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According to reports, six top Indian cricketers and four sought-after foreigners, from a pool of 50 cricketers, are likely to be among the hottest picks at the first-ever player draft. (Photo: BCCI)

Mumbai: India's limited-overs captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni today emerged as the top draw in the IPL draft with the Sanjeev Goenka-owned New Rising franchise Pune opting to pick him first for the stipulated price of Rs 12.5 crore here.

Dhoni's India teammate Suresh Raina was the first preference for the other new team Rajkot, which is owned by Kehav Bansal Intex Mobiles. He will also get an identical Rs 12.5 crore by virtue of being the first player selected by the franchise.

"Excited to play for the beautiful vibrant city- Rajkot in @IPL. Looking forward to have new teammates and support from the people of Gujarat," Raina tweeted after the draft.

In-form Indian batsman Ajinkya Rahane was the second choice for Pune, while Rajkot opted for Ravindra Jadeja in the same position. Both players will be entitled to a purse of Rs 9.5 crore per year.

The draft process was necessitated following the **suspension of Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals** [11] from the IPL for two years in the wake of the 2013 spot-fixing and betting scandal. The suspension was ordered by the Supreme Court-appointed Justice (retired) RM Lodha committee, which was formed to decide the quantum of punishment following the investigations.

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin was picked by Pune as their third choice and will get a purse of Rs 7.5 crore. New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum was Rajkot's choice.

In the fourth spot, both the teams opted for Australians with Steve Smith going to Pune and James Faulkner going to Rajkot.

Pune opted for South African batsman Faf du Plessis as their fifth and final player, while West Indian Dwayne Bravo was Rajkot's pick. Both players will get Rs 4 crore.

The draft pool only included players from Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals, the two teams which have been barred from participation. The players not picked will now go to the general IPL auction scheduled for February 6.

"The salary of players as per their contract with their former teams will be protected. The upper limit will be deducted from the total purse of Rs 66 crore. All will be put up on the website," IPL Governing Council Chairman Rajeev Shukla told a media conference after the draft.

Another BCCI source said the salary details will be revealed on the website after the first trading window closes on December 31. "Both the teams (who have each spent Rs 39 crore today) are now left with Rs 27 crore each from the total purse to form the rest of the team," he added.

"There are no catchment areas for the two teams," said Shukla.

Shukla said that a decision whether to invite Pakistan players to play in IPL was different from the bilateral series between India and Pakistan that is hanging in the balance.

"The series against Pakistan is different and including Pakistan players in IPL is different. We will have to discuss with the franchises. As far as the series against Pakistan is concerned the same situation prevails. We have got no communication from the government," he said.

Shukla said the opening game in the 9th season of IPL as well as the final will be played at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on April 9 and May 29.

"The first trading window is to be held from December 15 (today) to December 31, the second one is from January 11 to 22, 2016 and the third one (after the players' auction) from February 8 to 19. The franchises' workshop will be held on January 13 and 14 in Srinagar," he said.

He also pointed out that two new teams have been bought and a title sponsor already found when asked about IPL's credibility taking a hit. "You have seen two new teams have been decided upon. You know how many turned up (for tender process). Title sponsorship too has been decided," said Shukla.

Meanwhile, Pune franchise representative Subroto Talukdar, said that what was planned by his team had been accomplished at the draft today, including the picking of Dhoni as their first choice.

"Whatever we had planned, we have got. We wanted Dhoni as we are a new franchise and want to build our brand and who better than Dhoni. He was an automatic choice. We have got the players we wanted," he said.

"We were targeting eight players and got players of our priority. Manoj Tiwari and Ashok Dinda, who play for our company, were consulted. We have already talked to two contenders for coach," he said while making it clear that Sourav Ganguly, an IPL Governing Council member, was not involved in the process though he is a partner in their Indian Super League (ISL) football team Atletico de Kolkata.

"The name of the team and logo will be announced next week. We work out of Kolkata, so shifting to Pune will take some time. But we have the experience of running a team in ISL."

Rajkot franchise owner Bansal also sounded pleased with his team's picks. "We had a strategy and we knew Dhoni will not be available. So Raina was a strong option. On the Rajkot pitch we need aggressive batsmen as well as strong bowlers. We needed to have a balanced team."

He said his team, though missing the first eight seasons' experience, will learn from past mistakes committed by the other teams.

"We are a new franchise while others have the advantage of playing in the first eight seasons. But we will learn from their mistakes. My personal twitter is flooded with tweets. We will be announcing the captain soon."

"The BCCI has a fantastic senior management team, the chairman is fantastic, the president is fantastic and we have full faith in them," he added.

The next edition of the Twenty20 league will be held from April 9 to May 29.

Team Pune's picks: Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Ajinkya Rahane, R Ashwin, Steve Smith, Faf du Plessis.

Team Rajkot's picks: Suresh Raina, R Jadeja, Brendon McCullum, James Faulkner, Dwayne Bravo.

List of Indian players (33): Ravichandran Ashwin, Stuart Binny, MS Dhoni, Ravindra Jadeja, Dhawal Kulkarni, Abhishek Nayar, Ashish Nehra, Irfan Pathan, Ajinkya Rahane, Suresh Raina, Sanju Samson, Mohit Sharma, Rahul Sharma, Baba Aparajith, Ankush Bains, Rajat Bhatia, Eklavya Dwivedi, Deepak Hooda, Vikramjeet Malik, Mithun Manhas, Ronit More, Karun Nair, Pawan Negi, Ishwar Chandra Pandey, Pardeep Sahu, Dinesh Salunkhe, Barinder Singh Saran, Ankit Nagendra Sharma, Pratyush Singh, Pravin Tambe, Rahul Tewatia, Sagar Vijay Trivedi and Dishant Yagnik.

List of Foreign players (17): Kyle Abbott (South Africa), Samuel Badree (West Indies), Dwayne Bravo (West Indies), Ben Cutting (Australia), Faf du Plessis (South Africa), James Faulkner (Australia), Matt Henry (New Zealand), Michael Hussey (Australia), Brendon McCullum (New Zealand), Christopher Morris (South Africa), Kane Richardson (Australia), Dwayne Smith (West Indies), Steven Smith (Australia), Tim Southee (New Zealand), Juan Theron (South Africa), Andrew Tye (Australia) and Shane Watson (Australia).