

T20 rise raises risk

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

As cricket's T20 domestic champions battle it out for supremacy in South Africa, alarm bells are ringing that the proliferation of such tournaments has "considerably increased the risk" of match-fixing.

Less than a decade after the 20-over game made its debut in England, every major cricketing country now has its own T20 tournament: attracting new fans and lucrative sponsorship deals -- and the attention of illegal betting syndicates.

An Indian TV sting last week, in which six South Asian umpires were shown to be allegedly open to bribery, was just the latest in a line of scandals to have hit the sport, especially T20 cricket.

A recent review commissioned by the International Cricket Council (ICC) into its anti-corruption activities was unequivocal in pinpointing what the greatest threat to cricket's integrity lies.

"The view of those consulted is that the arrival of T20 cricket and the Indian Premier League has considerably increased the risk of match-fixing and spot-fixing," said the review led by former Hong Kong solicitor-general Bertrand de Speville.

The best known tournament is the Indian Premier League (IPL), a six-week jamboree infused with the glamour of Bollywood stars as well as the biggest names in world cricket.

But as the leagues spread across the cricketing world -- from Bangladesh to Zimbabwe -- experts say the dangers

should be clear to all.

"The mushrooming of domestic T20 leagues brings in not merely sponsors, spectators and TV revenue, but also a surging interest from the betting mafia," writer Sharda Ugra argued in a recent commentary for the Cricinfo website.

"They will not stop trying to find new footholds in the game. Protecting cricket's integrity does not only involve reacting to TV stings every few months. It is now a 24x7 undertaking."

The cash-rich IPL initially snubbed an offer by the ICC's anti-corruption unit to monitor matches for the first two editions in 2008 and 2009.

But in a bid to quash speculation that it was a haven for match-fixers, it decided to enlist the unit from the third year onwards.

Five Indian cricketers were suspended during this year's IPL after a sting by the same India TV channel claimed to unearth evidence that no-balls could be arranged to order.

Other tournaments have also been tainted by scandal.

Bangladesh banned former international Shariful Haque indefinitely in September after he was found to have approached current star Mashrafe Mortaza for spot-fixing during its T20 tournament.

During the Sri Lanka Premier League in August, the country's cricket chiefs were alerted to a possible match-fixing attempt by one of the team owners.

Sri Lanka Cricket announced an investigation at that time, but has remained silent on its progress.

Meanwhile, players and administrators of the Indian Cricket League, the ill-

fated rival to the IPL, traded accusations of match-fixing after the tournament's demise in 2009.

The ICC established its anti-corruption unit (ACSU) under former London Metropolitan police chief Paul Condon after South African skipper Hansie Cronje's was banned for life over a match-fixing scandal in 2000.

And according to de Speville, the risk of corruption in cricket is not "any less today" than when Condon and his team began work.

The ongoing Champions League T20 in South Africa is not only policed by the ICC's anti-corruption unit but also officiated by its elite panel of umpires.

But not all boards work with the ICC's monitors.

Bangladesh for example posted their own security officials at their event as well as hiring their own umpires.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board insists that its own measures are adequate.

"We have already taken stringent measures to combat corruption including spot fixing during BPL or any domestic league," board spokesman Jalal Yunus told AFP.

"Betting and fixing in cricket is nothing new. It was there even when there was no T20 cricket."

But the de Speville review said it was important to involve the ACSU in all cricket-related activities.

"One of the ACSU's central functions is to receive information about corruption," the report said.

"Without good information about what is going on, getting to grips with the problem is impossible."

Poland hold England

AFP, Warsaw

England were held to a 1-1 draw by Poland on Wednesday in a Group H qualifier that went ahead a day late after Tuesday's scheduled kick-off was called off due to a waterlogged pitch.

Wayne Rooney sent the Poles' morale sinking fifteen minutes from half-time, heading in a corner from captain Steven Gerrard for his 30th goal in an England shirt.

Poland's answer came in the 70th minute, thanks to Torino defender Kamil Glik, courtesy of another header from a corner.

"It wasn't one of our best performances," admitted England manager Roy Hodgson, whose side still lead Group H by one point from Montenegro.

"But there were factors -- the pitch was difficult, soggy and the ball was not moving well. It was more suited to a long ball game rather than passing.

"We weren't good in possession but got a result and we showed the necessary character. We are still unbeaten and it's good to get something out of a game when we didn't play well."

Gerrard admitted it had not been one of the team's best nights.

"It's a decent point but we are disap-

pointed," said Gerrard. "We know we can play better. We should have seen the game out but I still believe this will be a good point at the end of the day."

England goalkeeper Joe Hart took responsibility for the goal, having flapped as he tried to clear the corner.

"It was my fault and it cost us three points. They were knocking on the door but it was never going to open unless there was a mistake," he said.

England took their chance after 15 minutes but James Milner's lateral pass failed to find a team-mate before Polish goalkeeper Przemyslaw Tyton smothered the ball.

Manchester City's Milner fed Tottenham striker Jermain Defoe up front in the 26th minute, only for the latter to lose the battle with Poland captain Marcin Wasilewski, standing in for the injured Kuba Blaszczykowski.

Two minutes later, Poland powered back, with Grosicki finding Lewandowski in the box, only for newcomer Pawel Wszolek to fail to latch onto the pass.

A minute after Rooney's goal put England up, Grosicki again came up empty.

After the interval, Poland upped the pace in a drive to close the deficit, with corner-taking stalwart Obraniak firing over the bar in the 49th minute, followed by Lewandowski 10 minutes later.

Titans snap Auckland streak

INTERNET, Durban

South African club Nashua Titans put up a convincing performance with both bat and ball, as they defeated the Auckland Aces by 59 runs in a Group A encounter at Kingsmead on Wednesday.

Auckland were in trouble right from the start of their chase of 173 runs. Opener Lou Vincent's only scoring shot was a monstrous six over long on, before he went on to play away from his body, only to edge the ball to the keeper. Martin Guptill too fell courtesy a miscued stroke. Both openers back in the hut with just ten runs on the board.

Earlier Titans skipper Martin van Jaarsveld joined hands with Jacques Rudolph to take the team's score to 100, before the former holed out to Guptill off Kyle Mills. Auckland did manage to arrest the momentum a little thereafter, with Rudolph and Farhaan Behardien dealing mostly in ones and twos.

SCORES IN BRIEF
TITANS: 172 for 4 (Rudolph 63, Davies 36, Behardien 48 not out)
AUCKLAND ACES: 113 (Kitchen 23, Adams 30; Mbhalati 3-26, Thomas 3-18)

Result: Titans won by 59 runs.

Sk Jamal

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hard to deal with Sheikh Jamal's attacking duo Otojerari and Sunday Chizoba. And it was the former who completed his brace and ensured the margin in the hour mark.

Abahani ensured a tough finish for Sheikh Jamal after Towhidul Alam scored a rebound with eight minutes left. But it was not to be as the Sky Blues left the field to disgraceful scenes from fans who hurled abuse and bricks in the general direction of the players. Some fans also chased referees but thankfully everyone emerged unscathed.

LOCAL snippets

SPORTS REPORTER

Wednesday's action packed match day saw Dhaka Mariner Young's Club, Narinda Progoti Boys Club and Shurjodoy KC come out victorious in the Cute Premier Division Handball League at the Shaheed Captain Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium yesterday.

Mariner Young's thumped Victoria SC 34-17 goals in the first match. The second saw Narinda demolish Old Ideals by 40-8 goals. And in the final match of the day, Shurjodoy beat Bhratryia Samaj Kalyan Sangha 39-12.

GM Chess in Nagpur

GM Ziaur Rahman and IM Abu Sufian collected 2 points each after the second round games at the NIT Nagpur Grandmasters Chess Tournament in Nagpur, India on Tuesday. GM Abdullah Al Rakib, GM Enamul Hossain, IM Minhazuddin Ahmed, FM, Taibur Rahman, FM Debraj Chatterjee and FM Sk Nasir Ahmed earned .5 point each. FM Mehdi Hasan and WIM Shamima Akter Liza achieved 1 point each.

AFCU19 Women's Football

Bangladesh women's under-19 team were to jet off for Malaysia early today for the AFC U19 Football Championship qualifying round in Melaka. The delegation includes 18 players and 10 officials. Bangladesh are in Group A along with India and Uzbekistan.

They play their matches against India on October 20 and

Papon given BCB reins

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of Beximco Group, a business conglomerate in the country.

Abahani's cricket committee also extended their congratulations to the new BCB president.

Papon has taken the helm at a crucial stage as he will have to address a number of issues immediately. Uncertainty regarding the national team's head coach Richard Pybus, the responsibility of selling BCB's worldwide media rights -- the board's major source of income, arranging the franchisee-based first-class competition, solving the spot-fixing controversy and financial problems surrounding the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 are some of the major concerns facing the new BCB supremo.

Another crucial thing on his plate is the next BCB elections. The current committee took charge on November 28 in 2008, so their tenure will expire by November 28 this year, in which case the authorities have very little time to start the election process.

The main question surrounding the elections is whether it will be held on time, and if held on time whether it will take place under the amended or the existing constitution.

In line with the guidelines of the International Cricket Council (ICC), BCB brought changes to the constitution to the effect that the post of president will have to be democratically contested but the amended constitution is yet to be vetted by the National Sports Council (NSC).



Australia forward Archie Thompson (L) celebrates his winning goal against Iraq during their 2014 World Cup qualifier in Doha on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Qatar lose ground

AFP, Doha



A Doha double bill on Tuesday produced a defeat for Qatar and a crucial win for Australia in the fight to seal tickets for the 2014 World Cup in Asian Zone qualifying.

At the Grand Hamad stadium, Australia moved to

second in Group B of the final round of Asian qualifying with a 2-1 win over Iraq.

The Socceroos, who were stunned 2-1 by Jordan recently, desperately needed a win to move up the table to increase their chances of appearing at their third successive World Cup.

Tied at two points each with Iraq coming into Tuesday's tie they now have five points to go level with Oman, who defeated Jordan 2-1 earlier in Muscat.

Iraq are now at the bottom of the table with two losses and two draws. Japan, beaten 4-0 in a friendly against Brazil in Poland, lead the group with 10 points from their four matches.

Australia and Iraq shared possession in the goalless first half, but Australia had more chances of scoring. One of their best chances came in the 27th minute when Tim Cahill unleashed a superb left-footer but Iraqi keeper Noor Sabri Abbas brought about an acrobatic save to deny Australia.

And they completely dominated the second half, but it was Iraq who scored first against the run of play.

After another unsuccessful Aussie raid terminated, Younis Khalef made a perfect long cross to winger Mustafa Karim on the left, who headed it down perfectly for the onrushing Alaa Abdul-Zehra to slip it past Mark Schwarzer in the 72nd minute.

Abdul-Zehra had made his appearance just eight minutes earlier, substituting Muthana Khalid.

But that just galvanized Australia as they increased their attacks and Cahill, their talismanic forward, scored the equaliser eight minutes later when he headed home from a corner kick.

And the comeback was complete for Holger Osieck's men in the 84th minute when substi-

tute Archie Thompson leapt over the Iraqi defence and headed home a Tommy Oar cross.

Iran moved into second in Group A, level with South Korea on seven points, after Javed Nekomam's 76th minute goal earned the hosts a 1-0 win over the Koreans in Tehran.

Earlier, Qatar lost a golden opportunity to move closer to the finals in Brazil after a 1-0 Group A defeat to Uzbekistan at Doha's Jassim bin Hamad stadium.

Sanjar Tursunov producing the match winner in the 13th minute, the 25-year-old turned well and smashed a volley into the net from an Akmal Shorakhmedov cross.

Uzbekistan climbed into third on five points with Qatar slipping to fourth on four points, above Lebanon on goal difference.

Gun-toting Joy

FROM PAGE 16

match commissioner and referee which both mentioned that Joy was aggressive and hurled abusive words towards the referees.

Tournament by-laws prevent the BFF executive committee members from entering the field during the match of any league or tournament but Joy broke the law in spectacular and unprecedented fashion. The former footballer, holstering a gun in his trouser pocket, entered the field during half-time of the Federation Cup quarterfinal tie between Mohammedan and his club Team BJMC. He proceeded to threaten the referees as his side was trailing 2-0.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin told reporters that they would take proper steps in line with BFF and FIFA rules and that they have started the process through the serving of the show-cause notice.

Joy had earlier said that he only entered the ground during the break and that the gun was a licensed fire-arm which he kept for his personal security. The provision for firearms is so unprecedented that the BFF tournament rules make no mention of it. A FIFA clause states that firearms can be brought into the football grounds in exceptional circumstances and only by security personnel.

The BFF professional league committee yesterday wrote to all participating teams saying that they would not allow any club officials to enter the field without accredited cards.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Lose color
5 Actress Lupino
8 Half a ticket
12 Not "fer"
13 Neither mate
14 Bean curd
15 Tin Man's problem
16 Carriage
18 Cookbook entry
20 Under-score
21 Lacks the ability
23 Brit.
24 One seeking political asylum
28 Unaccompanied
31 --- Khan
32 Doctrine
34 Tiny
35 Trumpet, e.g.
37 Shame
39 Third letter
41 Close up tight

42 Narcotic fever
45 Jackson or Johnson
49 Oppressive ruler
51 Skeleton component
52 October birthstone
53 Peacock network
54 Reed instrument
55 Depend (on)
56 Blond shade

2 Chills and fever
3 Platter
4 Lure
5 Started a paragraph
6 Female deer
7 Weaponry
8 Gawks
9 Make less intense
10 Venusian vessels?
11 Prickly seed cases
17 Ike's command in WWII
19 Treaty
22 Morrison and Braxton

24 Doo follower
25 Id counterpart
26 Absurd
27 Use Wikipedia, maybe
29 Zodiac feline
30 --- the ramparts we watched ...
33 Compared to
36 Without making a mess
38 Address to a bloke
40 Greek vowel
42 Smell
43 Meer-schaum, e.g.
44 Sicilian spouter
46 Post-bout attire
47 Carbon compound
48 Cry
50 Out of use, as a wd.

DOWN
1 Jarnie of "M*A*S*H"
22 Morrison and Braxton

Solution time: 24 mins.

ACROSS: 1. LOSS, 2. CHILLS, 3. PLATTER, 4. LURE, 5. ACTRESS, 6. FEMALE, 7. WEAPONRY, 8. GAWKS, 9. MAKE, 10. VENUSIAN, 11. PRICKLY, 12. NOT-FER, 13. NEITHER, 14. BEAN, 15. TIN, 16. CARRIAGE, 17. IKE'S, 18. REED, 19. TREATY, 20. UNDERSCORE, 21. LACKS, 22. MORRISON, 23. BRIT, 24. ONE, 25. ID, 26. ABSURD, 27. USE, 28. UNACCOMPANIED, 29. ZODIAC, 30. THE, 31. KHAN, 32. DOCTRINE, 33. COMPARED, 34. TINY, 35. TRUMPET, 36. WITHOUT, 37. SHAME, 38. ADDRESS, 39. THIRD, 40. GREEK, 41. CLOSE, 42. NARCOTIC, 43. MEER-SCHAUM, 44. SICILIAN, 45. JACKSON, 46. POST-BOUT, 47. CARBON, 48. CRY, 49. OPPRESSIVE, 50. OUT, 51. SKELETON, 52. OCTOBER, 53. PEACOCK, 54. REED, 55. DEPEND, 56. BLOND.

DOWN: 1. JARNIE, 2. CHILLS, 3. PLATTER, 4. LURE, 5. ACTRESS, 6. FEMALE, 7. WEAPONRY, 8. GAWKS, 9. MAKE, 10. VENUSIAN, 11. PRICKLY, 12. NOT-FER, 13. NEITHER, 14. BEAN, 15. TIN, 16. CARRIAGE, 17. IKE'S, 18. REED, 19. TREATY, 20. UNDERSCORE, 21. LACKS, 22. MORRISON, 23. BRIT, 24. ONE, 25. ID, 26. ABSURD, 27. USE, 28. UNACCOMPANIED, 29. ZODIAC, 30. THE, 31. KHAN, 32. DOCTRINE, 33. COMPARED, 34. TINY, 35. TRUMPET, 36. WITHOUT, 37. SHAME, 38. ADDRESS, 39. THIRD, 40. GREEK, 41. CLOSE, 42. NARCOTIC, 43. MEER-SCHAUM, 44. SICILIAN, 45. JACKSON, 46. POST-BOUT, 47. CARBON, 48. CRY, 49. OPPRESSIVE, 50. OUT, 51. SKELETON, 52. OCTOBER, 53. PEACOCK, 54. REED, 55. DEPEND, 56. BLOND.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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DIZAQ DUAIRY AROUJSE NZUDY
NPZ'V D QZQDC QJHGD
IASS: "QPK SDEQV ZS NHSK."

Saturday's Cryptoquip: NOVEL THAT COULD POSSIBLY BE ABOUT A VERY EXHAUSTING CARPET INSTALLATION: "AS I DIE LAYING."
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals W