

Sanjiv Goenka, Rishabh Pant’s IPL team owner, lauds LSG captain for Leeds hundred

NEW DELHI: Bought for a whopping \$3.1m (INR 27 crore) at the IPL auction in November last year, Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) captain Rishabh Pant starred for Team India in the ongoing first Test against England at Headingley in Leeds, hitting his record third Test hundred in the whites on English soil. Although his form for LSG in IPL 2025 worried his team owner, Sanjiv Goenka, the business tycoon took to his social media handle to laud Pant for his historic feat. Meanwhile, once trolled for publicly lashing out at the former LSG captain KL Rahul last season, Goenka celebrated his team’s results this time.

“Three’s a charm with brilliant centuries from @ybj_19, @ShubmanGill, and now @RishabhPant17. Rishabh reaching his ton with a six speaks volumes about the future of Indian cricket. A commanding start to the series. #IND-



vsENG,” Goenka wrote on his X handle. Pant’s 134 headlined day two of the series opener; however, he was not the only one to get to the triple digits. Earlier on day one,

opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and newly-appointed Test captain Shubman Gill completed their respective maiden tons on English soil, with Jaiswal scoring a brilliant 101 while Gill

notching up 147. Meanwhile, it was the fourth instance in Indian Test history when three separate batters completed their respective centuries in an innings in an

overseas Test – the second time at the same venue (in 2022), and first since 2006 – when Virender Sehwag, Rahul Dravid and Mohammad Kaif hit hundreds against West Indies in Gros Islet.

While Ben Stokes dismissed Jaiswal clean bowled on 101 on day one, Shoaib Bashir and Josh Tongue accounted for Gill and Pant, respectively, on day two.

After dominating England for nearly four sessions, India lost all momentum just before lunch by losing three wickets quickly, only to lose the remaining ones afterwards.

India was reeling at 430 for three at one stage but got all out on 471, losing the remaining seven wickets for just 41 runs.

While lead seamer Chris Woakes returned wicketless, captain Stokes and seamer Tongue picked four each, with Brydon Carse and Bashir scalping one each to their names.

Faf du Plessis on why cricket’s American dream is just getting started



NEW DELHI: For Faf du Plessis, captain of the Texas Super Kings, cricket in the United States isn’t just another T20 franchise gig — it’s a chance to witness and shape the game’s evolution in a country with untapped potential. Now in his third season of Major League Cricket (MLC) – all three coming for Texas Super King – the South African star sees clear signs of progress. “I think what we’ve seen, from year one to year two, the domestic cricketers, the quality has improved a lot. And that’s in any league around the world. If you create enough opportunity, people do rise to the top,” said the 40-year-old to TimesofIndia.com. “So I think, yeah, if you fast forward this league, I think in 10 years time from now, it’ll be exciting to see what American cricket can do.” “Initially in year one, it was just playing in a

different country, new wickets where we haven’t played on. The surfaces in year one were a little bit tricky and by the time we got to year two, it was better.”

“So playing in those conditions, you’re just trying to use your experience to problem solve when you get out there and see what’s the best way possible to succeed,” he added.

And du Plessis has used his experience brilliantly so far. In four matches, he’s scored 133 runs including a 51-ball century against the San Francisco Unicorns. He’s also left a mark with a one-handed catch.

On the leadership front, Texas Super Kings are second in the points table as of June 21 with three wins out of four played. Their only has come against the yet unbeaten Unicorns. Having spent seven years with the Chennai Super Kings – sister concern of the TSK – du

Plessis brings a wealth of leadership experience to Texas, working closely with coach Stephen Fleming — a partnership built on trust and friendship. “There’s synergy in our personalities. We’ve had consistency across franchises, and that carries through in Texas too.”

Leading a diverse team of international and American cricketers, du Plessis stresses the importance of relationship-building. “I think wherever you play or captain, it’s about understanding the culture of the different guys that are there. So the most important thing is spending time with people and getting to know them better so that you build relationships. And through relationships, you build trust. And trust is really important when it comes to the cricket field,” he explained on leading the TSK in MLC.

160-Million-Year-Old Blue-Stain Fungus Discovered in China

Blue-stain fungi are a distinct group of wood-colonizing fungi that do not have the ability to break down wood lignocellulose. Despite this, they can cause noticeable discoloration in wood.

Although they are generally not fatal to trees, their presence, especially when combined with wood-boring insects, can accelerate tree mortality.

Molecular phylogenetic studies suggest that blue-stain fungi belong to an ancient fungal lineage, possibly originating in the Late Paleozoic or early Mesozoic eras. However, very little is known about their presence in the fossil record. “Not until 2022, the first credible fossil record of blue-stain fungi was reported from the Cretaceous in South Africa with an age of approximately 80 million years,” says Dr. Ning Tian from Shenyang Normal University in Shenyang, China.

A Chinese research team led by Dr. Ning Tian and Dr. Yongdong Wang from the Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology (CAS) discovered well-preserved fossil fungal hyphae inside a piece of Jurassic petrified wood from north-eastern China, dated to 160 million years ago.

Microscopic analysis shows that the fossil hyphae are dark in color, indicating the presence of pigmentation, a key feature of modern blue-stain fungi responsible for wood discoloration.

Notably, the hyphae often form a specialized structure known as a “penetration peg” when entering the wood cell walls. In other words,



the hyphae narrow in size to push through the rigid cell walls more easily. The presence of penetration pegs allowed the researchers to con-

firm that the fossil fungus belongs to the blue-stain group.

“Unlike wood-decay fungi, which degrade wood cell walls through en-

zymatic secretion, the blue-stain fungi lack the enzymatic capacity to decompose wood structures. Instead, their hyphae mechanically breach wood cell walls via the penetration pegs,” Dr. Tian explains.

“The finding of Jurassic blue-stain fungi from China, represents the second report of the blue-stain fungi and the earliest fossil record of this fungal group in the world, pushes back the earliest known fossil record of this fungal group by approximately 80 million years, providing crucial fossil evidence for further understanding the origin and early evolution of blue-stain fungi. Additionally, it offers fresh insights into understanding the ecological relationships between the blue-stain fungi, plants, and insects during the Jurassic period,” says Dr. Wang.

The bark beetle subfamily Scolytinae is considered as one of the major spore dispersal agents for extant blue-stain. However, both molecular biological and fossil evidence proposed that the origin time of Scolytinae dates back no earlier than the Early Cretaceous. Given the Jurassic age of present fossil fungus, it is hypothesized that its spore dispersal vector was not Scolytinae but rather other wood-colonizing insects prevalent during that period.

Reference: “Blue-stain fungus from the Jurassic provides new insights into early evolution and ecological interactions” by Ning Tian, Yongdong Wang, Fangyu Li, Zikun Jiang and Xiao Tan, 26 April 2025, National Science Review.

Shubman Gill’s first pep talk as Test captain fired up Team India



NEW DELHI: A baggy blue cap on his head, hands on his teammates’ shoulders, and a few charged-up words to fire up his squad — it was a familiar huddle for Shubman Gill, but this one held extra weight. At the boundary ropes of Headingley Stadium in Leeds, Gill addressed his team for the first time as India’s Test captain. With the batters having delivered a dominant performance, his message was clear: Let’s bowl England out early and take a 1-0 lead in the series. India were bowled out for 471 in their first innings of the opening Test against England, with three standout centuries leading the way.

Skipper Shubman Gill (147), vice-captain Rishabh Pant (134), and opener Yashasvi Jaiswal (101) laid a solid foundation for India’s strong position in the match. Gill and Pant shared a game-shifting 209-run stand

for the fourth wicket after Jaiswal and KL Rahul (42) had posted a 91-run opening partnership.

Jaiswal’s 101 came off 159 balls and included 16 fours and a six. Gill struck 19 boundaries and a six in his 227-ball 147, while Pant was the most aggressive, blasting 12 fours and 6 sixes during his 134-ball knock — his seventh Test hundred, now the most by any Indian wicketkeeper in the format.

India, resuming at 359/3 on Day 2, lost their remaining seven wickets for 112 runs. Ben Stokes (4/66) and Josh Tongue (4/86) were the pick of England’s bowlers.

This total of 471 is now India’s highest first-innings score in an away Test since they made 622/7 declared at Sydney in 2019. It’s also their highest in a first innings in England since 664 at The Oval in 2007.

Researchers present bold ideas for AI at MIT Generative AI Impact Consortium kickoff event

Launched in February of this year, the MIT Generative AI Impact Consortium (MGAIC), a presidential initiative led by MIT’s Office of Innovation and Strategy and administered by the MIT Stephen A. Schwarzman College of Computing, issued a call for proposals, inviting researchers from across MIT to submit ideas for innovative projects studying high-impact uses of generative AI models.

The call received 180 submissions from nearly 250 faculty members, spanning all of MIT’s five schools and the college. The overwhelming response across the Institute exemplifies the growing interest in AI and follows in the wake of MIT’s Generative AI Week and call for impact papers. Fifty-five proposals were selected for MGAIC’s inaugural seed grants, with several more selected to be funded by the consortium’s founding company members.

Over 30 funding recipients presented their proposals to the greater MIT community at a kickoff event on May 13. Anantha P. Chandrakasan, chief innovation and strategy officer and dean of the School of



Engineering who is head of the consortium, welcomed the attendees and thanked the consortium’s founding industry members.

“The amazing response to our call for proposals is an incredible testament to the energy and creativity that MGAIC has sparked at MIT. We are especially grateful to our founding members, whose support and vision helped bring this endeavor to life,” adds Chandrakasan. “One of the things that has been most remarkable about MGAIC is that this is a truly cross-Institute initiative. Deans from all five schools and

the college collaborated in shaping and implementing it.” Vivek F. Farias, the Patrick J. McGovern (1959) Professor at the MIT Sloan School of Management and co-faculty director of the consortium with Tim Krasaka, associate professor of electrical engineering and computer science in the MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL), emceed the afternoon of five-minute lightning presentations.

“AI-Driven Tutors and Open Datasets for Early Literacy Education,” presented by Ola Ozernov-Palchik, a research scientist at

the McGovern Institute for Brain Research, proposed a refinement for AI-tutors for PK-7 students to potentially decrease literacy disparities.

“Developing jam_bots: Real-Time Collaborative Agents for Live Human-AI Musical Improvisation,” presented by Anna Huang, assistant professor of music and assistant professor of electrical engineering and computer science, and Joe Paradiso, the Alexander W. Dreyfoos (1954) Professor in Media Arts and Sciences at the MIT Media Lab, aims to enhance human-AI musical collaboration in re-

al-time for live concert improvisation.

“GENIUS: GENerative Intelligence for Urban Sustainability,” presented by Norhan Bayomi, a postdoc at the MIT Environmental Solutions Initiative and a research assistant in the Urban Metabolism Group, which aims to address the critical gap of a standardized approach in evaluating and benchmarking cities’ climate policies.

Georgia Perakis, the John C. Head III Dean (Interim) of the MIT Sloan School of Management and professor of operations management, operations research, and statistics, who serves as co-chair of the GenAI Dean’s oversight group with Dan Huttenlocher, dean of the MIT Schwarzman College of Computing, ended the event with closing remarks that emphasized “the readiness and eagerness of our community to lead in this space.” “This is only the beginning,” he continued. “We are at the front edge of a historic moment — one where MIT has the opportunity, and the responsibility, to shape the future of generative AI with purpose, with excellence, and with care.”

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