Stokes to leave IPL early for Ireland Test and Ashes

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Online Desk: England's Ben Stokes will leave the Indian Premier League (IPL) early to prepare for a one-off Test against Ireland in June and the subsequent Ashes series against Australia, the star all-rounder has said. England Test Captain Stokes skipped last year's IPL but was sold to Chennai Super Kings for a staggering $1.96 million in December's auction.

The IPL final is scheduled on May 28, while England host Ireland in a one-off test at the Lord's from June 1 and begin their home Ashes campaign in Edgbaston on June 16. "Yes, I'll play," Stokes said of the Ireland match. "I'll be making sure that I give myself enough time to get back and play that game."

Several of his England team mates, who have been picked up by IPL sides, will also have to make a decision though Stokes hinted some of them could be allowed to miss the Ireland game. "I'll probably get round the individuals and ask them what they want to be ready for the Ashes, because those five games are obviously the big ones of the summer, and you've got to think about what lads want," Stokes said in Wellington. "It's just one of those where you have to weigh up the options of what the individual person actually wants out of that week, versus do we really need to play that one."

England's managing director of men's cricket, Rob Key, accepted it was becoming difficult for their non-contracted players to turn down "life-changing" deals from franchises to play bilateral cricket. "At the moment, we can't physically get our strongest team to every single game England play," Key told Wisden Cricket Monthly. "You're talking $500,000 or $600,000 for a few weeks' work, in some cases. If you're not on a central contract, then the difference is huge. "There's not a person in the world that would actually sit there and go, 'do you know what, I'm not bothered about that amount of money'. You're talking about life-changing amounts of money."