

Not CSK! Amit Mishra Predicts the Semifinalists of IPL 2026

According to the latest reports, Amit Mishra has identified four franchises he believes will reach the semifinals of **IPL 2026**, *excluding* Chennai Super Kings — in a move that surprised many fans and pundits alike. Cricket Times

Here's a breakdown of his projected semifinalists:

1. **Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR)**
2. **Mumbai Indians (MI)**
3. **Punjab Kings (PBKS)**
4. **Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH)**

This quartet reflects a mix of historic strength, auction strategy, and roster potential — but notably deviates from some classic power rankings. Let's unpack each selection and why Mishra might be backing them.

1. Kolkata Knight Riders: Dark Horse to Watch

KKR have been reshaping their squad as they head into IPL 2026 with a substantial purse and high-profile signings after their recent auction. Navbharat Times

In the 2026 mini auction, KKR made waves by securing **Matheesha Pathirana** with a record bid, earning him the label of “Baby Malinga.” Navbharat Times Such strategic investments signal their intent to bolster both pace bowling and death-over control — essential ingredients for playoff success.

Coach and management stability, along with a potent mix of power hitters and key bowlers, position KKR as one of the teams with a legitimate title push. Mishra's confidence in them aligns with their aggressive roster planning and the depth they now possess.

2. Mumbai Indians: Consistency Meets Experience

Mumbai Indians have long been a bastion of IPL success, and their core strength heading into 2026 remains intact. Despite a relatively modest auction presence, MI's squad carried over most of their playing XI from the previous season. SportsCafe.in

Adding depth players through trades and smart picks like Sherfane Rutherford and Shardul Thakur has strengthened their options, while star performers like **Jasprit Bumrah**, **Hardik Pandya**, and other seasoned campaigners continue to anchor the team. SportsCafe.in

Mishra's inclusion of MI among the semifinalists echoes a broader sentiment that experience, balance, and tactical maturity often matter as much as auction fireworks — especially in the long grind of an IPL campaign.

3. Punjab Kings: Rising Through Strategic Building

Punjab Kings are another intriguing pick in Mishra's semifinal projection. Coming off a strong performance and near-title run in recent seasons, Punjab have developed a squad that blends firepower with tactical depth. Bookies.com

A well-balanced team effort last year translated into consistent victories, and although they narrowly missed silverware, their core remains largely intact. With players capable of single-handedly changing games, Punjab have the type of momentum that can propel them deep into the tournament.

Mishra's endorsement of PBKS underscores how balance across batting, bowling, and fielding — rather than just star marquee players — can define success in the IPL's playoff race.

4. Sunrisers Hyderabad: The Sleeper Contender

Sunrisers Hyderabad's inclusion might be the most unexpected part of Mishra's lineup, but it's not without rationale. Historically resilient and known for strong bowling units, SRH have quietly built a squad that can outperform expectations when peak performance aligns.

Their bowling attack — often a decisive factor in T20 contests — can stifle opposing lineups, and with some shrewd talent retention and signings, they have the tools to pull off crucial victories in key moments. Bookies.com

Fans might view this pick as underdog optimism, but when balanced on Hyderabad's strategic discipline and knack for playoff-level performance, the choice feels grounded in realistic potential.

Why CSK Did *Not* Make Mishra's List

The omission of **Chennai Super Kings** from Mishra's semifinal predictions has grabbed headlines. As a five-time IPL champion, CSK are usually among the favorites in every season. APSense

However, CSK's squad has undergone significant changes heading into the 2026 campaign, including retirements, player movements, and tactical transformations. While they retain a passionate fan base and seasoned leaders, their evolving dynamics may create uncertainties that pundits like Mishra see as challenges in clinching a semifinal spot.

Whether that view holds up once the tournament unfolds remains a topic of heated discussion among fans and analysts — but it certainly makes his prediction more talked-about. Cricket Times

How Auction Moves Could Impact the Predictions

The IPL 2026 **mini auction** and recent player trades have reshaped many team fortunes. Some key additions and movements that factor into semifinal outlooks include:

- **David Miller to Delhi Capitals** — Bolstering DC's lower order with experienced firepower. The Times of India
- **Cooper Connolly to Punjab Kings** — Adding batting depth and youth promise for PBKS. Navbharat Times
- **CSK's acquisition of Rahul Chahar** — Strengthening spin options but still part of a transitional rebuild. Navbharat Times
- **Gujarat Titans retain strong core** — Led by Shubman Gill, positioning them as dark horses for knockout stages. The Times of India

These auction results feed directly into predictions like Mishra's, since every team's balance of firepower, bowling depth, and tactical flexibility influences their chances of semifinal qualification. The Times of India

Fan Reactions and Expert Debate

Cricket fans have taken to social media to share their views on Mishra's predictions:

- Some applaud the boldness of excluding CSK, arguing that the league's unpredictability requires fresh perspectives.
- Others feel CSK's experience and leadership still make them strong contenders, regardless of squad churn.
- Fans of the four projected teams have used the forecast as motivation and fuel for spirited debate.

This prediction dynamic highlights how the IPL narrative is shaped not only by players on the field but also by strategic forecasts and fan engagement off it.

Looking Ahead: IPL 2026's Semifinal Race

As IPL 2026 draws closer, every team's strategy — from youth integration to marquee player roles — will be put to the test. With Amit Mishra's semi-final predictions stirring conversation, fans will be watching closely to see:

- **How early season form translates into playoff momentum**
- **Whether dark horses like SRH can upset traditional powerhouses**
- **If strategic auction moves pay off when it matters most**

One thing is certain — predictions like these add another exciting layer to the world's biggest T20 league, giving fans new storylines to follow as the action unfolds. Cricket Times

Conclusion: A Season of Surprises Awaits

Amit Mishra's semifinal forecast for **IPL 2026** — notably excluding CSK — highlights the evolving dynamics of the league and the competitive balance between franchises. Whether his picks prove accurate or not, they underscore how unpredictable and thrilling the IPL ecosystem has become.

With key players shifting teams, young talents emerging, and seasoned veterans refining their roles, the race to the final four is shaping up to be one of the most intriguing in IPL history. Stay tuned as the season unfolds and these bold predictions are put to the ultimate test. Cricket Times