



# Wicketkeeper Dilemma Resolved: Data-Driven Insights for the T20 World Cup 2024 Squad

As the T20 World Cup 2024 draws near, the buzz around the Indian cricket team's lineup is palpable, especially concerning who will claim the coveted wicket-keeper spot. Sanju Samson, KL Rahul, and Rishabh Pant are the primary contenders, each bringing unique strengths to the table. Given the IPL's significance in influencing national team selections, this blog post will provide a thorough analysis of their recent IPL performances. We aim to shed light on which player might be best suited for this critical role, considering their current form and statistical achievements.

- **Match Participation:**

- Samson has appeared in 9 matches.
- Pant has participated in 11 matches.
- Rahul also played in 9 matches.

**Observation:** Pant has played two more matches than both Samson and Rahul.

- **Total Runs Accumulated:**

- Samson has scored a total of 385 runs.
- Pant has accumulated 398 runs.
- Rahul has gathered 378 runs.

**Observation:** The total runs scored by each player are fairly close, with Pant slightly ahead by 13 runs, despite having the advantage of two additional games.

- **Batting Averages:**

- Samson's batting average stands at 77.00.
- Pant's average is 44.22.
- Rahul's average is 42.00.

**Observation:** Samson significantly outpaces his counterparts with an impressive average of 77, far surpassing both Pant and Rahul.

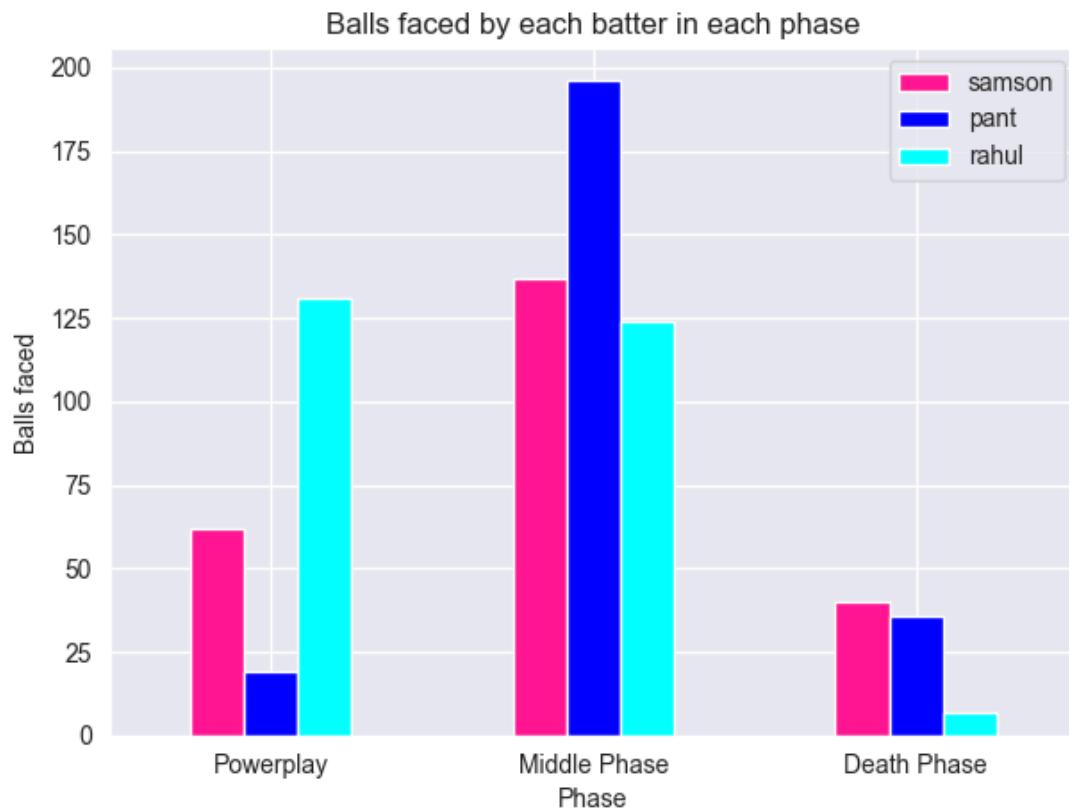
As we delve deeper into the batting order and roles of each contender, it's important to note their positions within their respective IPL teams. KL Rahul typically opens the innings, while Sanju Samson usually bats at one-down, and Rishabh Pant often comes in at two or three-down. Considering the Indian national team, the top-order slots are expected to be filled by Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Suryakumar Yadav. This arrangement leaves the wicketkeeper slot potentially open for the 4th or 5th position in the lineup. This strategic placement is crucial as it influences not only the dynamics of the innings but also the responsibilities and pressure associated with each batting position.

We represent Samson with pink, Pant with Blue and Rahul with cyan.

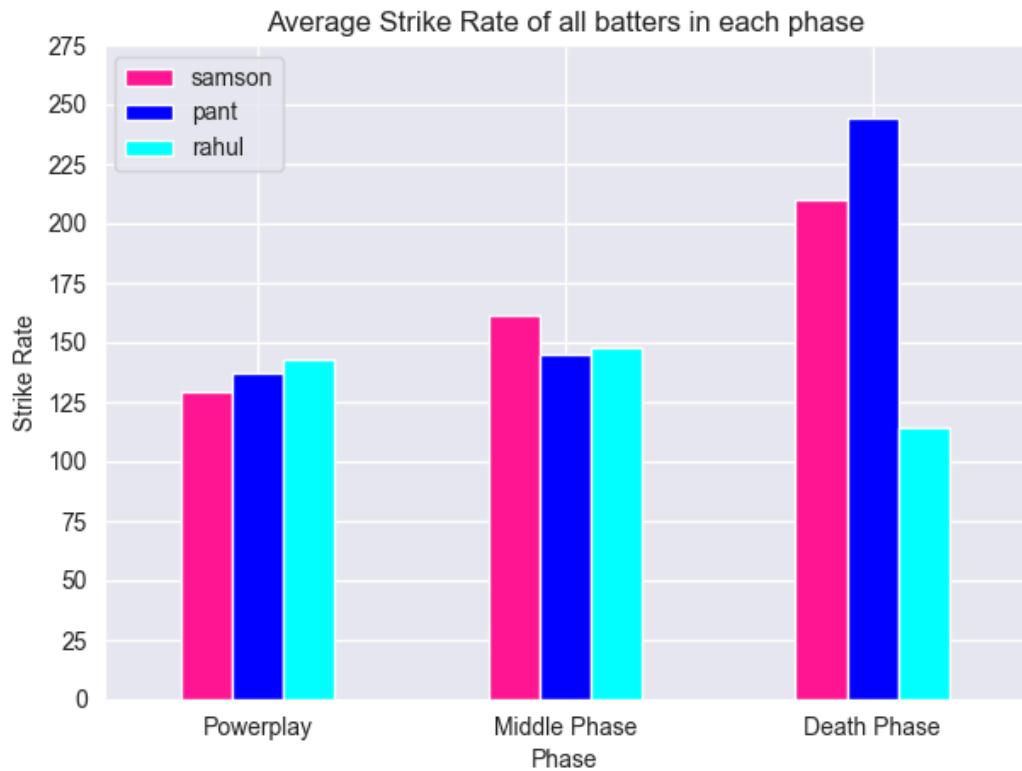
We categorise the innings into 3 , 1-6 is powerplay , 6-15 is middle phase and 15-20 is the death phase

In breaking down the structure of a T20 innings, it's helpful to categorize it into three distinct phases, each of which presents unique challenges and opportunities for the batsmen:

- Powerplay (Overs 1-6):** During this phase, only two fielders are allowed outside the 30-yard circle. This setup offers batsmen the chance to score freely but also poses the risk of losing wickets if they are overly aggressive.
  - Middle Phase (Overs 6-15):** This segment sees more fielders outside the circle, allowing teams to strengthen their defensive field settings. Batsmen need to balance aggression with caution, often rotating the strike while picking moments for boundary scoring.
  - Death Phase (Overs 15-20):** The final overs of the innings are typically where teams aim to maximise their scoring with aggressive batting. The risk of losing wickets is often offset by the need to increase the run rate, making this phase crucial for setting or chasing competitive totals.
- From figure 1 ,it is evident that the deliveries faced by each of them justifies the position they bat in with Pant facing the least number of deliveries in the powerplay.



- Average Strike rate for each batter in each phase:



**Observation :**KL Rahul excels in the powerplay, utilizing early fielding restrictions effectively. Sanju Samson dominates the middle phase, effectively anchoring and accelerating the innings. Rishabh Pant shines in the death phase, aggressively capitalising on the final overs to finish strong.

- We now assess the dotball percentage in each phase, figure x. We can clearly see that Pant's dotball percentage has been quite high in the middle overs , failing to rotate strike where the balls faced by all of them has been similar.
- Look at the boundary percentage , fours and sixes , figure y , we primarily asses the middle phase since Pant does has faced only fewer deliveries in the powerplay. and Rahul hasn't faced much in death phase. In the middle face, the stats look similar for all of the batters.

where as samson leads the fours category with a huge lead over Rahul ,more than 10% where as Rahul leads the sixes category, which is a bit unusual.

observation : Rahul has improved his striking compared to his usual safe shots and samson has adjusted his aggressive nature of high risk cricket by scoring more fours than sixes.

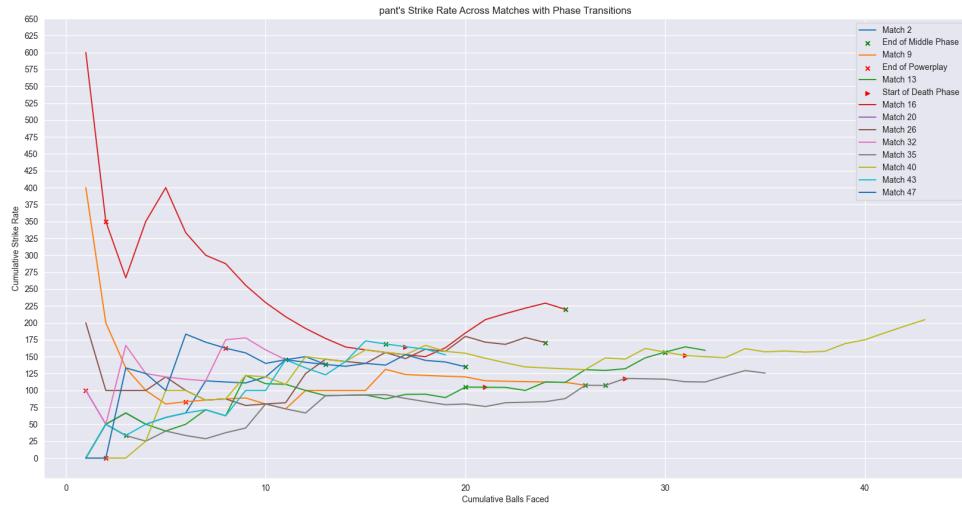
- Next, we'll explore how each batter's innings progresses based on the number of deliveries faced and their ability to accelerate through different phases in each match. This approach will help us identify trends in how each batter takes the time ,

Note : The y-axis is different for each of them because of fluctuation in strike rate.

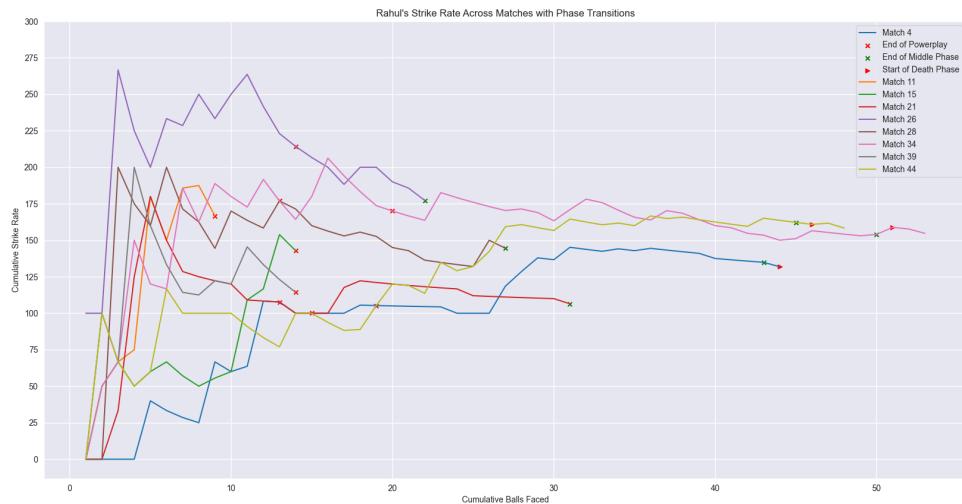
- Sanju Samson:



- Pant :



- o Rahul :



Insight : KL Rahul's strike rate experiences a significant surge during the powerplay, taking advantage of the field restrictions. However, it tends to drop shortly after the powerplay ends, a pattern observed in most of his innings. To compare all of them, we'll calculate the average strike rates across matches to observe their progression throughout the innings for the comparison



Insight: The analysis clearly indicates that Sanju Samson accelerates more effectively than both Pant and Rahul during the middle phase of an innings. Notably, Rishabh Pant's significant upward trend is primarily due to a standout innings against Gujarat Titans where he scored 87 runs off 43 balls. This performance, while impressive, is an outlier and should be considered when evaluating his overall consistency and impact during the middle phase.

### Conclusion :

From this analysis, it becomes apparent that if India is seeking a middle-order batter, Sanju Samson and Rishabh Pant are the frontrunners, as KL Rahul's progression in the middle overs is less impressive compared to theirs. Among Pant and Samson, if the team requires a player who can stabilize the innings and build a solid foundation, then Samson is the preferable choice. For a finishing role, both Samson and Pant are likely to deliver similar results. However, if the team composition requires a left-handed batter to complement a predominantly right-handed top order, then Pant would be the ideal selection.