

# Raina ready to be back in the hunt

'Looking forward to an opportunity with two T20 World Cups coming up'

**EXCLUSIVE**

**S. DINAKAR**  
CHENNAI  
Belief is everything for Suresh Raina. He is the sort of character who never says never.

Recovering well from a knee surgery, Raina was here on Thursday as a guest of honour at AARUUSH'19, a National level techno-management fest, conducted by the SRM University.

The 32-year-old Raina later said in an exclusive chat with *The Hindu*, "Basically my left knee was cleaned up. I expect to be back playing in November."

The strokeful southpaw, a game-changer, has not given up on his India dreams, with two T20 World Cups in successive years, 2020 and 2021. Raina can unsettle attacks with explosive hits, cheeky shots, and can rotate the strike.

The man with 5,615 ODI and 1,605 T20I runs, said with conviction, "I can be the No. 4 for India. I have batted in that slot before and delivered. I am looking forward to an opportunity with two T20 World Cups coming up."

At the same time, Raina had words of sympathy for Rishabh Pant who is going



**Target:** Suresh Raina eyes the No. 4 spot in the Indian line-up, but also has words of sympathy for Rishabh Pant. • S. DINAKAR

**Only Dhoni will decide when he leaves the game**

through a rough phase at No. 4. "He appears confused, is not playing his natural game. He is looking for singles, blocking, and appears lost."

Raina added, "Someone needs to talk to him as M.S. Dhoni would do to players. Cricket is a mental game and Pant has to be backed to play his attacking brand of cricket. Right now he seems to be playing under instructions and it is not working."

The southpaw also empathised with Ambati Rayudu who retired from cricket

following the disappointment of not being picked for the World Cup and then changed his mind to return to the game. Raina said, "I felt bad for him. He had been there and groomed for a role for two years. It can be devastating to anybody."

**Dhoni an asset**  
The Uttar Pradesh cricketer said Dhoni had a lot more to offer to the game. "He is still fit, still a terrific wicket-keeper and still the greatest finisher in the game. Dhoni will be an asset for India in the T20 World Cup."

Raina felt Dhoni should have surfaced earlier in the

order in that gripping World Cup semifinal against New Zealand. "Had he come earlier, he could have guided Pant and then we still had Pandya and Jadeja. Even then he kept India in the fight till the very end and we would have won but for the direct hit from Guptill."

The smashing southpaw said, "Only Dhoni will decide when he leaves the game." He said "togetherness and team spirit" was CSK's secret of success. "We have many match-winners but we play as a cohesive unit. And we have Dhoni."

The wounded Raina is ready to be back in the hunt.

# Happy playing for India: Deepak Chahar

'I could've been where I'm now two seasons ago if not for injury'

**S. DIPAK RAGAV**  
JAIPUR

Over the last two years, Deepak Chahar's stock is on the rise. He has been a part of the Indian team in the last two T20I series. Having reached the top, the 27-year-old is leaving no stone unturned in order to sustain his place there.

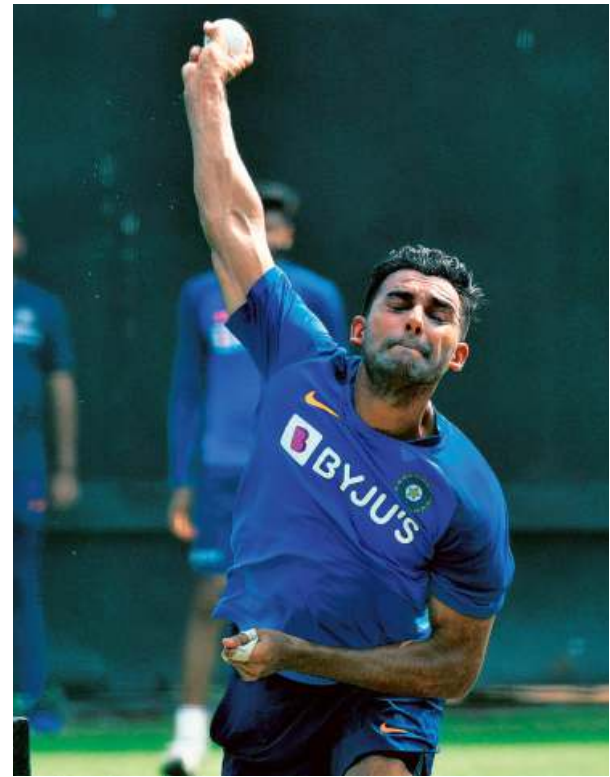
*The Hindu* caught up with Deepak, playing for Rajasthan here in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. *Excerpts:*

**How does it feel to be an India regular?**

It is a dream come true. I have been working hard for 15 years. If I had made my debut immediately after my first season of First Class cricket, maybe it would not have been that special. But after struggling for years and performing and then playing, makes you happy.

**It has been a long wait after a dream debut in Ranji Trophy in 2010. How did you handle the tough times?**

That was just luck. I could swing the ball but to get 40 wickets in the season, I would just say it was a good time for me. After that, I struggled a lot. I got injuries or jaundice once, for three straight years just before the season started. Then I was in that phase where I had changed my action to increase my pace and I lost my



**Allround effort:** Deepak Chahar wants to win matches with his bowling, but feels scoring runs gives an edge. • AKHILESH KUMAR

rhythm for a year or two.

But I had changed my action six to seven times since childhood, so I knew how much time it takes. I was in my early 20s, so I knew that even if I lost one or two years, I would be only 24 when I play for the country. So I took the chance even though I struggled to get a

place even in Rajasthan.

**Talk us about the impact of IPL on your career?**

Stephen Fleming selected me for Rising Pune Supergiant as a batting allrounder because I scored two fifties in practice matches. He saw me as someone who can bat and swing the new ball for one or

**I have worked hard on my batting and have to prove myself as a batsman**

two overs. Mahi Bhai had told me I would play all the matches but while batting in a practice match I injured my hamstring and missed most of that season (2016). Then next year Steve Smith became captain; so... I could have been where I am now two years ago if not for the injury. After the 2017 IPL final, I asked (M.S. Dhoni) as to what I need to do and he said just improve your skills and you will be picked for Chennai. I was able to do well for CSK and the fact that I could bowl well in Chennai conditions and on that wicket gave me confidence that I could do well anywhere.

**Any specific targets for you in this competition?**

There is one more month to go for me before the T20I series against Bangladesh (beginning on Nov. 3). I have worked hard on my batting and have to prove myself as a batsman. Because when you play for the country or India-A, you don't get a lot of chances. So this is the place where I can show what I can do with the bat. I obviously want to win matches with my bowling, but scoring some runs gives you an edge.

# Rahane wants to don the India blues again

Missing the World Cup still rankles the Test vice-captain

**G. VISWANATH**  
MUMBAI

Ajinkya Rahane is in a happy space now, especially after a very successful Test series in the West Indies, where he made 271 runs with one century and two half-centuries for an average a fraction over 90.

But, being overlooked for the ICC World Cup still hurts. At least thrice in the course of an interaction, arranged by his employer Indian Oil here on Thursday, Rahane said he enjoys playing ODIs and wants to don the India blues again.

**Frustrating time**  
It was frustrating for the 31-year-old Mumbaier to be away from action for more than eight months after the Test against Australia in Sydney in January, but a two-month stint with Hampshire helped him prepare for the West Indies.



**Getting in the groove:** Ajinkya Rahane goes into the South Africa series on the back of a rewarding series in the West Indies. • AP

"When I got to know that I was not in the World Cup squad, the plan was to look to play County cricket. Luckily Hampshire called me and I played there for two

months," said Rahane. Rahane said the aim was to get used to red-ball cricket in England. "I played seven matches in two months and it really helped. I focused on

playing the ball close to the body and trusting my ability," said Rahane. On the possibility of Rohit Sharma opening the innings, Rahane replied: "You want

me to answer that question? We all know the quality he brings. Test cricket is all about mindset, whereas ODI cricket is all about backing yourself. In Tests, if two bowlers are bowling good spells, you have to come strongly out of it. And so if Rohit plays, I will be happy."

**On Rabada**

On South Africa pace bowler Kagiso Rabada, Rahane said: "He is a quality bowler, whatever may be the wicket. We have to respect him, not only him but also the other bowlers. Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj (left-arm spinner) did well with the red ball in County cricket."

Rahane said focus on individual skills were secondary as how the team fared was of paramount importance. And, good use of the knowledge of the conditions would stand India in good stead, he said.

# Dramatic win takes Dabang to the top

Overcomes a six-point deficit and fights back to score 13 points in the last four minutes

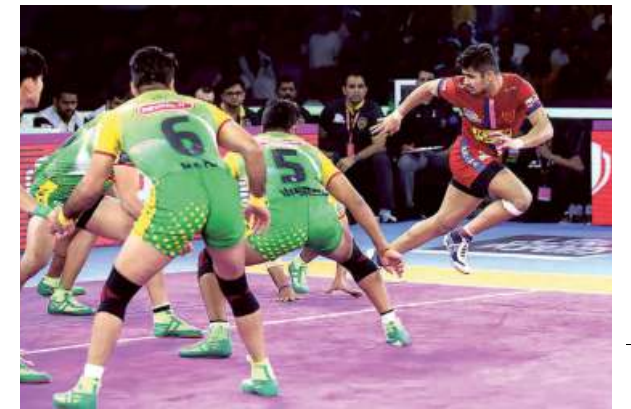
**PKL**

**UTHRA GANESAN**  
JAIPUR

In a game that went level for large parts with occasional moments of individual brilliance and team lapses, Dabang Delhi overcame a six-point deficit, fought back to score 13 points in the last four minutes and regained the top spot on the leaderboard with a 43-39 win against Patna Pirates on Thursday.

The most crucial moment came in the 36th minute. With his team six points behind, Vijay went in for a raid, came away with five points, and sent out four defenders. That changed the equation and an all-out later, with the clock winding down, Dabang had managed perhaps its most dramatic win of the season.

The result also put a span-



**Slipping away:** Naveen scores a point for Dabang.

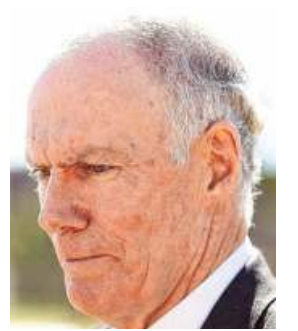
ner in three-time champion Patna's chances of making it to the playoffs in the seventh season of the Pro Kabaddi League despite the heroics of its captain Pardeep Narwal, who crossed quite a few personal milestones through the game - the first to complete a massive 1100 raid points and 50 super raids in the competition and 200

touch points this season. He admitted later that he would gladly trade them all for a win.

For Dabang, the spotlight remained on Naveen Kumar and his raids.

**The result:** Dabang Delhi 43 (Vijay 13, Naveen Kumar 11, Chandran Ranjit 8) bt Patna Pirates 39 (Pardeep Narwal 19, Jang Kun Lee 7).

# Greg Chappell retires as Aussie selector



Chappell. • GETTY IMAGES

Australia is on the hunt for a new national selector after Greg Chappell announced his retirement from the game on Thursday.

The former Australian skipper, who played 87 Tests and 74 ODIs, had been Cricket Australia's national talent manager for the past nine years as well as a selector.

Former Test wicket-keeper Graham Manou will take over an expanded role of national talent and pathway manager, with a replacement selector to be named at a later date.

The current panel consists of Chappell, chairman Trevor Hohns and coach Justin Langer.

Cricket Australia chief Kevin Roberts said: "Greg has had a profound and positive impact on cricket for generations," he said.

# Ramkumar and Behar move into the quarterfinals

**INDIANS ABROAD**

**SPORTS BUREAU**  
ORLEANS

Ramkumar Ramanathan and Ariel Behar of Uruguay made the doubles quarterfinals with a 3-6, 6-3, 12-10 victory over Maxime Janvier and Stephane Robert of France in the €137,560 Challenger tennis tournament here.

In the ITF women's event in Tabarka, Tunisia, national

junior champion Humera Shaik overcame 11 double-faults to beat compatriot Jennifer Luikham 6-4, 4-6, 7-5 in the first round.

**Ashmitha advances**

In a similar tournament in South Africa, Ashmitha Easwaramurthi made the quarterfinals, while Zeel Desai bowed out after winning the first set love against Kristin Younes of Israel.

**The results: €137,560 Challenger, Orleans, France: First round:** Ariel Behar (Uru) & Ramkumar Ramanathan bt Maxime Janvier & Stephane Robert (Fra) 3-6, 6-3, [12-10]; Ruben Bemelmans (Bel) & Nenad Zimonjic (Srb) bt Rameez Junaid (Aus) & Purav Raja 4-6, 7-6(4), [10-6].

**\$15,000 ITF men, Nanchang, China: Second round:** Taisei Ichikawa (Jpn) bt Nitin Kumar Sinha 6-2, 5-3 (retired); Takashi Saito (Jpn) bt Anirudh Chandrasekar 5-7, 6-0, 6-0.

**Doubles: Quarterfinals:** Anirudh Chandrasekar & Vijay Sun-

dar Prashanth bt Cheng Han & Changli Zhang (Chn) 6-1, 6-3; Chukang Wang & Zihao Xia (Chn) bt Vasith Cheruku & PC Vignesh 3-6, 6-4, [10-5].

**\$15,000 ITF: Cairo: Second round: Men:** Daniel Michalski (Pol) bt Dhruv Sunish 6-1, 6-1.

**Women:** Sathwika Sama bt Tamara Milosevic (Srb) 6-3, 6-0.

**\$15,000 ITF men, Antalya: First round:** Paul Woerner (Ger) bt Adil Kalyanpur 2-6, 7-5, 6-1.

**\$15,000 ITF women, Anning: Second round:** Meiqi Guo (Chn)

bt Sowjanya Bavisetti 6-1, 6-0.

**\$15,000 ITF women, Johannesburg: Second round:** Kristin Younes (Isr) bt Zeel Desai 0-6, 6-1, 6-3; Ashmitha Easwaramurthi bt Mikayla Faure (RSA) 6-3, 6-0.

**Doubles: Quarterfinals:** Maria Vittoria Viviani (Ita) & Zeel Desai bt Demi Tran (Ned) & Ashmitha Easwaramurthi 7-5, 6-0.

**\$15,000 ITF women, Tabarka, Tunisia: Second round:** Humera Shaik bt Jennifer Luikham 6-4, 4-6, 7-5.

# Maana — fighting the good fight

Phelps' words of advice early this year acted like a booster dose

**SWIMMING**

**N. SUDARSHAN**  
BENGALURU

Maana Patel is happy to be back to her chirpy self. After an 18-month injury lay-off between 2016 and 2018, following a tear in her left shoulder, she is inching towards her best.

The evidence was in the pool on the opening day of the Asian Age Group swimming championship when she claimed the gold in the 50m backstroke.

**Looking ahead**

"I got a 29 [29.92s] after three years. So I am really happy," the 19-year-old said with a grin. "I am gradually back to believing in myself and in the next few months, I

will be up there and clocking personal bests."

But the days she sat out because of the injury were "like hell," she said.

Ever since Maana broke all three senior backstroke records (50m, 100m and 200m) at a tender age of 13 back in 2013, the burden of expectations has been immense. She then dreamt about Rio 2016 only for things to take an abrupt turn.

"I just wanted to quit swimming. I thought I'd never comeback and I was finding it hard to believe in myself. I had insomnia and lost a lot of weight.

"I was depressed. Then surgeons told me I couldn't support a surgery because I didn't have big muscles. So I was asked to do physiotherapy instead. The rehab



**Backing herself:** Maana Patel, who won the 100m backstroke silver on Thursday, believes she will soon be back at her best. • SUDHAKARA JAIN

stretched to one-and-a-half years.

"The whole recovery process slowed down because I had stopped believing in myself. But my mother really helped me. She kept saying 'if you come out of this successfully, it will help over-

come other life challenges.' I am glad I didn't stop."

Things, she said, started looking up at the senior Nationals in Thiruvananthapuram in 2018, where she swept all three backstroke events. A few words of motivation by none other than Michael Phelps early this year acted like a booster dose.

"He told me that 'if you have been out of the water for 18 months, then it will take 36 months to get back to the same level again.' That sort of eased things a bit," she said.

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**Self-belief**

To be sure, Maana is still some way off. Her timing of 1:05.08 in the 100m backstroke on Thursday that fetched her a silver is a good three seconds behind even the B-mark for Olympic qualification. But she is confident of improving.

"I need to be patient. I basically tell myself that I have faced challenges before and I can do it again. There is nothing new. Just the water and me."

# I don't stand for what society has become

Takes inspiration from Kaepernick to stand up to racism

**BASKETBALL**

**ASHWIN ACHAL**  
BENGALURU

When National Football League (NFL) player Colin Kaepernick protested racial discrimination in the United States of America by kneeling during the pre-game national anthem, it got Kelli Hayes thinking.

Hayes, at the time a part of top American college basketball team UCLA Bruins, wanted to join the movement. As a person of mixed race - half-Black, half-Filipino - she had faced racism too.

So her UCLA teammates decided to support Hayes's view by linking hands during the national anthem. "The U.S. national anthem does not really exemplify what the people of America have become today. There is lot of racial disparity, and a lot of injustices. Linking arms, in lieu of putting our hands across our heart, is to show that I don't stand for what the government and what the society has become," Hayes said here.

There were some who interpreted the team's stand as a slight to nationalistic pride. "There was some backlash, but when you do something respectfully to shine light on



Kelli Hayes. • K. MURALI KUMAR

powerful issues, you can expect people to appreciate that," she said.

After completing her UCLA stint, Hayes made another bold move, choosing to represent the Philippines national team instead of playing her trade in the USA. "Representing the USA - my country of birth - would have been great. But I'm happy to represent another country that is also a big part of me," Hayes, a dual citizen, said.

The Philippines side, however, has had a tough time in this tournament, losing all three of its group matches. "We have worked hard, but the results have not gone our way. The goal now is avoid relegation and stay in Division-A," the 23-year-old said.