

'Dhoni never said drop Yuvraj. Sachin was shocked. Gambhir won't even look at me'

NEW DELHI, MAR 11:

Sandeep Patil was India's chief selector for four years. In that time his committee dropped some of the biggest names in Indian cricket — Yuvraj Singh, Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir among them. He has mostly stayed quiet about it.

or years, Yuvraj Singh's father Yograj Singh has publicly blamed MS Dhoni for his son being dropped from the Indian team. Patil chaired those selection meetings. He says Dhoni had nothing to do with it.

"Not once — not during selection meetings, not on tour, not during matches — did Mahendra Singh Dhoni say drop Yuvraj Singh. I am going on the record." Did Dhoni at least push back when the committee decided to drop Yuvraj?

"He had total confidence in the selection committee. He didn't say any-



thing." On Yograj's anger, Patil said: "A father feeling strongly about his son is not wrong. But the blame is being placed in the wrong place."

In late 2012, after a Test series loss to England in Nagpur, Patil and fellow

selector Rajendra Singh Hans requested a meeting with Sachin Tendulkar. They first had to take formal permission from the Anti-Corruption Unit before doing so. When they sat down with him, Patil asked one question.

"He said, 'Why?' I told him the committee was looking for a replacement. He was shocked. He called me again — are you serious? I said yes."

Patil is clear the committee never formally dropped Tendulkar or told him to retire. "Selectors can drop a player. Selectors cannot tell a player his career is over. We asked his plans. He said he wanted to continue. We said okay."

Tendulkar eventually announced his own retirement and called Patil when he did. "Sandy, I'm announcing my retirement." When the Nagpur meeting became public, the backlash was severe. Patil remembers one headline — "Sachin Tendulkar bowled by Sandip Patil" — and laughs at it. "So I was such a great bowler that I took Sachin Tendulkar's wicket?" He accepts some of the criticism. "I understand why people were angry. He is Sachin Tendulkar." But he also points to what came after.

IPL 2026: Holders RCB to take on SRH in season opener, Chinnaswamy clearance awaited

CHENNAI, MAR 11:

Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru will take on Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League 2026 season opener at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on March 28, the BCCI announced on Wednesday. However, all matches in Bengaluru are subject to clearance by expert committee on March 13.

Several states set to go for polls and the dates are yet to be finalised. Keeping that in mind, the BCCI has announced the schedule only for the first 20 games that will run till April 12. In the first set of schedule announced, Chennai, Guwahati and Kolkata — three cities that has state elections — will host



only two, three and three matches, respectively. While the opening weekend do not have any afternoon games, the subsequent weekends will have double-headers with first 20 matches set to be played in 16 days. Chennai Super Kings will open their campaign in Guwahati against Rajasthan

Royals on March 30 before moving to Chennai for the Punjab Kings match on April 3. CSK will take on RCB in Bengaluru on April 5. SRH, meanwhile, will play only one game at home in the first phase while travelling to Bengaluru and Mullanpur for their away games.

'Pakistan batsmen were trembling': Shahid Afridi reveals pressure of facing MS Dhoni's India in 2011 WC semi-final in Mohali

MUMBAI, MAR 11:

India won their third T20 World Cup with a 96-run win over New Zealand in the T20 World Cup final at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad in front of the home crowd. It was a rare World Cup triumph for India in home conditions: India's last World Cup win at home was in the 2011 ODI World Cup, with the MS Dhoni-led side scoring a six-wicket win over Sri Lanka in the final at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. Just like in the recent T20 World Cup, one of the defining games for India back in 2011 was a win over arch-rivals Pakistan, where the Dhoni-led Indian team



stormed into the final with a 29-run win over Shahid Afridi-led Pakistan in the semi-final played at Mohali, which was also watched by the Indian PM Dr Manmohan Singh and then Pakistan PM Yusuf Raza Gilani. Afridi has now shared how the Indian team benefited from the home crowd and how some of the Pakistan batsmen were trembling while going to bat in the tense clash. He said that the Pakistan team was

under immense pressure when they lost wickets after a fine start.

"I remember when we were playing the World Cup semi-final at Mohali in 2011, we made a very good start. Mohammad Hafeez and Kamran Akmal were batting and our score was 90 something for loss of no wicket (Pakistan were 44 for 0 before they lost Kamran Akmal). I, as the captain, was sitting relaxed in the dressing room believing that we will win the match. After the first wicket fell, the way the crowd got behind the

Indian team and the way the Indian team were fighting, some of our batsmen were trembling while going out to bat. I, as a leader and captain, was seeing that after Hafeez got out (Hafeez got out with Pakistan score of 70 for 1), their players were high in confidence after every ball. I believe we came under a lot of pressure," Afridi said. While India had won its first ODI World Cup under the captaincy of Kapil Dev in 1983, the country won its second World Cup title in the form of the T20 World Cup in 2007 under the

captaincy of MS Dhoni. The 2011 World Cup semi-final against Pakistan at Mohali was the fifth instance that India was facing the arch-rivals in a ICC ODI World Cup having won all four of the previous such encounters.

Batting first, India had posted a total of 260 for 9 in the allotted 50 overs. India were once 115 for 1 before they lost three wickets in the next few overs to be placed at 141 for 4.

Sachin Tendulkar played a patient knock of 85 runs to hold the front at one end before a 36-ball 39-run cameo by Suresh Raina took India to a fighting total. Chasing the target, Pakistan were 70 for 1 in 15.2 overs before Hafeez fell to the pace of Munaf Patel. Pakistan were eventually bundled out for a total of 231 runs in 49.5 overs with India marching into the final. Post the match, Afridi had lauded the efforts of Pakistan pacer Wahab Riaz, who claimed four wickets of 38 runs including the wickets of Virender Sehwag, Virat Kohli, Yuvraj Singh and MS Dhoni.

'Absolute freak': Former Australian bowler heaps praise on Jasprit Bumrah after T20 World Cup win

NEW DELHI, MAR 11:

Former Australia fast bowler Damien Fleming was full of praise for Jasprit Bumrah after the Indian spearhead's match-winning performance in the final of the T20 World Cup. Bumrah delivered another standout performance, claiming 4/15 in four overs, as India defeated New Zealand by 96 runs in the final to lift the T20 World Cup title.

Fleming particularly highlighted Bumrah's slower delivery, comparing it to a curveball in baseball — a variation that deceives batters through subtle changes in pace and movement. Beyond the variations, however, Fleming was particularly impressed by Bumrah's ability to keep improving despite already being regarded as one of the premier fast bowlers in the game.

"That slower ball of his is like a curveball in Baseball. It's absolutely brilliant. You think with these great fast bowlers, when do they plateau



Bumrah, with each big tournament or big series, is enhancing his reputation. When will it ever stop? He is an absolute freak, Jasprit Bumrah," Fleming said.

Another Australian fast-bowling great, Glenn McGrath, admitted he was slightly concerned about how long Bumrah would continue playing a heavy workload in Test cricket.

With the physical demands of back-to-back Tests increasing, McGrath wondered whether the Indian pacer might eventually prioritise white-ball formats — something he said would be a huge loss for Test cricket. He added that in such a scenario, fans might only see Bumrah in select Tests, such as marquee series against Australia.

"My concern, as he's a little

bit older now, is that playing back-to-back Test matches is getting tougher for him. Is he going to just start focusing on white-ball cricket? That'll be a massive loss to Test cricket if he did. We might only see him rarely in Test matches, maybe against Australia," he said.

He also highlighted how different the Indian ace pacer looks compared to other fast bowlers when he runs in to bowl. He particularly praised Bumrah's ability to bowl a probing Test-match length even in T20 cricket while still possessing a range of highly effective variations, describing him as a 'gun' bowler.

"Just how good is he. When he comes on, he looks completely different to every other fast bowler. Batters try to line-up every other bowler when they are set, but not him. What I like about Bumrah is how he bowls the really good Test match length successfully in T20s. His other variations are all brilliant as well. He is just a gun," McGrath said.

Ruthless Sinner subdues Fonseca to reach Indian Wells quarter-finals

INDIAN WELLS, MAR 11:

Four-time major champion Jannik Sinner edged talented Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4) in a scintillating Stadium Court clash on Tuesday to reach the quarter-finals at Indian Wells. The first meeting between the world number two Sinner and the big-hitting 19-year-old lived up to expectations, the fireworks sparking a raucous response from a crowd packed with enthusiastic Brazilian fans. Sinner will face another fast-rising youngster in 20-year-old Learner Tien of the United States for a place in the semi-finals. Fonseca went toe-to-toe with the Italian in a tense first set but was unable to convert his lone break chance and Sinner failed to capitalize on two. A couple of uncharacteristic Sinner errors helped Fonseca power to a 6-3 lead in the tiebreaker, but the Italian responded, denying one set point with an ace to launch a run of five straight points that sealed the set. Sinner looked headed to a comfortable victory with a break for 4-2 in the second, but Fonseca wasn't about to go quietly. He broke Sinner to love in the ninth game and held for 5-5 as they went to a second tiebreaker.

An ace gave Fonseca a 4-3 lead in the decider, but Sinner surged home with four straight points, polishing off the win with a masterful forehand service return. "I felt like trying to be as aggressive as possible was the key," said Sinner, who is chasing a first title in the prestigious Masters 1000 event in the California desert. "Joao's an incredible talent, very powerful from both sides. He was serving very well. Maybe he dropped a little bit at the end of the second set, but I'm very happy to get through," Sinner added. Tien saved two match points to reach his first Masters 1000 quarter-final with a 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) victory over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

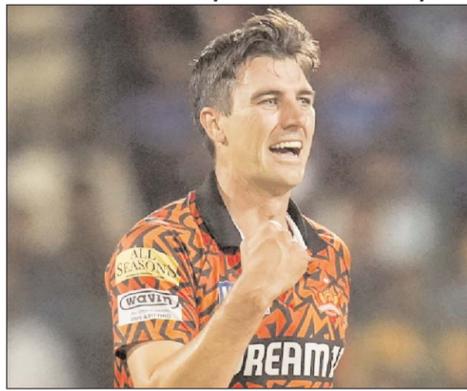
Lamine Yamal's penalty rescues Barcelona from defeat at Newcastle in Champions League

NEWCASTLE, MAR 11:

Lamine Yamal's penalty with the last kick of the game rescued Barcelona from defeat at Newcastle in a 1-1 Champions League last 16, first leg draw. The Magpies were headed for a night to savour at St. James' Park when Harvey Barnes opened the scoring on 86 minutes. Yamal had been a peripheral figure but showed the composure of one of the world's best players from the spot after Dani Olmo was tripped by Malick Thiaw deep into stoppage time. The Liga champions still have work to do when the sides meet again on March 18, but will leave Tyneside relieved after a sub-par performance from Hansi Flick's side.

Newcastle's bid to make the quarter-finals for the first time was dealt a blow before kick-off when Anthony Gordon was forced to start on the bench due to illness. Only Kylian Mbappe has scored more than Gordon's 10 Champions League goals this season and the England international's threat was badly missed as Newcastle applied early pressure. Eddie Howe had billed this game as the biggest in the club's history and the desire to make amends for a FA Cup exit to Manchester City and a disappointing Premier League season showed. Howe made a bold choice with Gordon's replacement as William Osula came in at the expense of club record signing Nick Woltemade and Yoane Wissa up front. Osula's pace troubled Barca's high defensive line early on, but Newcastle's best attempt to break the deadlock before half-time came from a corner. Joan Garcia spilled his attempt to save Sandro Tonali's header and needed to be rescued by a goal-line clearance from Pau Cubarsi. The home side continued to press for a breakthrough in the second period. Anthony Elanga should have picked out Barnes for a simple finish when his low cross was cut out by Garcia.

SRH IPL 2026 Schedule: Sunrisers Hyderabad fixtures list, match dates, timings, venues



NEW DELHI, MAR 11:

Sunrisers Hyderabad will start their IPL 2026 season against defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru on the opening day of the season. After the first game Hyderabad will face Kolkata Knight Riders in an away clash, then face Lucknow

Super Giants at home and travel to Mullanpur to play last year's finalists in Punjab Kings.

Sunrisers Hyderabad entered the 2025 season of the Indian Premier League with high expectations due to their power-packed batting lineup and hopes of producing sever-

al high-scoring encounters. However, the batting-dominant side failed to deliver consistently, falling short of expectations after having made the final in 2024.

South African asset in Heinrich Klaassen was retained despite the rumours of potential exit while the likes of Adam Zampa and Rahul Chahar were let go. The headline exit is of Indian pacer Mohammed Shami who was traded out to Lucknow Super Giants. With Shami already being traded to the Lucknow Super Giants for Rs 10 crore, SRH let go of some domestic talent like Abhinav Manohar, Rahul Chahar and Simarjeet Singh. They have managed to keep hold of their star assets like Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma and Pat Cummins.

"Wanted to keep nucleus together, happy with how players performed. Happy to go with enough of a purse to target players.

CSK IPL 2026 Schedule: Chennai Super Kings fixtures list, match dates, timings, venues

MUMBAI, MAR 11:

Five-time champions Chennai Super Kings will start their IPL 2026 campaign against Rajasthan Royals in Guwahati on March 30, Monday.

The first phase of the IPL 2026 schedule comprising 20 matches were revealed on Wednesday, 17 days out from the tournament opener featuring defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Chennai Super Kings had a disappointing 2025 season in the Indian Premier League finishing at the bottom of the points table for the first time in the franchise's history after managing only four wins across the tournament. However, the five-time champions will be hoping for a turnaround in the upcoming season after undergone a major overhaul in the auction process. The 10-franchise IPL will start just 20 days after the final of



the ICC Men's T20 World Cup on March 8.

Among the most high-profile signings for the Yellow Army has been the trade of Sanju Samson into the franchise, marking one of the biggest ever trade deals in IPL history. CSK acquired the Kerala wicket-keeper's services from the Rajasthan Royals in exchange for their star all-

rounders Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran. CSK also made history by breaking the bank for two uncapped stars — Kartik Sharma and Prashant Veer — during the IPL 2026 mini-auction last December. The two youngsters were bought for Rs 14.5 crore each, the highest bid for uncapped players in the history of the IPL auction.

Bodo/Glimt's Champions League run sparks debate over domestic postponements



MUMBAI, MAR 11:

Bodo/Glimt's superb Champions League run has drawn global praise but left their domestic rivals frustrated after several of their Norwegian league matches were postponed to accommodate the club's European schedule. The club from north of the Arctic Circle have enjoyed a stellar run in

Europe's elite club competition, sneaking into the playoffs with stunning victories over Manchester City and Atletico Madrid before knocking out last season's finalists Inter Milan with a 5-2 aggregate victory to reach the last 16.

Glimt's European success, however, has created logistical and scheduling challenges ahead of the new Norwegian

season.

The Norwegian league campaign begins this weekend, but with Glimt facing Portuguese side Sporting in the Champions League last 16, their opening two domestic fixtures against Sarpsborg 08 and HamKam have been postponed with no new dates set.

"It has become a bit much," Zlatko Tripic, who captained Viking to the league title ahead of Glimt last season, told.

The Viking skipper said he understood the challenges of balancing domestic and European commitments but warned against giving priority to one club. "We cannot take such extreme consideration for Glimt," he said. "It creates confusion in the schedule and I hope we can avoid that in the future," he added, suggesting the Norwegian league could instead start its season earlier in March to avoid congestion later in the campaign.

'Shubman Gill can't be T20I captain anymore': Former opener rules out all-format captain for India after T20 World Cup win

NEW DELHI, MAR 11:

With India marching to their third T20 World Cup title under skipper Suryakumar Yadav in Ahmedabad last week, former opener Aakash Chopra has ruled out the potential return and appointment of Shubman Gill as the next T20I captain.

Gill, who had taken over as Test and ODI captain last year, made a surprise return to the T20I squad after 14 months in September 2025. The right-hander was immediately named vice-captain at the 2025 Asia Cup, displacing Sanju Samson from the opening spot. However, Gill's indifferent form in the format extended to 15 games where he failed to notch up a single half-century. Chopra said the Punjab batter will find it difficult to return to the T20I set-up with the chances of all-format captaincy looking slim.

"It's going to be difficult,



although the Indian team thought that it would become easier if there were one captain for all three formats. However, it won't happen at all. I feel we won't be able to do that because he is the Test and ODI captain, but he can't get the T20I captaincy. At this moment, even his name com-

ing is difficult because of the way the Indian team has been playing, especially the last four games," Chopra said.

Chopra said that with India putting on mighty totals, Gill should instead focus on his long-format abilities and not dilute them in a bid to adjust with the T20I game.