

# THE HINDU



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M.S. Dhoni and (R) Suresh Raina



India's limited-overs captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni on Tuesday emerged as the top draw in the IPL draft with the Sanjeev Goenka-owned new 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, owned by Intex Mobiles. He will also get an identical Rs. 12.5 crore by virtue of being the first player selected by the franchise. Seven players of the suspended Chennai Super Kings (CSK), including Dhoni, were picked along with three others from the Rajasthan Royals (RR), also banned from the league for two years.

In-form Indian batsman Ajinkya Rahane was the second choice for Pune, while Rajkot opted for Ravindra Jadeja in the same position. Both will be entitled to a purse of Rs. 9.5 crore per year. The draft process was necessitated following the suspension of CSK and RR 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) R. M. 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 Australians with Steve Smith (Rs. 5.5 crore) going to Pune and James Faulkner (Rs. 5.5 crore) 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 will get Rs. 4 crore.

The draft pool only included players from CSK and RR, the two teams which have been barred from participation. The next edition of the Twenty20 league will be held from April 9 to May 29.

Out of this lot, Rahane, Faulkner and Smith had represented the Royals last year, while the rest belonged to the Super Kings. A total of 50 players from both suspended teams were available to be chosen in the draft.

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 chairman Rajeev Shukla told a media conference after the draft.

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