

Sanju Samson should be groomed as India's next T20 captain after Rohit Sharma, says Harbhajan Singh

NEW DELHI, APR 24:

Sanju Samson's Rajasthan Royals has looked like a near-perfect team in the Indian Premier League 2024 losing just one of the eight games. They are placed comfortably at the top of the table and are expected to qualify for the playoffs with ease. The skipper of the side has looked good in batting and made sharp decision-making captaincy moves in the tournament thus far.

Former Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh would propose Sanju should take over T20 captaincy after Rohit. On his X account (Formerly known as Twitter) the 43-year-old wrote, "@IamSanjuSamson (Sanju Samson) should walk in to the Indian team for T20 worldcup and also groomed as a next T20 captain for india after rohit . koi shak." MP of Lok Sabha Shashi Tharoor from Thiruvananthapuram constituency would join the conversation and reply to Harbhajan. "Have been arguing for years that Sanju (Sanju Samson) has not had the selectorial breaks he



deserved. Now he is the leading Keeper-batsman in the @IPL but is still not discussed when the team is debated. Justice for Sanju!" Former Australian player Aaron Finch too would praise Samson for his captaincy. "I think he's leading the side unbelievably well, you can see how calm the Rajasthan Royals are when they're under pressure. And I think that the only game they lost was when they had that meltdown against GT right at the back end of the game, so they've been so clinical right throughout this IPL and a lot of credit has to go to Sanju for that," he said on Star Sports Cricket Live.

In eight games so far Samson has scored 314 runs with the bat at an average of 62.80 and strike rate 152.43. "He's been playing really mature innings and that's what is required for the team. I think in times of T20 cricket, the ego of the batsman can get in the way of what the team needs sometimes but he's been playing each and every situation exactly how it's needed to be done."

Sachin Tendulkar brings in birthday week by playing game of football with girls



MUMBAI, APR 24:

Sachin Tendulkar turned 51 on Wednesday and chose to start the week with kids that his foundation supports.

Social media was abuzz with wishes for the legend all through the day, with his former teammates taking the opportunity to wish the cricketing legend who made his debut in 1989 against Pakistan. "What a way to kick off my

birthday week! I had so much fun playing football, sharing stories and cutting my birthday cake with these incredible girls who are supported by the Sachin Tendulkar Foundation. They were the first ones to wish me and it made my week truly special!" Tendulkar tweeted as he shared a clip of his birthday celebrations with kids from the Sachin Tendulkar Foundation. In the

clip, Sachin can be seen playing football on the beach with kids, dribbling the football and also asking a little girl if she would teach him some football moves. On his birthday, former Indian cricketer Yuvraj Singh shared a heartfelt video for the legend on X. In the post, Yuvraj wrote, "Happy birthday paaji! From smashing bowlers on the field to smashing life goals, you're the reason I learned to aim higher in life (and sometimes on the field too). Here's wishing you loads of love, good health and happiness always." "When Sachin Tendulkar used to play those gorgeous straight drive I had a privilege to stand on the non striker's end. This is the story will be told to my grand kids. May you have blessed birthday with happiness, health and abundance of Karisma which u carry with u all the time.

Army Pal: Making a splash in open-water swimming



CHENNAI, APR 24:

Army Pal, the open-water swimmer from India, had to beat 87 participants in the 10 KM open-water race to earn the gold medal at Swim Miami 2024. A feat that has not been achieved by an Indian in a race of this stature in the US.

The 22-year-old is training at the World Aquatics open

water development centre in Miami, Florida as part of the FINA Aquatics Scholarship Programme. "I am getting the opportunity to use the best facilities in the world and working along with some of the best swimmers in the world is a motivation in itself," he told this daily from Miami. The unique feat was hailed by

the Swimming Federation of India which felt this could lead to an Olympic quota in the next Olympics. A son of a bank employee father and a housemaker mother from Hooghly in West Bengal, who earned his name as a result of many of his family members from his maternal side serving in the armed forces, started swimming because his mother wanted to put his energy to some good use. "I was an active kid and there was a swimming pool close to my house and my mother sent me there to swim. Once I started, I enjoyed swimming a lot. Then in 2012, I started competing and I came last in my first-ever race. I couldn't stop crying because I didn't win a medal. My mother bought me a medal from the market and she has been supporting me since then. With that, I think, I got that aggression in me that I also have to win and be better. I started working harder with that motivation.

Roy, Carlos help Odisha outplay Mohun Bagan



BHUBANESWAR, APR 24:

Local favourites Odisha FC remained unbeaten at home, coming back from behind to edge out Mohun Bagan Super Giant (MBSG) 2-1 in the first leg of the Indian Super League semifinal.

At the Kalinga Stadium as the day heat merged into the night, a determined looking

Odisha FC went about their chores with earnestness. Mohun Bagan, coming from their maiden League Shield triumph last week, looked confident and did not give much room to the home team to weave their magic.

The two teams remained equal in the previous two meetings in the league stage

(2-2 and 0-0) this season as well. Spirited MBSG put forward their best foot forward and got an early lead in the third minute itself. The goal was scored through a free-header by Manvir.

Not bogged down by pressure, the home team started dominating. The 11th minute corner kick was taken by Ahmed Jahouh and Delgado who was unmarked who found the net with a crisp shot. Roy Krishna became Odisha FC's highest goal-scorer in a single season after scoring his side's second goal in the 39th minute.

The first-half ended with 2-1 in favour of the home team. The second half was full of action. In the 67th minute the MBSG came down to 10 players as Sadiku was red carded. Similarly, in the 72nd minute Odisha FC also came down to 10 players as Carlos Delgado was sent off. The semifinal Leg 2 match is on April 28.

2024 FIDE Candidates winner D Gukesh sign autographs to fans in Toronto

MUMBAI, APR 24:

Winner of the 2024 FIDE Candidates India's D Gukesh was seen signing autographs, talking to children and answering their questions at a fan meet-up in the Trinity Bellwoods Park in Toronto. 17-year-old Gukesh had edged past a troika of stalwarts: America's Hikaru Nakamura, and Fabiano Caruana and Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi to become the Candidates winner on Monday. While Nepomniachtchi is a two-time World Championship contender, World No 2 Caruana was competing in his fifth Candidates event, having won it once. Meanwhile, Nakamura, the World No 3, was competing in his third Candidates event.

Despite their experience, they could not prevent the Candidates debutant Gukesh from breasting the tape first. With one round to go, Gukesh had raced into the lead while the trio were just half a point behind him.

Gukesh only needed a draw with Nakamura in his final game, provided the other game between Caruana and Nepomniachtchi also drew. If either of the latter had won, they would meet Gukesh in a tiebreaker.

Emil Sutovsky, the CEO at FIDE, the global governing body of chess, on social media after the teenager from Chennai had emerged victorious in the prestigious eight-player event held to handpick the challenger to the world champion Ding Liren in the World Chess Championship in November-December this year.

Indian squash's Peter Pan, Saurav Ghosal, bows out of professional circuit after stunning 21 years on the Tour

MUMBAI, APR 24:

The only boasting in Saurav Ghosal's never-growing-old Peter Pan-like squash career, was the delightful nicks that hit the side wall and then trickled to the front walls. On the court, he carried good humour and dollops of humility.

The 37-year-old vividly remembers when he first played squash. With his father watching at the Calcutta Racket Club, an eight-year-old Ghosal loved creating geometrical angles on the court with the racquet and ball.

A day after he announced his retirement from professional squash he will still represent the country the 37-year-old recalled his first steps on the court. "I did not know the names of any squash players at that time. I just started visualizing different angles on the court and it made me go back to the court again and again. That's what kept me going all these years," Ghosal told. While Ghosal started PSA



journey at the Country View Open in 2003, 21 years ago, it was his title triumph in the 2004 British Junior Open that pointed to his immense potential after he defeated Egyptian Adel el Said in the final at Sheffield, England. The Kolkata player recalls how the win over the Egyptian gave him a confidence boost that he could be successful at the sen-

ior level too.

"It has been a long time since that feat. I remember I was not seeded and my game was not my best at that time. But the quarter-finals win over the third seeded Egyptian made me feel in my bones that if I could win today, I could win the title. The junior British Open title was like a spring for me to make the transition from

the junior to senior level and it remains one of the nicest memories of my career," Ghosal remembered.

From 2003 till his last PSA Tour appearance at the Windy City Open, where he lost against Timothy Brownell of USA in the round of 64, Ghosal played a total of 511 matches on the PSA Tour. The 37-year-old won a total of 281 matches, appearing in 18 PSA Tour finals and winning ten titles.

Ghosal also broke into the top 10 in 2019. It had come on the heels of him reaching the quarters of world championships, PSA Grasshopper Cup and Macau Open. "To reach the top ten had been a dream, the six months among the world's top ten remains a cherished memory," Ghosal said.

With Egypt dominating the squash world, Ghosal had his share of wins over some of their top-ranked names in the world.

Nadal says he'll only play French Open if he can 'compete well'

MADRID, APR 24:

Rafael Nadal said on Wednesday he will only play at the upcoming French Open if he feels "capable enough to compete well". The 14-time Roland Garros champion conceded that if the action in Paris were to kick off today, he would not be able to participate but vowed to keep fighting for the chance to play at his most successful tournament one last time. "I don't know what's going to happen in the next three weeks. I will keep fighting and doing the things I believe I have to do so I can try to play in Paris, and if I can play, I play, if I can't, I can't," the former world number one told reporters at the Madrid. "I will not play in Paris if I am the way I am now. If Paris were today, I wouldn't take to the court. That's the reality. I will only play in Paris if I feel capable enough to compete well." Nadal returned to tennis in Brisbane in January after spending almost an entire year



on the sidelines nursing a psaos injury. But his comeback was short-lived as he sustained a muscle problem in Australia and has competed in just five matches so far this season.

The Spaniard kicked off his clay campaign in Barcelona last week, where he lost in the second round and is set to face

16-year-old American Darwin Blanch in his Madrid.

"I don't think I'm ready to play at my 100 percent but I'm prepared to go out and play tomorrow. It's important for me to play one last time here in Madrid, for me it means a lot," said the 37-year-old Nadal.

As he attempts to resume his

'Last Dance' in Madrid and say goodbye to one of his favourite tournaments on court, rather than on the sidelines, the 22-time major champion admits his farewell tour hasn't been as enjoyable as he would have hoped.

"A few weeks ago, I didn't know if I will be able to play again on the professional tour, so today I am playing," he added.

"It's not perfect, of course not perfect, but at least I am playing and I can enjoy again, especially in the few tournaments that are so emotional for me. I'm able to enjoy the fact that I can say probably goodbye on court."

Nadal says he's hitting the ball well when he is able to be on court but "it's about more body limitations. I went through a lot of things last year and a half, two years".

"So body feelings are not enough good to feel myself playing with freedom enough in terms of body issues.

MS Dhoni Snaps At Photographer, His Epic Act Leaves Fans In Splits

MUMBAI, APR 24:

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) veteran MS Dhoni played just one ball in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 match against Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday. Though Dhoni's time on the crease was limited, he still remained one of the most captured players from the match by photographers. In fact, Dhoni is often shown on the screen even when he is in the dressing room. Probably a little tired of seeing his face constantly on the big screen, Dhoni snapped at a photographer, producing a bottle-throwing act that left social media in splits.

As for the match, LSG all-rounder Marcus Stoinis defied the odds with his relentless onslaught and his maiden ton guided Lucknow Super Giants to a 6-wicket win over the Chennai Super Kings.

Following the match in the post-match presentation, CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad said, "Tough pill to swallow but LSG played a good game at the end. We had the game in hand around the 13th over, but hats off to Stoinis. There was a huge part that the dew played. It took the spinners away from the game. We could have taken the game deeper. But it is a part of the game, you cannot control the uncontrollable."

Gaikwad also gave clarification about his decision to send Ravindra Jadeja ahead of Shivam Dube in the batting order.

"Jaddu is batting at number four. We lost the second wicket in the powerplay and he was the one to come at that stage. We have a clear process, that whenever a wicket falls (during the powerplay) Jaddu is the one to come in. Batting first we could not have got more than that. I never thought it was enough. It was just about enough with the amount of dew we were having. Credit to them for how they batted," concluded the captain.

'It was a plan' Sandeep Sharma explains how he got Suryakumar Yadav's wicket with a split-finger slower ball



NEW DELHI, APR 24:

Sandeep Sharma, the Rajasthan Royals seamer, operates in anonymity. He doesn't own the strapping built of a pace bowler, he has often turned up for unglamorous sides like Punjab Kings, Sunrisers Hyderabad and now Rajasthan Royals. But more often than not he has punched

above his weight.

Every time he does well the pundits and fan calls him underrated. "I don't know. I have never thought about it," he tells. After a long pause, he adds: "Kabhi kabhi lagta hai mujhe mera due nahi mila jo milna chahiye tha (Sometimes I feel like I never got the credit I deserved."

He is not tearing his hair over it. "But it's fine. I am not 23-24 anymore. By the end of this tournament, I will turn 31. Few things are just not in your hands," Sandeep, who has played two T20Is in 2015, adds. It was a sweet moment of triumph as he had gone unsold in 2023 before Royals picked him as a replacement for the injured Prasad Krishna. "When I went unsold, it broke me. But at the same time helped me grow as a person. Now I am taking every game as a bonus. I am not taking anything for granted. I am enjoying my game more now," he says.

A swing bowler touted the next Praveen Kumar after his exploits in the 2012 U-19 World Cup in Australia, the 30-year-old from Patiala kept evolving. At the Sunrisers, he picked up the knuckleball from Bhuvneshwar Kumar; at Royals, he evolved into a death-overs specialist, a role he is really enjoying.

IPL 2024: Chennai Super Kings shed off middle-overs slowdown to go big

CHENNAI, APR 24:

After their heavy loss against Lucknow Super Giants last week, Chennai Super Kings skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad admitted that middle-overs slowdown cost them dear as the team fell short by about 10-15 runs.

"I know we finished off really well couldn't have asked for more — but I think after the powerplay, we couldn't just kick-off from the start we got until the 14th or 15th over," Gaikwad had said. "We kept losing wickets at regular intervals. I think (we were) 10-15 runs short," he had added.

The five-time champions had scored 62 runs between 7 and 16 overs losing three wickets in Lucknow in the first leg match between the two teams. Five out of those 10 overs were bowled by LSG's spinners Ravi Bishnoi and Krunal Pandya and they went for only 29 runs. In those overs, Pandya bowled Ajinkya Rahane for 36 off 24 balls and



had CSK's Impact Sub Sameer Rizvi stumped for 1. It was a cause of concern for the Chennai franchise and needed to be addressed as soon as possible.

Before the loss against Lucknow, CSK had defeated Mumbai Indians, their only away win from the four matches so far. What stood out in the win was the team's scor-

ing rate between 7 to 16 overs wherein they scored 103 runs, losing two wickets. It was the only time CSK scored more than 100 runs in that period before Tuesday as the Gaikwad-led side improved their previous best by scoring 105 runs in the middle overs against the visiting LSG here at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.