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SPOT FIXING: AN UGLY SIDE OF MODERN CRICKET

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Abstract:

The purpose of the present study is to highlight the spot fixing in cricket. Spot-fixing refers to illegal activity in a sport where a specific part of a game is fixed. Spot-fixing attempts to defraud bookmakers illegally by means of a player agreeing to perform to order by pre-arrangement. Spot fixing and match fixing have done huge damage to the game spirit of cricket. International Cricket Council (ICC) and all state cricket association should come forward to tackle such issues amicably. It is highly expected from individual players to play the game with its true spirit and honesty in order to maintain the faith and glory of this gentlemen's game.

KEYWORDS:

Ugly side, Spot fixing, Spirit, Amicably.

INTRODUCTION

Sports are well known for honest sweat, overwhelming desire to win, urge for perfection and inculcation of game spirit. Above all, it is about playing the sport with game spirit shredding of individuals vested interests. However, at times the frenzied march towards victory triggers a brain-freeze and warped measures are unveiled. Sports activities are deeply connected with the nationality. The name and fame of the country lies with games -- if a player does anything which is against the norms of sports activities or does anything which is not favourable to the game, in that scenario whole nation comes into question.

The recent past has witnessed the extreme urge to win by any means as revealed through the recurring blots of match fixing and spot fixing, most notably in the field of modern cricket, historically known as "gentlemen's game". There have been numerous examples depicting the win-at-all-costs attitude.

The bodyline tactic employed by England captain Douglas Jardine and implemented through the fearsome fast bowler Harold Larwood against Sir Don Bradman in 1932-33. Australian skipper Greg Chappell egging on Trevor Chappell to bowl an under arm delivery against New Zealand's Brian McKechnie in 1981, were all manifestations of this attitude [1]. Tragically, the extreme urge to win polar opposite as revealed through match-fixing and spot-fixing threatens the very existence of the willow game.

The purpose of the present study is to highlight the spot fixing in cricket. Spot-fixing refers to illegal activity in a sport where a specific part of a game is fixed. Examples include something as minor as timing a no ball or wide delivery in cricket or timing the first throw-in or corner in association football. Spot-fixing attempts to defraud bookmakers illegally by means of a player agreeing to perform to order by pre-arrangement [2].

Sport fixing is an illegal and anti-nationactivity which violates the norms of sports. Games are matter of passion, motivation and devotion are essential elements of game and sports activities. Today

nations are known by their players. Nation's pride depends upon the games and sports activities. Therefore players should perform according to rule and regulations of the game.

As such spot-fixing differs from match fixing, where a whole match is fixed, or point shaving, a specific type of match fixing in which corrupt players (or officials) attempt to limit the margin of victory of the favoured team. Spot-fixing is more difficult to detect than match fixing or point shaving. Spot-fixing is most associated with the betting markets of the Indian subcontinent where bets can be placed on individual deliveries in a cricket match. The advent of Twenty 20 cricket has made spot-fixing more difficult to detect as has the growth of internet gambling and spread betting [2].

Money always destroyed morality, without morality honesty loses its existence and then marketisation of value prevails. Therefore there must be legal control over such activities. A strong legal mechanism is needed which provides appropriate punishment to those who violate the norms of game.

2. HISTORY OF SPOT FIXING

In 2010 Pakistan tour of England, Pakistani players Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir allegedly bowled no-balls at specific points as part of a conspiracy involving captain Salman Butt to defraud bookmakers. As a result, Salman Butt has been banned for ten years, Asif for seven years and Amir for five years [3]. The matter became a criminal investigation and resulted in custodial sentences for four people involved. In November 2011, Butt was sentenced to 30-months' imprisonment, Asif being imprisoned for one year and Amir jailed for six months [4]. In England, allegations of spot-fixing have been made against two Essex players, the Pakistani Test bowler Danish Kaneria and Mervyn Westfield. In India, five players in IPL Season 5 (2012) --Mohnish Mishra, Shalabh Srivastava, TP Sudhindra, Harmeet Singh and Abhinav Bali -- were suspended for spot-fixing.

2.1 Spot fixing in International Cricket

England is considered the originator of cricket. In India cricket was brought from England. The Marylebone Cricket club was formed at Loads England in 1787. The Marylebone Cricket club framed rule for the cricket. These rules were modified from time to time. The first test match was played between England and Australia in 1877 [5]. In 1909 the Imperial Cricket Conference, an international body for cricket was formed at England. The name of the conference was later on changed to International Cricket Conference. Then after many years this name was further changed to International Cricket Council (ICC) [6]. The first one-day international match was played on 5th January 1971, between England and Australia. In 1975, the first world cup was organised in England. In India first cricket club was formed in Calcutta in 1792. In 1928 the Indian cricket board (BCCI) was formed by R.E.Granth as its chairman.

In August 2010, undercover reporters from News of the World, secretly videotaped Mazhar Majeed accepting money and informing the reporters that fast bowlers Asif and Amir would deliberately bowl no balls at specific points in an over. This information could be used by gamblers to place bets with inside information (i.e. spot-fixing). In response to these allegations, Scotland Yard arrested Majeed on the charge of match fixing. The International Cricket Council (ICC) banned three players—Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir—for terms of between 5 and 10 years. In November 2011, Butt and Asif were found guilty by a London court on criminal charges relating to spot-fixing. All four were given prison sentences, ranging from six months to 32 months [4].

2.2 Spot Fixing in Indian Premier League (IPL)

The Indian Premier League (IPL) is a professional league for Twenty 20 cricket championship in India. The inaugurated season of the tournament started on 18 April 2008. It was initiated by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), headquartered in Mumbai, and presently supervised by BCCI Vice-President Rajeev Shukla, who serves as the league's Chairman and Commissioner. It is currently contested by nine teams, consisting of players from around the world. It was started after an altercation between the BCCI and the Indian Cricket League. Indian Premier League, the biggest extravaganza of T-20 cricket, had a spectacular opening ceremony for its fifth edition [7].

IPL is the commercialisation of cricket and exploits the people by selling their multination products. IPL is an association which is regulated 'moneycracy'. Players are sold and purchased on the bases of their performance.

The Indian Premier League (IPL) has turbulent times in its five editions. Just few days earlier, a sting operation by a television channel on five fringe players belonging to three separate IPL franchises exposed corruption and underhand financial dealing in the league.

The dark clouds of spot fixing threatens to burst the ongoing Indian Premier League's (IPL) party as according to a news report, Deccan Chargers' TP Sudhindra is under the scanner for having been caught on camera accepting bribes before a domestic match. The 28-year-old pacer from Madhya Pradesh was caught on camera asking Rs. 40,000 to bowl a no-ball during an Indore T20 League match although there is no proof that he took money during the tournament of IPL. As per the deal, the player who took 40 wickets for his state in the 2011-12 seasons did bowl a huge no-ball off the second delivery of his first over. Yet surprisingly, Sudhindra was allowed to play for Deccan Charges and he took a wicket as well from his three outings in the tournament. The same report also names Kings XI fast bowler Shalabh Srivastav demanding 10 lakhs to bowl a deliberate no-ball during an IPL game [8]. The five cricketers - TP Sudhindra (Deccan), Mohnish Mishra (Pune), Amit Yadav (Punjab), Shalabh Srivastav (Punjab) and Abhinav Bali - will remain suspended from all cricketing activities pending the investigation. Out of the five cricketers, Bali has not played in any of IPL's five editions. Footage from India TV appeared to show an IPL player negotiating a fee for bowling a no-ball, while another said he received under-the-table payments above his contracted fee [1].

3. SPOT FIXING INVESTIGATION

One test under investigation was a defeat against Australia in January 2010 when Pakistan were leading in a comfortable position but Kamran Akmal dropped three catches and missed an easy run out of Michael Hussey who was on 33. Hussey went on to 134 not out. The ICC later cleared the Sydney test and did not investigate it further due to lack of evidence. After spot fixing scandal emerged Pakistan registered a victory against England in the third ODI and the ICC announced the match was under investigation due to suspicious behaviour. The ICC carried out a thorough investigation and Pakistani team and players were given the all-clear to continue playing. Speculation about fixing in the third-ODI ended as the investigation closed.

4. CONCLUSION

Spot fixing and match fixing have done huge damage to the game. The ardent fans of cricket are highly disappointed and have lost complete faith in game which is jeopardizing the cricket game. It is the need of the hour to take stringent measures to cure this menace. ICC and all state cricket association should come forward to tackle such issues amicably. The perpetrators of such foul practices should be heavily penalised and banned for life from all activity related to the game. Above all, it is highly expected of individual players to play the game with its true spirit and honesty in order to maintain the faith and glory of the gentlemen's game.

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