Let Them Eat Cake

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In high school, Mary Antoinette, was one of my history teacher's favourite characters. Whenever we would be up to some mischief, she would invoke one of Madame Antoinette's favourite lines during the French Revolution: when brought to her attention that the "rebels" were dying of hunger, the Queen was shocked and was said to have replied "Why can't they just eat cake?"

The fair lady and her subjects obviously lived in alternate realities and sometimes I think the same could be said of our cricketers, particularly our own rebels who had joined the moribund International Cricket League (ICL). Recently, a spate of reports has suggested that they have abandoned a sinking ship and are traversing realities again. Following the exodus, forgive and forget has been the mantra for most of the international cricket boards lately, as ICL cricketers are reneging on their contracts and wanting to play for the national team instead. Boards have been suggesting "cooling off" periods where former ICLers are gradually re-inducted back into the national team; some, like Yousuf Youhana the former Pakistani Vice Captain , are even touted as coming back into the team directly. Intuitively, this seems as if the natural course of action that our own cricket board should be taking as well; after, the ICL ban has hit us more with our small pool of national players who have enough talent and international experience, especially since our premature exit from the twenty 20 World Cup. However, precisely because the ICL has had such a strong impact on our cricket, I would like to argue that there should be no pardon for those who have left.

Let's start off with the argument that cricketers are like any other professionals and they have every right to join an alternative more lucrative source of income, especially in the context of a poor country like Bangladesh. This argument sounds tempting till you pull the rug and realise that cricketers (and most other sportsmen) are not like everyday salary men.

Ever since age cricket has been strongly introduced into our cricket structure a decade ago, BCB has been playing a direct and active role in developing cricketers. The likes of Aftab, Shariar Nafees et al., can trace their career back into different age groups and their rise to an international career (and hence into the ICL) have come precisely because of their cumulative successes in these groups. In fact, some of the ICLers never played international cricket and were picked precisely because of their performances with domestic league, age cricket and A tours. Thus, at every stage of their career and development, BCB has directly been involved. This is not akin to an engineer who went to a



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