

Top 5 Favourites to Win the Player of the 2026 ICC T20 World Cup ft. Pathum Nissanka, Hardik Pandya, Mitchell Marsh, and More

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The 2026 ICC T20 World Cup is less than a fortnight away, and the build-up to the T20 extravaganza is heating up as most of the teams are already playing or are set to play in bilateral T20I series to perfect their preparations for the tenth edition of the ICC T20 World Cup.



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The tenth edition of the T20 World Cup would mark a new leaf in the history of the tournament, as this will be the first edition which would not be marked by the presence of former Indian skipper Rohit Sharma or former Bangladesh skipper Shakib al Hasan.

Veterans like David Warner and Virat Kohli have played some memorable performances in the recent editions of the marquee tournament, but will not appear in the 2026 edition. This year could mark the rise of new legends in T20Is with the likes of Suryakumar Yadav, Aiden Markram, Harry Brook, and Mitchell Marsh vying to win their first ICC tournament as the skipper of their respective nations.

While batters have majorly ruled the roost in terms of winning the Player of the Tournament accolade at the previous T20 World Cups, the last edition witnessed Jasprit Bumrah bagging the individual accolade after a thoroughly impressive performance, helping India end their 17-year wait for the ICC

T20 World Cup trophy.

Let's have a look at the top four favorites to win the Player of the Tournament award at the 2026 edition of the ICC T20 World Cup:

#5 Marco Jansen (South Africa)

Marco Jansen will have to contribute as a genuine all-rounder in the 2026 ICC T20 World Cup

Marco Jansen has emerged as one of the best all-rounders in T20 cricket over the last couple of years, as his power-hitting abilities have consistently improved, and the lanky all-rounder now stands as the firm favorite to play at No.7 or No.8 for the Proteas.

Placed alongside New Zealand and Afghanistan in Group D, South Africa would have an unenviable task of being at their best from the word 'go', which could prove to be tough, as showcased in their 3-1 loss to India in a recent bilateral series in similar conditions.

Jansen showcased his power-hitting in the dead rubber of the series, smashing two boundaries and three maximums in 12 deliveries and also bowled a brilliant spell of 2/25 in four overs in the only match Markram's men won in the tournament.

#4 Mitchell Marsh (Australia)

The Australian skipper has proven to be a powerhouse for Lucknow Supergiants, and despite the fact that Supergiants struggled in the 2025 edition of the Indian Premier League season, Marsh ended up in the Top 5 of the Orange Cap race

with 627 runs in 13 innings at a strike rate of 163.71.

After winning the 2021 ICC T20 World Cup, Australia has suffered two consecutive disappointing campaigns in the tournament, and both campaigns hurt the Kangaroos in different ways. While the loss in the 2022 edition at home would have arguably hurt them the most, the fact that they were eliminated by dark horses Afghanistan from the last edition would have stung even more for the fans down under.

A product of Western Australian cricket, Marsh is one of the three Australian batters to feature in the Top 11 of the ICC T20I Men's Batter rankings, alongside Travis Head and Tim David. The opening batter is well-versed with pitches in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Chennai, which could benefit the 2021 ICC T20 World Cup champions in the Super Eight stage.

#3 Mohammad Nabi (Afghanistan)

Veteran all-rounder Mohammad Nabi would be a key figure in the middle-order for Afghanistan alongside Azmatullah Omarzai and Rashid Khan. Over the years, Nabi has proven his mettle by finishing several matches for the Afghan Atalans and has a career strike rate of 136.59, which further improves to 165.5 when we narrow his T20I record to matches played in India.

Along with his power-packed variety of batting shots, the 41-year old is a wily spinner who can spin webs around the opposition teams, especially on spin-friendly pitches in Chennai and Colombo.

Afghanistan will open their group stage campaign and end it at the M.A.Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai, and their tournament opener against New Zealand could prove to be crucial for their

2026 ICC T20 World Cup chances.

Nabi would be expected to support the spin trio of Mujeeb Ur Rahman, skipper Rashid, and Noor Ahmad while Fazalhaq Farooqi and Omarzai take care of the seam bowling duties. Afghanistan have a strong chance of making it to the semi-finals yet again if they play their cards right with Ibrahim Zadran and Darwish Rasooli in top form at the top of the order.

#2 Pathum Nissanka (Sri Lanka)

Pathum Nissanka has been the shining light for Sri Lanka's flailing batting order in the last couple of years. While the youngster started his career with timid strike rates in T20Is, Nissanka's consistency and improvement in the last couple of years have been rewarded by a bidding war between Delhi Capitals and Kolkata Knight Riders at the 2026 IPL mini-auction which ended with the Capitals shelling out INR 4 Crores to sign the Lankan batter.

Over the last couple of years, the 27-year old has bulked up, gained more power, and opened his shot selection to more options, thus improving his strike rate to 138.53 in 2024 and 149.16 in 2025, which included a century against India in the 2025 Asia Cup. The opening batter stuck to his guns in a chase of 203 runs, scoring 107 runs off 58 balls, smashing 7 fours and 6 maximums, helping Sri Lanka take the dead rubber encounter to a Super Over battle.

The 2014 T20 World Cup champions endured a tough time in the last few editions, even failing to get out of the group stage in the 2024 edition of the tournament, finishing in third place behind Bangladesh. The Lankan Lions would be relying on the brilliance of Nissanka and Wanindu Hasaranga in home conditions, which would provide some much-needed familiarity

to the players.

#1 Hardik Pandya (India)

The defending champions are packed with a plethora of match winners, with Hardik Pandya the most proven all-round option and the senior-most player of the team in terms of appearances for the national team.

The Mumbai Indians skipper would be playing under the leadership of his franchise colleague Suryakumar Yadav, which could prove to be a blessing in disguise, as Pandya would be freed of the captaincy responsibilities and can fully focus on opening the bowling for the Men in Blue alongside Arshdeep Singh or providing the finishing touches with the willow in his hand.

Amidst a patchy injury record, the No.4-ranked all-rounder in the ICC T20I rankings has been completely focused on perfecting his preparations for the upcoming T20 World Cup, as the 32-year old sat out of the ODI series against New Zealand.

Since the start of 2024, Pandya has taken a wicket in almost every three overs in T20Is, and his career batting strike rate of 143.65 is improving further as Pandya has recorded strike rates of 150+ in the previous two calendar years.

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