

# THE CHOSEN TEN

**Pune pick Dhoni as their first choice | Raina the surprise package, with Rajkot bagging him for `12.5 crore**

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Mumbai: If MS Dhoni's name features in the list of players available for the draft pick by two new IPL franchises, there can hardly be a surprise. And that's how the script went on Tuesday.

In the IPL draft here, India's limited-overs captain MS Dhoni was bagged by Team Pune as the first pick for Rs 12.5 crore.

The two new IPL teams — Pune (owned by Sanjeev Goenka's New Rising) and Rajkot (Intex Mobiles) — went out about picking their players carefully.

The biggest surprise of the day was thrown by Rajkot, who picked star batsman

Suresh Raina. The team from Gujarat was expected to go first for their local lad Ravindra Jadeja or someone like R Ashwin, considered captaincy material.

Rajkot did go for Jadeja, but as their second player. The batsman for all seasons, Ajinkya Rahane was second choice for Pune. This selection was the most interesting, considering Dhoni quite doesn't consider the Mumbaikar an effective limited-overs batsman.

Offie Ashwin was picked for Rs. 7.5 crore by Pune. The franchise also went for Australia captain Steve Smith (Rs 5.5 crore) and South Africa T20 captain Faf du Plessis (Rs 4 crore).

Rajkot went for New Zealand skipper Brendon McCullum (Rs 7.5 crore), Australian all-rounder James Faulkner (Rs 5.5 crore) and West Indian T20 specialist Dwayne Bravo (Rs 4 crore). It will be interesting to see who of Raina or McCullum is asked to lead the outfit.

Both teams spent Rs 39 crore off their total purse of Rs 66 crore, leaving Rs 27 crore for the auction on February 6, 2016.

"Whatever we had planned, we got. We wanted Dhoni as we are a new franchise and want to build our brand. Who better than Dhoni," said Subroto Talukdar, representative

of Pune.

Asked if the franchisee consulted an expert, hinting at the alleged conflict of interest involving Sourav Ganguly who is an IPL Governing Council member and a partner of the RPG group in ISL's Atletico de Kolkata, Talukdar said, "Manoj Tiwari and Ashok Dinda, who play for our company, were consulted," he said.

Team Rajkot's Keshav Bansal said : "We never had any doubts about Jadeja being our preferred choice. Obviously, the local connect was a factor but we needed a big hitter lower down the order."

"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," IPL chairman Rajiv Shukla said. The details will be available on the BCCI website after the first trading window closes on December 31.

Shukla added that the opening game of the 9th season and the final will be played at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on April 9 and May 29, respectively.

