

2026 Indian League Elite Cricketer AI Public Voice Pulse Check 2026

*Assessing the Public Voice of the
Top 20-ranked Cricketers of the IPL*

Edition 1: 2026

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The Pulse Check examines publicly available information relating to selected elite cricketers and their publicly identifiable relationship with artificial intelligence, including public statements, commentary, advocacy, campaigns, commercial associations and other qualifying AI-related activity. The Pulse Check does not assess or infer an individual's private beliefs, motives, awareness, intent, contractual obligations, legal or political position, moral character or professional conduct. It does not suggest that any cricketer, club, governing body, sponsor or other entity is required to speak about AI.

A finding of "Public AI Voice Identified" means that qualifying, publicly attributable evidence of AI-related commentary, activity, commercial association or other engagement was identified within the published research methodology and observation period.

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WHY PUBLIC VOICE ON AI IN THE WORLD'S MOST POPULATED COUNTRY MATTERS TO ENTERPRISE AI

Enterprise AI transformation is not simply a technological challenge. It is equally a human, enterprise and societal transformation.

Successful organisational change depends on many factors, but trust is one of the most important.

Traditionally in organisational change trust is shaped within the enterprise through leadership, decisions, culture, communication, systems and the experiences employees have with the organisation itself. But AI is different.

Unlike most workplace transformations, AI arrives within a substantial public conversation already attached to it - and in 2026 - a significant degree of distrust.

Long before many organisations begin transforming with AI, people are encountering the technology through news media, social media, governments, technology companies, advertising, entertainment and influential public figures. These external influences contribute to how people understand AI, what they believe it will mean for them, and whether they approach it with optimism, concern or uncertainty.

Employees may therefore enter an AI transformation with established hopes, fears, assumptions and expectations that have been formed well outside the enterprise.

The enterprise is not introducing AI into a blank space. It is joining a conversation that has already begun.

This matters because enterprise AI transformation ultimately depends on people being willing to understand, trust and engage with the changes taking place around them.

When trust is at the centre of AI, and elite sportspeople are among the most visible and influential public figures in society, their public relationship with AI becomes an interesting part of that wider environment.

What This Pulse Check Examines

The AI Public Voice Pulse Check series has been developed to examine how influential public figures engage with AI in the public sphere. It is designed to create a longitudinal record of how some of society's most influential public figures and institutions engage with AI as the technology reshapes work, enterprise and public life.

The 2026 Indian Premier League Elite Cricketer AI Public Voice Pulse Check examines a cohort of 20 leading IPL cricketers to determine whether publicly identifiable evidence of an AI voice can be found.

This study is observational. The question is whether there is a public AI voice on record: has an elite cricketer spoken publicly about AI, participated in an AI-specific initiative, or knowingly associated themselves with an AI-related product or activity?

The assessment considers attributable public commentary about AI as well as qualifying AI-specific public representations, including knowingly associating a player's identity, image, voice or personal brand with an AI-specific product, campaign or initiative.

The purpose is not to determine whether those voices are right or wrong, whether they support or oppose AI, or whether they should have a position on the technology.

Rather, the purpose is to observe engagement with AI, whether direct or indirect, to understand its level and nature across the cohort, and to explore how public voice on AI intersects with public opinion and the broader environment in which enterprise AI transformation takes place.

Why India Provides an Important Context on AI Public Voice

India provides an unusually important environment in which to examine the public conversation surrounding AI.

AI adoption in India is already high, while public sentiment has historically been comparatively optimistic about its potential benefits. At the same time, concerns about the consequences of AI are becoming more visible.

India is therefore experiencing an important tension: AI is being embraced as a source of productivity, innovation, competitiveness, skills and economic opportunity while questions about employment, trust, transparency and human contribution are becoming more visible.

This is particularly relevant to India's employment environment.

India has enormous opportunity to capitalise on AI, but also a level of risk to its sizeable outsourcing and IT industries by virtue of AI's projected ability to absorb routine and rules-based work.

Why Elite Cricketers in the Premier Indian Cricket League are an Important Case Study for Public AI Voice

The Indian Premier League (IPL), from which the cohort of 20 elite cricketers is drawn, provides a particularly powerful cultural lens through which to examine that conversation.

Cricket in India extends well beyond sport. Elite Indian cricketers in the IPL are celebrities, commercial ambassadors, cultural figures and representatives of aspiration and achievement.

Collectively, their public reach is significant, and individually, some players have audiences of extraordinary scale.

At 276 million Instagram followers, Virat Kohli has an Instagram following of a scale comparable with the populations of most countries in the world.

This gives elite cricketers a distinctive position within the public conversation.

Their influence is not simply a function of follower numbers. It is also built through familiarity, sustained visibility, emotional connection and the relationship between players and their audiences.

When an elite sportsperson becomes publicly associated with an issue such as AI, that association enters a much broader cultural environment.

Cricket and AI are already connected. AI is increasingly entering performance analysis, coaching, media, digital content, commercial activity and the representation of athletes.

The commercial environment is changing as well, with Google's AI platform Gemini serving as the title sponsor of the IPL for 2026.

What Does It Mean for an Elite Sportsperson to Lend Their Trust to AI?

The question of commercial association with AI becomes more interesting when considered in the context of the public environment into which that association enters.

AI is not a conventional consumer category. Public attitudes toward it remain mixed and are evolving rapidly. Stanford's 2026 AI Index describes a public conversation in which optimism is rising, but so too is anxiety: globally, 59% of respondents said AI products and services offer more benefits than drawbacks, while 52% said they were nervous about AI. The Index also identifies substantial differences between experts and the public in expectations about AI's impact on work and the economy.

Against that backdrop, a different question arises when an elite sportsperson with millions of followers chooses to associate their personal identity with AI.

Why would an elite sportsperson, trusted by fans and the wider community, lend their name, identity and personal credibility to an AI product or enterprise?

The question is not whether such an association is right or wrong. Nor is it whether the player personally endorses every aspect of AI. A commercial relationship may be based on a

particular product, technology or commercial proposition, rather than on a general position about artificial intelligence.

But the distinction between endorsing a product and being publicly associated with AI may be less clear to an audience.

Elite sportspeople possess something that AI companies cannot manufacture through advertising alone: a pre-existing relationship of familiarity and trust with millions of people. Their audiences have followed their careers, watched them compete, identified with them and, in many cases, developed a personal affinity with them over many years. When that individual chooses to place their name and identity alongside a technology, the association can carry meaning beyond the functional claims of the product itself.

This potentially gives elite sportspeople a distinctive role in the public adoption of emerging technologies. They can make an abstract or unfamiliar technology culturally familiar. They can position it alongside qualities such as performance, achievement, aspiration, innovation and human capability.

But that influence also creates a different kind of consideration.

If public attitudes toward AI become more positive, the association may be perceived as an endorsement of innovation and progress. If concerns intensify around employment, privacy, environmental impact, authenticity, misinformation, regulation or the distribution of AI's benefits, the same association may acquire a different meaning.

The athlete does not control that evolution.

This is particularly relevant because AI itself is changing rapidly. The technology, the claims being made about it and public understanding of its consequences are all moving at a pace that makes today's commercial proposition potentially different from tomorrow's public perception.

The question therefore extends beyond sponsorship.

What is the value, responsibility and potential risk of lending personal trust to a technology whose social licence is still being formed?

The Pulse Check does not attempt to answer that question for individual players. Nor does it suggest that elite sportspeople should avoid commercial relationships with AI.

Rather, the observation is that AI-specific commercial representation is qualitatively different from many conventional endorsements. When an elite sportsperson associates their personal identity with AI, they potentially become part of a much larger public conversation about a technology that is already provoking significant questions about work, human capability, trust and society.

That makes the emerging question not simply whether AI companies will seek out elite sporting identities, but what happens when people with extraordinary public reach choose to lend their personal credibility to AI at a time when society is still deciding how much it trusts the technology itself.

[1]: https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report/public-opinion?utm_source=chatgpt.com "Public Opinion | The 2026 AI Index Report | Stanford HAI"

Results

The 2026 Indian Premier League Elite Cricketer AI Public Voice Pulse Check provides an early picture of how artificial intelligence is beginning to intersect with the public lives of elite cricketers.

The 2026 Indian Premier League Elite Cricketer AI Public Voice Pulse Check examined a cohort of twenty elite IPL cricketers to determine whether a publicly identifiable AI voice could be identified using the published methodology.

The IPL cohort has the highest incidence of identifiable public AI voice or AI-specific association across the four sporting cohorts examined to date. Yet much of that voice does not arise from players consciously positioning themselves as commentators on artificial intelligence.

The headline result is that 9 of the 20 cricketers reviewed had an identifiable public AI voice or AI-specific public association. The more significant finding lies beneath that number.

Applying the methodology, a publicly identifiable AI voice was identified for nine of the twenty cricketers (45%). For the remaining eleven cricketers (55%), no publicly identifiable AI voice was identified within the scope of the review. Of the nine cricketers for whom a public AI voice was identified, three had made publicly attributable comments or direct statements in which artificial intelligence was an identifiable subject or component of the exchange. These represented the clearest form of public AI voice because the cricketers themselves had directly entered an AI-related public conversation.

A further six cricketers had not made identifiable substantive commentary about AI but had a qualifying, publicly attributable AI-specific association. These included participation in AI-enabled cricket media, AI-specific commercial campaigns and partnerships, AI-related sporting activity, or other publicly observable activity in which AI formed a substantive component of the cricketer's public association.

The Pulse Check found AI has entered elite cricket through commercial partnerships, performance

2026 INDIAN LEAGUE ELITE CRICKETER AI PUBLIC VOICE PULSE CHECK RESULTS

RANK	CRICKETER	PUBLIC VOICE ON AI (Either Dimension = Yes)	
		DIRECT AI VOICE (Stage 1)	AI ASSOCIATION (Stage 2)
1	Vaibhav Sooryavanshi	✓ Yes	✗ No
2	Kagiso Rabada	✗ No	✗ No
3	Jofra Archer	✓ Yes	✗ No
4	Bhuvneshwar Kumar	✓ Yes	✗ No
5	Shubman Gill	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
6	Sai Sudharsan	✗ No	✗ No
7	Abhishek Sharma	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
8	Mohammed Siraj	✗ No	✗ No
9	Ishan Kishan	✗ No	✓ Yes
10	Virat Kohli	✗ No	✗ No
11	Jos Buttler	✗ No	✓ Yes
12	Anshul Kamboj	✗ No	✗ No
13	Rashid Khan	✗ No	✓ Yes
14	Krunal Pandya	✗ No	✗ No
15	Eshan Malinga	✗ No	✗ No
16	KL Rahul	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
17	Dhruv Jurel	✗ No	✗ No
18	Mitchell Marsh	✗ No	✗ No
19	Heinrich Klaasen	✗ No	✗ No
20	Sunil Narine	✗ No	✗ No



PUBLIC AI VOICE IDENTIFIED
9 of 20 cricketers (45%)
Yes



NO PUBLIC AI VOICE IDENTIFIED
11 of 20 cricketers (55%)
No

Note: Either Direct AI Voice (Stage 1) or AI Association (Stage 2) = Yes constitutes Public Voice on AI for the purposes of this Pulse Check.

technology, coaching, media, consumer technology, synthetic representation and the cultural language of exceptional human performance.

While AI has entered elite cricket in multiple ways, the cricketers themselves have not yet become a sustained or coherent public voice on AI.

No cricketer within the cohort was identified as having developed what might be considered a broader "position" on AI: a sustained public position on the broader implications of AI for employment, enterprise transformation, trust, governance, human contribution or society. However, there is no suggestion that elite sportspeople are obligated or should be compelled to develop such positions. Rather, it highlights a distinction between the willingness of elite cricketers to participate in public conversations about issues they consider important and the comparatively limited visibility of AI within their public record.

This distinction is important. The Pulse Check does not require a cricketer to have articulated a developed or sustained position on artificial intelligence for a public AI voice to be identified. The methodology is designed to capture the broader range of ways in which AI may enter a public figure's public life, while maintaining a requirement for observable and attributable evidence.

The results also demonstrate AI was frequently visible around the players without necessarily being part of the players' own public voice.

The current public record suggests that AI is becoming part of the environment in which elite Indian cricketers perform, are represented, are commercialised and are understood, even where it has not yet become a sustained subject of public commentary in its own right.

The review identified AI-generated imagery, AI-based performance analysis, AI-mediated media coverage and other AI activity involving individual cricketers. Where the player's participation, authorisation or knowing association could not be established, these examples were not counted as evidence of an AI voice.

The findings therefore suggest that, while AI is increasingly visible within the public and commercial environment surrounding elite IPL cricket, direct player commentary about AI remains relatively limited. Where a public AI voice was identified, it was more commonly established through AI-specific public association than through substantive public discussion of AI itself.

The 2026 Indian Premier League Elite Cricketer Public AI Voice Pulse Check contributes to a broader longitudinal record of how influential public communities are engaging with AI as the technology increasingly reshapes work, enterprise and public life. Its purpose is not to suggest that athletes should speak about AI, but to examine what is publicly visible when they do, and what remains comparatively absent from the public conversation.

The Pulse Check provides a useful mid-2026 baseline for observing what happens next as AI becomes more capable, more pervasive and more

consequential across Indian society and the global sporting environment.

KEY FINDINGS & OBSERVATIONS

1. The elite Indian cricketer cohort shows a comparatively higher incidence of public AI voice, which may be more reflective of the sport and league's associations with AI than of the individual sportsperson

Across the four AI Public Voice Pulse Checks conducted to date - elite football, tennis, Formula Racing and Indian cricket - this cohort produced the highest incidence of identifiable public AI voice. It therefore sits at the leading edge of the four sporting cohorts examined to date in terms of the proportion of elite professional sportspeople for whom an observable public relationship with AI could be identified.

Most of the identified cases are not examples of cricketers delivering developed views about the future of artificial intelligence. Rather, AI has entered the public record because it has intersected with the players' existing professional, commercial or cultural roles.

Shubman Gill was associated with AI through Google's Pixel campaign.

Ishan Kishan was associated with an AI-oriented technology brand.

KL Rahul's cricketing knowledge became part of a GenAI-powered coaching proposition.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Rashid Khan participated in AI-enabled sports media environments.

Abhishek Sharma became publicly associated with AI-generated representations of his identity that became sufficiently consequential to result in legal action.

The common feature is therefore not necessarily what the cricketers think about AI, but rather how AI has intersected with their public role.

This suggests that public AI voice may be shaped less by conscious technological commentary and

more by the circumstances in which the sportsperson encounters AI.

The IPL is not simply a sporting competition. It operates simultaneously as a global media property, commercial platform, entertainment product, technology environment and cultural institution.

The BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India)'s commercial relationship with Google's Gemini provides an example of AI becoming part of the institutional and commercial infrastructure of Indian cricket itself.

The research identified AI appearing through broadcasting and media, consumer technology and sponsorship, performance and coaching, digital content and synthetic representation, as well as through the increasingly important question of how public figures are represented online.

This means that a player does not necessarily have to seek out AI for AI to become part of their public identity.

AI can arrive through the commercial environment surrounding them, through technology used to support their performance, through media products in which they participate, or through the way their identity is reproduced and represented digitally.

The IPL therefore provides an early example of AI becoming embedded across multiple dimensions of a highly visible cultural ecosystem.

The relatively high incidence of public AI association among IPL players may therefore reflect the density of AI touchpoints within the broader Indian cricket ecosystem, rather than a greater propensity among individual players to become AI commentators.

2. It is not unusual for India's elite cricketers to demonstrate public engagement with social issues

The relationship between elite Indian cricketers and wider social issues provides useful context for interpreting the AI findings.

Indian cricketers have, at times, used their public profiles to engage with issues extending beyond cricket.

Rohit Sharma, for example, has spoken publicly about air pollution in Mumbai. Sachin Tendulkar, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma have participated in environmental and tree-planting initiatives, while leading players have also supported community, health and charitable causes.

These examples demonstrate that elite Indian cricketers can and do use their public profiles beyond their sporting performance. The broader pattern, however, is more selective and episodic.

Players may lend their profile to a particular cause, respond to an issue that directly affects them, or participate in an organised campaign without developing an ongoing public role as commentators on wider social or political issues.

With respect to AI as a social issue, several questions arise. Has AI yet become a social issue in its own right? Are cricketers in the study not attuned to the broader questions of AI?

What will future editions of the AI Public Voice Pulse Check reveal?

3. Direct commentary about AI remains limited, with public AI voice more commonly established through association

Of the nine cricketers for whom a publicly identifiable AI voice was identified, only three had made publicly attributable comments or direct statements in which artificial intelligence was an identifiable subject or component of the exchange. The remaining six were identified through qualifying AI-specific public association.

This distinction is central to the Pulse Check. The research does not equate public association with a developed personal position on AI. Rather, it recognises that AI can become part of a cricketer's public identity through a commercial campaign, AI-enabled media environment, technology partnership or other qualifying activity without the cricketer becoming a commentator on the broader implications of AI.

4. AI is being framed around human capability rather than simply human replacement

Public comment on AI from the cohort is connected with human performance and capability and demonstrates the relationship between AI and elite sport.

AI is appearing in the cohort through several relationships with human capability:

- augmenting human performance;
- capturing human expertise;
- distributing human expertise;
- analysing human performance; and
- commercialising human capability.

KL Rahul's cricketing knowledge became part of a GenAI-powered coaching proposition that incorporates batting, technical approach and preparation mindset.

Shubman Gill provides another version of the relationship, with an elite athlete positioned within a commercial proposition built around AI-enabled consumer technology.

At the other end of the spectrum, Jos Buttler and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi demonstrate AI entering the language of cricket as a metaphor for exceptional human ability.

In these examples, AI is being used to describe, augment, capture or distribute what the human can do.

5. AI has been used to characterise exceptional human sporting performance

In the case of Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, AI was used to analyse and demonstrate his performance as something so extraordinary that AI became a metaphor for something that seemed almost beyond ordinary human capability.

Sooryavanshi was directly asked whether there was an AI chip in his bat. Jos Buttler independently described his astonishment by asking whether Sooryavanshi was AI and whether Elon Musk had created him.

There is humour in this, but it also reveals a different message. AI is not only being discussed as something that might enhance human performance, it is also becoming a reference point

against which the limits of human performance are imagined.

AI is also beginning to influence the language through which extraordinary human capability is described.

6. AI can affect a player's identity even when the player has not chosen to engage with AI

In the case of Abhishek Sharma, the identification of a public AI voice arose because AI-generated representations of his identity had become sufficiently consequential to require legal intervention.

The broader research across the Pulse Check series identified other examples of AI-generated material involving elite players, including fabricated images, fictional events and representations.

As generative AI becomes increasingly capable of reproducing images, voices, personalities and performances, the relationship between public identity and AI becomes more complex.

7. AI is converging on players through the infrastructure of the sport

The cases involving Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Rashid Khan illustrate another emerging characteristic of AI in elite sport.

Both players were publicly associated with AI-enabled cricket media environments, yet neither necessarily became an AI commentator as a result. This creates a category of relationship in which the player, technology and media product become intertwined without requiring direct commentary from the cricketer.

The cricketer remains the subject and personality at the centre of the sporting experience, while AI becomes part of the infrastructure through which that experience is delivered, analysed or consumed.

In many of these cases, the player may not be consciously engaging with AI as a subject, but the technology is increasingly shaping the environment in which the player performs, is represented and is experienced by the public.

This creates an important methodological boundary for the Pulse Check: AI may be present within the sporting environment without necessarily constituting the player's own public AI voice. The methodology therefore distinguishes between AI being present around an individual and AI being knowingly and publicly associated with that individual.

8. An Observation on Social Capital – Could Elite Sportspeople be a Sleeping Giant in the AI Conversation?

Elite sportspeople are not required to speak on social issues. Indeed, some would argue that they have no place to do so. Others would prefer that such issues be left to elected representatives, policy makers, economists, technologists or workplace leaders.

But historically, celebrities and elite sportspeople have lent that social capital to matters beyond their professional fields.

Their influence has extended beyond their professional achievements because the relationship they develop with audiences can give them something that few institutions or individuals possess at comparable scale: social capital.

They have supported social causes, raised awareness of community issues, contributed to public conversations and used their platforms in ways that have extended their influence beyond entertainment or sport.

Muhammad Ali challenged prevailing attitudes towards race, religion and war; Billie Jean King used her prominence to advance gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights; Audrey Hepburn used her global fame to advocate for children through UNICEF; and Harry Belafonte used his platform in the civil rights movement and later for humanitarian causes.

These examples are different in purpose, context and consequence, but they share a common characteristic: people with extraordinary public visibility used some of their social capital to bring wider public attention to issues that mattered beyond their profession.

Elite sportspeople occupy a particularly distinctive position within this landscape. Sporting achievement can give them extraordinary reach, while sustained visibility, familiarity and identification with audiences can create high levels of public trust and emotional connection. Their influence is therefore not simply a function of how many people follow them. It is also a function of the relationship audiences have with them.

Their public influence represents a form of soft power. It can attract attention to an issue, make an unfamiliar subject more culturally accessible, signal that an issue matters, or encourage audiences to engage with a conversation they might otherwise overlook.

The implications of AI increasingly extend well beyond technology. AI is reshaping work, education, creativity, communication, identity and everyday life. Public concern and debate are consequently expanding beyond questions of what AI can do towards questions of what AI means for people and society.

This creates an intriguing possibility: if the implications of AI become increasingly social and human, social capital may become more significant to the AI conversation than it is today.

Could elite sportspeople be a sleeping giant in the AI conversation?

9. The Elite Sportsperson potentially represents an accessible trusted public voice for AI Companies

Public trust of AI remains a defining challenge. There is no obvious short-term scenario in which AI simply becomes a universally trusted category. The issue is no longer only whether people perceive AI as trustworthy. As AI becomes more capable and autonomous, questions of reliability, safety, transparency and control are increasingly being experienced in practice. AI systems can make mistakes, behave unexpectedly and, increasingly, act with a degree of autonomy that makes the consequences of those failures more tangible.

If public trust can be influenced by credible human association, elite sport may represent a particularly accessible environment in which to seek it. The combination of global visibility, established personal brands, large audiences and a professional identity that is not directly threatened by AI substitution may make elite sportspeople commercially attractive partners for AI companies seeking to humanise the category and build public confidence.

As AI increasingly enters the commercial marketplace, elite sportspeople may become one of the relatively few categories of highly visible public figures for whom representing AI does not carry an obvious contradiction with the value of their own work.

Elite sportspeople occupy a relatively distinctive position. Their professional value is built primarily around physical performance, competition and human capability. Their work product is therefore, at least presently, less directly exposed to replacement by generative and autonomous AI than the work of many other highly visible public figures.

The contrast is potentially significant. For writers, filmmakers, actors, musicians and other creative professionals, AI is increasingly capable of producing, replicating or materially altering elements of the work through which those individuals earn their living and establish their professional identity. For some, association with AI may therefore carry a more immediate tension: the technology seeking their endorsement may also be perceived as threatening the value, ownership or future of the very work they represent.

That may make elite sportspeople a comparatively accessible category for commercial association with AI companies as the nature of their relationship with the technology may create fewer direct conflicts of interest.

READING THE ROOM - THE STATE OF THE AI CONVERSATION IN MID-2026

The public voice of elite IPL cricketers on AI does not occur in a vacuum. It sits within a broader public conversation about what AI means, what it may deliver and what its consequences may be.

When a public figure or organisation speaks about AI, that voice enters a conversation already shaped by optimism and anxiety, adoption and resistance, opportunity and uncertainty. A positive, neutral or critical voice is therefore received against expectations and assumptions that already exist within the public.

The Pulse Check does not seek to determine whether any particular position on AI is right or wrong. It asks a different question:

Are elite IPL cricketers 'reading the room' of public sentiment on AI?

The Pulse Check series does not attempt to recreate or independently measure public opinion about AI. A substantial and growing body of research already examines public attitudes, sentiment and experience with AI, including research from the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered AI through its AI Index, Ipsos, the Pew Research Center, Gallup, Edelman and Lightcast. The Pulse Checks consider this established body of research as context for understanding the broader public conversation rather than attempting to replicate it.

This distinction is important because the AI conversation is extraordinarily dynamic. Technology capabilities, investment, regulation, enterprise adoption and public understanding are changing rapidly, often in response to one another. At the same time, questions about trust, employment, infrastructure, human agency and whether the benefits of AI will be broadly shared are becoming increasingly prominent.

An Environment That Is Difficult to Predict

The AI environment is extraordinarily dynamic. Technology capabilities, investment, regulation, enterprise adoption, public sentiment and the competitive landscape are changing rapidly and often in response to one another. Developments that appear significant today can be overtaken, revised or challenged within months.

This makes forecasting particularly difficult. It is challenging to know how the AI landscape will unfold over the next three months, let alone the next 12 months or the years beyond.

That uncertainty is precisely why the broader public conversation matters to the Pulse Check.

The findings in this research should not be interpreted against a fixed or settled view of AI. They should be understood against a public conversation that is itself evolving, sometimes rapidly.

The Pulse Checks are therefore best understood as snapshots of the AI conversation at a particular point in time.

They do not attempt to predict where that conversation is heading. Rather, they capture what can be observed about public voice, engagement and participation against a rapidly changing social and technological backdrop.

This provides the context for examining the public AI voice of elite cricketers of the Indian Premier League (IPL): not as a judgment of whether they should speak, but as an observation of what is publicly visible, and how that voice sits within the broader conversation taking place around AI in mid-2026.

Against this backdrop, several themes are particularly visible in the public conversation in mid-2026.

1. The Prospect of an AI Bubble

Concern about a potential AI bubble is not simply a question of whether AI companies or investments are overvalued. It reflects a broader question about whether the scale of investment, infrastructure

development and corporate expectation surrounding AI is sustainable, and whether the benefits ultimately experienced by society will justify the enormous financial and social investment being made.

For the public, the consequences of a significant correction could extend well beyond financial markets. If expectations collapse, it could contribute to growing cynicism about AI, particularly among people already uncertain about its impact on employment, privacy, creativity and trust.

Conversely, continued rapid investment without visible and broadly shared benefits may reinforce a perception that AI is primarily serving investors, technology companies and wealthy economies rather than the wider community.

The significance of the potential AI bubble therefore extends beyond financial valuation. A growing gap between the expectations being created around AI and the benefits experienced by ordinary people could become another source of public scepticism.

2. Data Centres: When AI Becomes a Local Issue

The rapid expansion of AI data centres has brought the consequences of AI directly into communities. What was once a largely invisible infrastructure issue is increasingly being debated in terms of electricity, water, land use, household costs, environmental impact and who ultimately pays for the infrastructure required to support AI.

In the United States, a March 2026 Gallup survey found that 71% of Americans opposed the construction of an AI data centre in their local area, including 48% who were strongly opposed. Environmental impacts, resource consumption, local quality of life and potential increases in energy costs were among the concerns expressed.

Australia is experiencing similar tensions. Governments continue to promote data centres as opportunities for investment, jobs and digital capability, while communities and policymakers are questioning their demands on energy and water resources.

The significance for the public AI conversation is considerable. AI is becoming physically visible within communities. The debate is no longer only about what happens on a screen; it is increasingly about what AI infrastructure means for people's communities and shared resources.

This raises a broader question about the social licence of AI: will people accept the infrastructure required to deliver AI if they do not believe its benefits are being fairly shared?

3. The Prospect of a 'Job Apocalypse' Remains Unclear

The prospect of widespread AI-driven job displacement has become one of the most powerful narratives in the public conversation about AI.

There remains considerable uncertainty about the scale and timing of actual displacement. At the same time, the prospect of AI performing increasingly sophisticated cognitive and professional tasks has created genuine anxiety about career security, particularly among younger people and those entering traditionally white-collar professions.

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 estimates that broader structural labour-market change could displace 92 million roles by 2030 while creating new employment opportunities. Although the report projects a net increase in jobs overall, the roles created will not necessarily be the same roles, in the same locations, requiring the same capabilities or available to the same people.

For many people, therefore, concern is shaped less by long-term economic forecasts than by immediate questions of employment, fairness and human relevance.

Public concern is also not limited to the possibility of mass unemployment. It encompasses uncertainty about what work will remain, how jobs will change, whether people will have sufficient time and opportunity to adapt, and whether human skills will retain their value.

The question is increasingly not simply whether AI will replace jobs, but whether it will fundamentally alter the pathway into work, the value of human contribution and the relationship between people and their employers.

People are being asked to prepare for a future of work that neither governments, employers nor technology companies can yet clearly describe.

That uncertainty is an important part of the public mood surrounding AI and a critical backdrop to any discussion of AI, work and human contribution.

4. AI Companies Are Moderating Some of the 'Doom' Narrative

An interesting development in the 2026 AI conversation has been the softening of some of the more dramatic predictions about AI-driven job destruction.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has acknowledged that earlier concerns about AI rapidly eliminating entry-level white-collar jobs have not materialised to the extent anticipated. This illustrates a broader challenge in the public conversation: predictions about technological capability and predictions about its social and economic consequences do not necessarily move at the same pace.

For the public, changing narratives can raise questions of credibility and trust.

Earlier warnings helped establish the possibility of a 'job apocalypse' as a legitimate part of the AI conversation. A subsequent moderation of those predictions does not necessarily remove the anxiety they created, particularly for people already uncertain about their employment prospects.

It also reinforces a broader question: if the people building AI cannot confidently predict its impact on work, how can employees, governments or the wider public confidently prepare for it?

5. Increasing Government Intervention and Regulation

Another important development in the 2026 AI conversation is the increasing involvement of governments in the governance of advanced AI.

The United States Government's increasingly direct intervention in the activities of frontier AI companies, including actions involving Anthropic, provides a visible example. These developments reflect the growing intersection of advanced AI with national security, economic policy, technology sovereignty and public safety.

For the public, interventions such as these provide tangible evidence that governments themselves regard increasingly capable AI systems as having implications that warrant government oversight.

The conversation is therefore moving beyond the abstract question of whether AI should be regulated. Government intervention is increasingly becoming part of the reality of how frontier AI is developed, deployed and accessed.

This is also consistent with public sentiment. Anthropic's 2026 public research found that more than 70% of Americans surveyed believed government should play a role in regulating AI.

6. Instances of AI Going 'Rogue'

Recent incidents involving frontier AI systems have given the public conversation a more tangible sense of what can happen when increasingly autonomous systems operate beyond their intended boundaries.

In July 2026, OpenAI disclosed that models being tested for cybersecurity capabilities had gained unintended internet access and subsequently compromised systems belonging to Hugging Face during an internal test. OpenAI said the models exploited a vulnerability in a software package installer, allowing them to access the broader internet and ultimately obtain information from Hugging Face's infrastructure.

Other reporting has also documented incidents involving Anthropic and other frontier models during controlled security evaluations, in which AI agents undertook unauthorised or deceptive actions.

These incidents have intensified discussion about control, containment, accountability and human oversight.

The significance extends beyond whether the phrase 'going rogue' is technically accurate. As AI moves from generating answers towards taking actions, the public question increasingly becomes: What happens when an AI system acts in ways its creators or operators did not anticipate?

7. Enterprise Experience With AI: Adoption Remains Relatively Light

Alongside these broader developments, enterprise experience with AI provides another important part of the context.

While AI adoption is expanding, the transformation of organisations remains at an early and uneven stage. The significance of this is that public expectations, concerns and assumptions about AI are developing at a time when many people have yet to experience substantial enterprise AI transformation directly.

This creates an unusual environment for organisations.

Employees may already have formed views about AI through the broader public conversation before they have meaningful experience of how AI will actually affect their work. The expectations entering the workplace may therefore be shaped as much by external narratives as by organisational experience.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of the 2026 IPL Cricketer AI Public Voice Pulse Check is to examine:

- whether a publicly identifiable AI voice can be identified among the elite cricketers of the Indian Premier League
- whether that public record reflects a developed position on AI or only incidental proximity to AI
- the nature of any public AI voice, including the issues, themes and contexts in which AI is discussed.

The Pulse Check is intentionally observational. It seeks to understand what is publicly visible rather than evaluate whether particular views are right, wrong or desirable.

Its value lies in understanding how one of the world's most influential sporting communities is publicly framing AI at a time when AI is increasingly reshaping both professional sports and the enterprises that surround it.

Meaning of a Pulse Check

In enterprise transformation, a pulse check usually refers to a quick, light-touch survey or temperature check designed to gauge employee sentiment, alignment or readiness around major changes, often asking staff directly how they feel.

This Pulse Check applies the same principle in a different way.

Rather than surveying cricketers directly, it observes the publicly visible record to understand how elite cricketers are engaging with AI in the public domain. It therefore represents an external pulse check of public AI voice rather than an internal survey of opinion.

Selection of Cricketers

The Pulse Check examines the 20 highest-ranked players in the 2026 Indian Premier League according to MVP points.

The IPL's MVP system provides a composite measure of player contribution across batting, bowling and fielding. The 2026 season ranking places Vaibhav Sooryavanshi first, followed by Kagiso Rabada, Jofra Archer, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Shubman Gill.

The top 20 players were selected solely on the basis of their 2026 IPL MVP ranking and independently of any assessment of their engagement with artificial intelligence.

This approach provides a transparent, performance-based and reproducible basis for defining the cohort. It also avoids selecting players on the basis of their existing visibility or known interest in AI, which could otherwise introduce selection bias into the assessment of AI voice.

The resulting cohort represents the players who made the greatest measured contribution to the 2026 IPL according to the competition's MVP framework, rather than a subjective assessment of the "best", most famous or most influential cricketers.

What Constitutes Public AI Voice?

For the purposes of this Pulse Check, a public AI voice may include documented material such as interviews, public statements, social media posts and other publicly attributable material linked to a cricketer included within the scope of the Pulse Check.

Only material that was publicly available before the publication date of this report has been considered.

Public AI voice is conveyed not only through commentary, but also through public association. Where an influential individual knowingly and publicly associates their identity, image, likeness, voice or personal brand with an AI-specific product, campaign or initiative, that association forms part of the public conversation about AI. Such representation is therefore treated as a publicly identifiable AI voice for the purposes of this Pulse Check.

The absence of a documented public position should not be interpreted as evidence that a

cricketer has no view on AI. Rather, it indicates that no attributable public position was identified within the scope of the review.

The Pulse Check applies a two-stage methodology to determine whether a publicly identifiable AI voice exists for each cricketer within the defined cohort.

Stage 1 (Primary) asks:

Has the cricketer made a publicly attributable comment about AI?

This is the most direct form of public AI voice because it contributes directly to public discourse. Publicly attributable commentary may include interviews, public statements, social media posts, podcasts, speeches, published articles, media quotations or other comparable public communications in which the cricketer comments specifically on AI.

Where no publicly attributable AI commentary is identified, the Pulse Check applies a second test.

Stage 2 (Secondary) asks:

Has the cricketer knowingly and publicly associated their image, likeness, voice or personal brand with an AI-specific product, campaign or initiative?

This recognises that a publicly identifiable AI voice may also arise through representation rather than commentary. A cricketer may not express a personal opinion on AI, yet may knowingly and publicly participate in, endorse or represent an AI-specific product, service, campaign or initiative. Such public representation forms part of the observable AI landscape and is therefore included within the scope of the Pulse Check.

A publicly identifiable AI voice is established where either Stage 1 or Stage 2 is satisfied. Consistent with the observational purpose of the Pulse Check, the assessment does not evaluate the quality, frequency or significance of the commentary or representation, nor does it assess whether any position expressed is correct or desirable. It seeks only to determine whether a publicly identifiable AI voice exists within the defined scope of the review.

Conceptual and Analytical Foundation

While the Pulse Check asks a relatively straightforward question - what is publicly visible about the AI voice of elite IPL cricketers - the question itself is informed by the conceptual framework developed in the Hearts, Minds & Hands trilogy. The trilogy comprises:

- *The Human Point of Difference (HPOD): Finding Your Human Relevance in the Age of AI*
- *A New Bargain: Reframing the Employment Relationship for the Age of AI*
- *The Jinji Method: Strategic, Sustainable & Humane Enterprise AI Transformation*

The trilogy argues that enterprise AI transformation is ultimately a human, enterprise and societal challenge rather than simply a technological one. It examines AI through the connected lenses of human relevance and identity, the evolving employment relationship, and the strategic, sustainable and humane transformation of the enterprise. The central proposition is that successful AI transformation depends not only upon technological capability, but also upon trust, culture, leadership, public confidence and the way people understand AI's role in work and society.

The Pulse Check explores that proposition through one of the world's most influential sporting communities.

If publicly identifiable AI engagement remains limited among athletes who possess comparatively greater autonomy over their public communications, the findings may suggest that the relative absence of AI discussion extends beyond organisational communication constraints.

Conversely, where meaningful engagement is identified, it may provide insight into how independent global sporting figures are contributing to one of the defining technological and societal conversations of our time.

This observation is significant beyond cricket itself because employees do not encounter AI for the first time when their employer launches an AI strategy. Long before that, their perceptions are shaped through news media, social media,

commercial campaigns, public debate and the voices of influential individuals and institutions. Public sentiment therefore forms part of the environment into which enterprise AI transformation is introduced.

The Pulse Check proceeds from a simple premise: before enterprises transform with AI, societies are already forming opinions about it. Understanding those opinions and the public voices that shape them is therefore relevant to understanding enterprise AI transformation itself.

Accordingly, the Indian Premier League Elite Cricketer AI Public Voice Pulse Check should be understood not simply as a study of professional cricket, but as a case study of how one of the world's most influential communities of independent athletes is contributing to, or remaining comparatively absent from, the wider public conversation surrounding AI.

Consistent with that purpose, the Pulse Check does not seek to determine whether cricketers should speak about AI, nor whether particular positions are correct or incorrect. It is intentionally observational. It asks what is publicly visible, what is not publicly visible, and what those patterns suggest about the current state of AI discourse within one of the world's most influential public communities.

Scope and Limitations

This Pulse Check provides a structured observational baseline of the publicly visible AI landscape among elite cricketers. The findings should be interpreted within the following methodological boundaries.

Public Record Only - The assessment is limited to publicly available material, including interviews, verified social media activity, public campaigns, commercial endorsements, sponsorships, partnerships and media reporting. It does not seek to infer private opinions, unpublished discussions or internal enterprise views.

Observational Rather Than Evaluative - The Pulse Check does not assess whether cricketers should hold, express or promote particular views on AI. Nor does it seek to evaluate the quality or accuracy

of any position identified. Its purpose is to describe the visible public record.

Language and Geographic Coverage - The review prioritised publicly available material published in, or translated into, English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and German. Relevant material available only in other languages may not have been identified.

Temporal Scope - The research reflects publicly available information reviewed up to August 2026. Given the pace of AI development and changing commercial relationships, public positions may evolve after publication.

Voice and Engagement - The methodology intentionally distinguishes between public AI voice and public AI engagement.

A cricketer may become publicly associated with AI through qualifying commercial endorsements, sponsorships or technology partnerships without having articulated a broader public position on AI itself. Conversely, a cricketer may publicly discuss AI without maintaining significant commercial relationships within the AI ecosystem.

This distinction forms an important analytical principle of the Pulse Check and provides a foundation for future editions.