Sailorsâ?? extraordinary consistency across 21 matchdays that ultimately told.

default watermark



Source: Lion City Sailors FC official website (lioncitysailorsfc.sg)

Director of Football Luka LaliÄ? was reflective in his post-season comments. â??Not every season is perfect, but it gave us valuable lessons that will help us grow as a club,â• he said. â??The target for next season is clear: we want to do much better, especially in the international competitions, and we want to represent Singapore with pride on the continental stage.â•

That continental stage comes in the form of the AFC Champions League Two next season â?? a competition where the Sailors are determined to make their mark after a period of domestic dominance. With the foundations laid, the league secured, and ambitions firmly set on Asia, this is a club clearly building towards something bigger. The SPL title celebrations were well earned. The hard work, however, is only just beginning.

Keep up with all the SPL action on our Sports page. Read about the Matchday 21 preview and how Albirex ended the Sailorsâ?? unbeaten run earlier this month.

Date Created
19/05/2026
Author
jadeyeo

default watermark