



Ahead Of Afghanistan Test, Struggling Rishabh Pant Gets Big Advice From Childhood Coach

Mumbai, 4 June : India wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant is playing too many horizontal shots and throwing his wickets away, according to his formative coach Deven Sharma, who has advised him to play more vertical and more on the off-side. Pant had a forgettable IPL for the second season in a row following which he stepped down from captaincy of Lucknow Super Giants.

He has also now become a one format player for India and recently lost his vice-captaincy in the Test team. "He is trying too much and mostly playing horizontal shots. He is pushing & forcing himself too much. He should play more vertical shots that will give him more success.

"When I last talked to him, I had suggested him to play more vertical shots to get back into form. When you



are not getting runs, you need to get back to basics," Sharma told PTI on Thursday.

Pant will be next in action in the one off Test against Afghanistan beginning in Mullanpur on June 6.

"I will tell him to play a little differently with a different approach as there is a lot of difference in Test & T20 cricket. Last time when he played Test for India, he

played a match winning innings. I am sure he will do it again against Afghanistan," said the Sonnet coach.

"He should show controlled aggression. He should concentrate more. The problem is that he has too many strokes (shots) backfoot, frontfoot. He must cut down on his innovative shots. He should play more on the off-side rather than on the on-side," he observed.

Sharma pointed out that it was just a matter of time that Pant returned to form.

"Rishabh is a mentally strong cricketer. After the car accident, when he went to England, he scored centuries in both innings of a Test match. It's a big thing for a cricketer.

"I have seen him since childhood and groomed him. Whatever matches he played after the accident, he played well. IPL is a white ball game. He had a lean patch there. It comes in every big cricketer's career. Ups and downs come in every cricketer's life.

"It's a phase and it will go. I am quite hopeful that Rishabh will come back strongly and win matches for India again," he added.

Pant lost his place in the T20 side following the 2024 World Cup and his name

doesn't feature in the ODI squad for the three games against Afghanistan. Sharma said Pant remains a three-format player.

"He has solid defense and all range of shots. But in cricket things don't always go the way you want. He did not click in IPL this year. It's a team game. There is always pressure of captaincy but I don't think it was too much on him. He couldn't do well. It's alright. It's a part of the game."

On where he sees Pant heading to in his career, Sharma said: "There is a lot of cricket left in Rishabh. At least 10 to 12 years of cricket is left in him. If he pays attention to fitness he can even play 15 more years. Virat Kohli is an example. He is performing, leading by example, winning the IPL Trophy on his own.



Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli, right, reacts in pain as he runs between the wickets after a hamstring injury during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 Final T20 cricket match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Gujarat Titans, in Ahmedabad.

Kuldeep Yadav Turns Mentor For Debutants Manav Suthar, Harsh Dubey For Afghanistan Test

Mumbai, 4 June : Seniority comes with added responsibility and Kuldeep Yadav understands it well but instead of being a traditional mentor, he is looking to be a "partner" to rookies Manav Suthar and Harsh Dubey in the upcoming one off Test against Afghanistan. The 31-year-old wants to make sure that the new entrants feel comfortable in the set-up and wants them to pick his brains as and when they feel it is necessary.

The game against Afghanistan begins in Mullanpur on Saturday. "Whenever a new player joins the team, your job is to make him comfortable. You want him to see you as a partner. If he has any problem, he should feel free to talk to you, and you must be ready to support him," Kuldeep told PTI in an exclusive interview facilitated by series broadcasters 'Jio-Hotstar'.

"Right now, there is good bonding with two or three of the younger players. It feels good to have them around," Kuldeep added. For Kuldeep, the best way to integrate youngsters is by asking them relevant questions and getting a hang of their understanding of the game.

"We talk freely as a



group, especially about the conditions. If I want to test the youngsters, then I ask them questions regarding their understanding of the pitch, the weather conditions, and how should the team approach the match. "So, our conversations are mostly about basic tactics, what lengths to bowl, what pace works on this surface, and how spinners need to be patient in Test cricket. Patience is everything in this format," the man with 365 international wickets across three formats said.

If Kuldeep plays the one-off game against the Afghans starting Saturday, for the first time in his career, he would neither have a Ravichandran Ashwin (now retired) nor a Ravindra Jadeja (rested) alongside him.

Kuldeep acknowledged that the absence of Jadeja for

this game and even Axar Patel would be felt but expressed confidence in Suthar and Dubey's ability to shine at the highest level. "Yes, Jaddu bhai (Ravindra Jadeja) is not there, as he is a regular Test player. We will also miss Axar Patel in the Test match. But the preparations have been good.

"Many youngsters are here – Harsh, Manav, Washi (Washington Sundar) is also playing Test cricket quite regularly now, so he is well settled in the regular Test player. The preparations have been good.

"Over the last two years, these young players (Dubey and Suthar) have been part of India A tours. They are also playing the Duleep Trophy and Irani Trophy regularly," he said.

Supreme Court Refuses To Remove Delhi High Court's Remarks Against Wrestling Body In Vinesh Phogat Case

Mumbai, 4 June : The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to remove adverse observations made by the Delhi High Court against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) in a recent judgement that allowed wrestler Vinesh Phogat to participate in the Asian Games 2026 selection trials. A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Aravind Kumar said the plea filed by the WFI had become infructuous as Phogat had already participated in the trials pursuant to an interim order passed by the top court on May 29.

The Supreme Court however clarified that closing the matter should not be construed as an endorsement of those observations by high court against the wrestling body. "In view of subsequent developments, this SLP is rendered infructuous. This court will not be taken as reiterating the findings and observations of the High Court. The issues are kept open," the bench said. In its ruling, a division bench comprising Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia observed that Phogat was unable to satisfy the WFI's selection criteria only because she was on maternity leave.

The court said motherhood could not become a ground for excluding or marginalising female athletes. The High Court also criticised the WFI for issuing what it described as a "deplorable" show-cause notice to Phogat, calling the federation's actions vindictive.

What Next After Suryakumar Yadav Sacking? Report Makes Big Claim On BCCI's Possible Moves

Mumbai, 4 June : Shreyas Iyer is all set to become the Indian cricket team skipper for the T20I series against Ireland and England with Tilak Varma replacing Axar Patel as vice-captain, according to a report by Dainik Jagran.

The report claimed that Suryakumar Yadav will be removed from captaincy just months after winning the T20 World Cup 2026 and he will be informed of the decision on Thursday as the BCCI Apex Council will meet online to discuss the captaincy situation. The report went on to claim that the decision regarding Shreyas becoming the captain has already been taken and it will be ratified at the meeting.

According to the report, head coach Gautam Gambhir



wanted Sanju Samson to replace Suryakumar as the T20I captain but BCCI chief selector Ajit Agarkar was not convinced. Some members of the selection committee were also reportedly not in agreement with Gambhir as they believed that Samson has not been consistent enough.

Sources claimed that although Samson played a big role in clinching the T20 World Cup for India, several selectors did not consider him to be a long-term captaincy option. They also believed that it was too early to trust him with the responsibility.

Shreyas, who was not a

part of the T20 World Cup-winning squad, led Punjab Kings to the IPL 2025 final where they lost to Royal Challengers Bengaluru. In IPL 2026, the team were off to a sensational start but failed to reach the Playoffs after losing six consecutive matches.

Iyer was a top performer for his side with the bat as he scored 498 runs in 14 matches at a strike rate of 168.81. He scored a century and five half-centuries and will reportedly replace Suryakumar in the No. 4 position.

The report also claimed that there were no discussions over a possible call-up for Rajat Patidar even after impressing with the bat and leading RCB to two consecutive IPL titles.

"Would Make The Team Better": Ex-England Star Backs Vaibhav Sooryavanshi To Make India Debut

Mumbai, 4 June : Vaibhav Sooryavanshi continues to rise through the ranks. The teenager shot to fame after Rajasthan Royals paid a whopping sum of Rs 1.1 crore for him ahead of IPL 2025. Sooryavanshi showed his brilliance in the limited opportunities he got in the season before completely bossing the next edition.

In IPL 2026, the teenager broke multiple records while also winning the Orange Cap, an honour given to the highest run-scorer in the season. He scored 776 runs in 16 matches at an astonishing strike rate of 237.30. The wonderkid played a huge role in taking his IPL side Rajasthan Royals to Qualifier 2,



where they lost to Gujarat Titans.

With every impressive knock, Sooryavanshi forced cricket veterans and former players to consider him for a potential India senior debut.

Former England fast bowler Steven Finn praised the teenager. He also hopes to see him in the nation when India tour for five T20Is and

three ODIs in July this year.

"I would love to see him in an Indian shirt in the UK summer. The problem is that they (India) are the world champions, and it'll be an incredibly tough call on those opening the batting now. Yet, whoever he replaces, he would make the team better," Finn said on 'For the Love of Cricket' YouTube channel.

"The question entering this season was if he could do it again and be consistent. The most staggering thing is that he struck at 236 across 700-plus runs against the best bowlers in the world. To sustain that for a full season as a 15-year-old is mind-blowing. He was the story of this IPL. And people say the yorker is his lone weakness. But that's so tough to execute with the new ball that if that's your only weakness, you would almost take that," he added.

Talking about IPL 2026, Royal Challengers Bengaluru defeated Gujarat Titans by five wickets in the final to defend their title. RCB had also won the trophy last year, which was their first IPL title after a long wait of 18 years.

Lionel Messi Nursing 'Muscle Fatigue, Hamstring Strain'; Huge Crowd Gathers For Argentina's World Cup Training

Spain, 4 June : Turns out that reigning World Cup champions Argentina draw quite a crowd no matter where it goes. Whether it be fans surrounding the team's upscale hotel near downtown Kansas City, or their first training session opened to media Wednesday that drew hundreds of reporters to the facilities of Major League Soccer club Sporting Kansas City, there are few places that Lionel Messi and the rest of La Albiceleste are not the center of attention as the tournament draws near.

They begin their title defense against Algeria at Arrowhead Stadium on June 16. Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni revealed his 26-man World Cup roster last week. It is headlined by Messi, who

turns 39 in less than a month, and features 17 players that were on the team that triumphed four years ago against France in the final in Qatar.

Messi has been dealing with muscle fatigue and a mild strain in his left hamstring. The team has said his recovery time will depend on "his clinical and functional progress," though it seems unlikely that he will participate in its upcoming friendlies. He came to the practice field after the rest of the team on Wednesday and did some conditioning work off to the side.

Argentina did not make any players or coaches available to speak to reporters. The team will continue training in Kansas City until it departs for the first of two



World Cup tune-up matches against Honduras on Saturday in College Station, Texas.

The team plays Iceland in Auburn, Alabama, three days later before resuming its training in Kansas City.

Most of the players arrived at the team's home base Sunday aboard a charter from Buenos Aires designed to pay

homage to the nation's rich World Cup history. The flight number 1978 was a nod to the year it beat the Netherlands to win the title, and the A330 was trimmed with special livery that included the national team colors and Messi's No. 10 on the tail.

Messi joined the team on a separate charter from

Florida a few hours later.

The entire roster got a dose of Midwestern hospitality from hundreds of fans who waited outside the Origin Hotel to greet them, then they got a big taste of summer life in tornado alley when sirens sounded after midnight and a heavy storm rolled through.

"When they pick you as their training site for defending the World Cup, and this is where they are for the next — you know, hopefully through the end of the tournament — it's surreal," said Jake Reid, the president and CEO of Sporting Kansas City, who watched the open training session with a series of dignitaries that included Kansas City, Missouri, Mayor Quinton Lucas.

Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma Out Of Afghanistan ODIs? India Coach Provides Massive Update

Mumbai, 4 June : Indian cricket team assistant coach Ryan Ten Doeschate remained tight-lipped over Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma's fitness status amid reports that both star batters can end up missing the upcoming ODI series against Afghanistan.

Ahead of the one-off Test match in Mullanpur, Ten Doeschate addressed the media but when asked about the duo, he said that the protocols will be followed in order to assess their fitness before any official communication is sent out by the BCCI. Several media reports claimed that Kohli will miss the series due to a hamstring injury while Rohit remains doubtful. Rohit was included in the squad but his availability for the series will be completely dependent on him passing BCCI's fitness tests.

"Official communication will come on that. You know, it's obviously big news when it's someone like Virat or Rohit, but the same protocols will be in place where we'll assess the fitness of those guys, and we've got a few days now to decide whether they are fit enough to play and be part of the squad, and make adjustments accordingly. But I'm sure some official communication

will come through as soon as the medical team has confirmed," Ten Doeschate said at the press conference.

Earlier, PTI reported that Virat Kohli was ruled out of the ODI series against Afghanistan due to a hamstring injury. The three-match series begins on June 13 in Dharamsala. "He is out of the



ODI series due to a hamstring injury," a BCCI source told PTI. Kohli, known for his unmatched fitness even at 37 years of age, was in stellar form in the recently-concluded IPL where he steered Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a second consecutive title. He hit the winning runs in the final against Gujarat Titans. Reinventing his T20 game, Kohli amassed 675 runs in RCB's triumphant campaign including a hundred and five fifty plus scores.

Kohli's absence will take the sheen off the upcoming

series. Though the former India captain is now a one-format player, he remains a top draw for fans worldwide. It is extremely rare for Kohli to miss games due to an injury, given his exemplary fitness standards.

In nine IPL matches this year, Rohit has scored 283 runs at an average of 35.37

and a strike rate of 1576.22, including two fifties and a best score of 84.

However, Rohit, at 39 years of age, is an exclusively ODI-only player now. He retired from T20Is after the T20 World Cup title win as a captain in 2024 and from Tests last year in May ahead of the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) 2025-27 cycle. His last assignment as an ODI captain was an ICC Champions Trophy win back in March 2025, including a match-sealing 76 against New Zealand in the final.