

# The Cricket Cult

England retain the **Ashes**,  
**India** rout Zimbabwe  
and the ongoing  
**BCCI** turmoil



News, Opinions, Stats and more  
from The Ashes, India vs Zimbabwe ODIs  
and the BCCI turmoil

# PREFACE

In an enthralling fortnight of cricketing action, England managed to scrape through to a weather-aided draw in the Investec Ashes 3rd test match to retain the Urn. At the same time a young Indian cricket team completed their first ever 5-0 whitewash in ODIs overseas under the able leadership of Virat Kohli.

The current turmoil in the BCCI is pretty evident to all and sundry and the big question everyone is asking is if the BCCI should come under the RTI.

All this is covered in this edition of The Cricket Cult, with a whole lot more to come in the future.



Sandy Baan, Chief Editor

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## Third Ashes test, 2013: Match Review

- Liam



England managed to secure the series and the ownership of the urn after just three tests for the second time in Ashes history. But play being abandoned was a rather tame end to a match that could have had a significant say in the final outcome of the series.

For a change, Australia did dominate the proceedings. For a change, the familiar Clarke of yore did dictate the terms. And for a change, England was in tatters. Sadly though, it wasn't to be.

Inclement weather and torrential rains brought the curtains down on an inspired Aussie fight back led by skipper Clarke, who led the way with a classy 187 in the first innings.

Coming into the match 0-2 down in the series, the Aussies had no option but to go all out. And apart from the inevitable DRS glitch much to the chagrin of a bemused Khawaja, the Aussies dominated the first two days of play.

A solid first innings batting performance from the Australians meant that Siddle and co. had enough runs to play with. They pretty much delivered, and had the English kowtowing till Pietersen and Bell, the man-of-the-series thus far, came to the party and diffused the ignominy of following on.

What followed next from the Australian side was an attempt to get the English in to bat as early as possible.





A healthy lead and the urgency to win the match meant the Aussie batsmen tried to up the ante in their second outing with the bat, promoting Warner to open the innings in an apparent show of intent. Sadly for them, the rest of the batting imploded, though they managed to score 4.8 runs to the over.

The Met Office's forecast of a washout in the final day did bring out the required instincts from the Aussies, who were itching to have the English face a good number of overs in the final session of the fourth day.

But abandonment of play in the fourth day itself meant that the match was pretty much decided. Whether or not Clarke rued a delayed declaration, he couldn't have done better.

Final day's play was a far-fetched idea considering how the Old Trafford stadium resembled an Olympic pool, but those who actually turned up to watch the proceedings were in for a pleasant surprise. The rain gods relented, though temporarily, and the Australians had a shot, trying for 20 odd overs before play was completely suspended.

A dry morning prevailed till lunch, but rain returned three deliveries after lunch, much to the Australian dismay. The English were reeling at 37/3, and wouldn't have complained being off the ground. Rain brought them relief, but for the Australians, it brought the feeling of being let down by matters you can't have a say in.

Memories of the last day of the second match of the Border-Gavaskar series (2004/05, Bangalore) came alive, when a near assured victory was snatched from the Indians who were 0-1 down in the series. Life does come full circle.

There are lots of positives for the Australians going into the fourth test at Durham, though the urn, for now, stays with Cook. The Australian batting showed its class; though it is still largely Clarke-centric. They did manage to catch England off-guard, but were done in by rain.

For the England team, it was a wake-up call. Complacency has ruined many a party in the past, though luck helped them scrape through this time.

With the Ashes pretty much finished vis-à-vis the urn's ownership, the remaining matches are a chance for the Australians to redeem themselves. And with the urn going up for grabs later this year, a few brownie points from the last two games won't hurt.

## Ashes 3rd Test - Stat Review

**88** - This was the 88th drawn match in Ashes. This was the first draw after 6 consecutive results (4 in 2010/11 and 2 in this Ashes)

**1981** - Australia last lost a test at Old Trafford in 1981. Since then in the 6 tests, they won 3 and drew 3

**6** - Alastair Cook got his 6th duck in his test career, his first as a captain and second in the Ashes. England has never won a test match in which he scored a duck

**19** - Graeme Swann has already taken 19 wickets in 3 tests of this Ashes. The last time any English spinner took 20 or more wickets in an Ashes was G Miller, who took 23 wickets in 6 matches

**3** - David Warner came in to bat at No.6. This is the first time he has batted lower than No.3 in his test career

**200** - Stuart Broad with the wicket of skipper Clarke, became the 15th English bowler to complete 200 Test Wickets

**0/116** - James Anderson conceded 116 runs without a wicket. This is his worst performance in an innings in tests. Previous worst was 0/111 at Johannesburg vs SA in 2010

**50** - Peter Siddle with his figures of 4/63, completed 50 wickets in his Ashes Career of 16 matches. He became the 32nd Australian to achieve this feat

**7** - Kevin Pietersen fell for the 7th time to Peter Siddle in the 10 tests they have played together. Siddle has dismissed him the most in tests. The next are Lee (6) and Muralitharan (6)

## The DRS – Boon or Bane?

- Dave



The suggestion by Channel Nine that some batsmen could have been using silicone-based tape on their bats to avoid detection of edges by HotSpot is the latest controversy in the DRS saga going on in the Ashes. Responding to buzz that he could be implicated in the allegations, Kevin Pietersen used twitter to claim his innocence, saying: "I am never afraid of getting out! If I nick it, I'll walk.. To suggest I cheat by covering my bat with silicon infuriates me. How stupid would I be to try & hide a nick when it could save me on an LBW appeal, like in the 1st innings where hotspot showed I nicked it." Michael Clarke has also been quick to go on record to say that no Aussie batsman has resorted to the alleged unfair means.

The allegations are the latest issue to mar the on-going Ashes, in which the much-debated Decision Review System (DRS) has been under heavy scrutiny due to plenty of disputable decisions given after the review. Even the England coach Andy Flower, otherwise a consistent advocate of the system, has admitted that it "hasn't worked well at all" in the Ashes.

The blame for the blunders can't be solely pointed to one party, as there have been separate occasions when it has been the players, umpires and even technology, who have been at fault.

The Stuart Broad incident at Trent Bridge, where the batsman had clearly edged the ball to the slip fielder but was given not-out by the on-field umpire, illustrated the need to utilize the allocated reviews judiciously. Australia had wasted their allocated reviews in the innings over decisions that almost certainly seemed going against them.



Hence, when it came to the point where they were sure of a dismissal, but because of having no reviews remaining, they could do little to get the incorrect not-out decision overruled. Of course, Stuart Broad's decision not to walk was against the spirit of the game, but that's another matter altogether.

The umpiring standards in the series have been below par as well.

Some decisions like the Stuart Broad incident should have been made correctly even without the assistance of technology. However, it was the decision by third umpire Kumar Dharmasena, to give Usman Khawaja out caught behind in the third Test, which really created uproar.

Given out by the on-field umpire, Khawaja was certain that he hadn't nicked the ball and immediately asked for a review. The tools available – HotSpot and Snickometer (though Snicko is not officially a part of DRS) – showed no evidence of any contact between the bat and the ball. However Dharmasena relied on the evidence of the sound and after a lengthy delay, upheld the on-field umpire's decision, which prompted the commentator Shane Warne to term it as "shocking and ridiculous". Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd later tweeted about the dismissal, saying:

"I've just sat down to watch the Test. That was one of the worst cricket umpiring decisions I have ever seen."

It isn't just the Aussies who have had to bear the brunt of bad decisions due to DRS, as Jonathon Trott was given out LBW for a first-ball duck in the second innings of the first Test in controversial circumstances. And the anger among the English was not because of human error, but because of the fact that technology showed its limitations in this incident. The HotSpot images of the wicket were not available, as the broadcasters were still focussing on Joe Root's dismissal off the previous delivery. Technology limitation meant that HotSpot couldn't be simultaneously used for a replay and a live delivery, and hence Trott's dismissal wasn't recorded on the system. The ICC and the inventor of HotSpot had to later apologize to England for the system failure in the incident.

The DRS system was introduced into cricket to improve the accuracy of decisions and bring things into order. However, as evident in the Ashes, the system has only managed to create more chaos and confusion instead of clarity and accuracy. The fall of a wicket can have a huge impact on the outcome of a test match, and can shape a player's career. And hence the importance of getting the decision correct is immense. The idea of introducing technology into decision-making was to reduce controversy. However, going by the evidence in the Ashes, the reverse outcome has resulted. The ICC will have plenty of food-for-thought to improve the implementation of DRS in future to ensure that technology serves its right purpose.



## Ashes 2013: Australian Hopes on the Brink of Poignancy

- Ron R



Two losses and one fateful draw later; Australian cricket can now put the Ashes monkey off its back and focus on equalizing the series, at least theoretically. Looking back at their performance in the third test – a marked contrast against the first two – they have proved that they can get their bearings right and do what needs to be done in the hour of calling.

Aside from all the controversies that surrounded DRS and the umpires' decision-making, Australians can take a lot of positives from Old Trafford. Their aggressiveness – controlled aggression – starkly missing from the first two test matches allowed them to put themselves on the top in all departments against their opponents. Had Australia played with such focus and intensity in the first two matches, England would have had a tough time on their hands. Australia need to maintain the same rhythm and intensity all throughout the rest of the series now, considering that a draw would go a long way in salvaging their pride; right in time for the next edition of the Ashes in 2014-15.

The third test saw the visitors experimenting with a change in the batting order in the second innings – promoting David Warner up the order, to open alongside Chris Rogers. The comparative success of this newer opening combination allowed Australia to get a much-needed partnership going at the top. Australia will look to continue the rest of the series with this combination so as to allow both batsmen – and thus the team – free rein to play their natural game and dominate the proceedings.

Speaking of natural game and dominating proceedings, Old Trafford also saw the entire Australian line-up play with a distinct cohesiveness. In comparison to their outings at Trent Bridge and Lord's, where there seemed to be innumerable fumbling by the Australians on-field, Coach Lehmann's side was quite composed. Australia would need to hold on to this composure to brace and sustain them for the rest of their Ashes sojourn. England's complacency in the third test was much in evidence, a fact that they would need to capitalize on.

While Australia still lack the core strength that they had in the years previously, this series would nonetheless be important for the team marking a threshold for better talents to emerge.



So far in the series Australia has put up three different variances of performances. Trent Bridge saw them lose narrowly, riding back on the efforts on Ashton Agar and Brad Haddin; Lord's saw their utter deconstruction as if they were minnows and not one-time invincible and Old Trafford saw them regroup wholly only to be faced with a circumstantial draw. All these matches have been important learning curves and though it's too soon to predict, there's no denying that Darren Lehmann is indeed working out for the Australians.

Lehmann's efforts have been in prominence so in the series even as quite a few loose ends remain for him to tie up. Shane Watson is the biggest if factor and the most important loose end that has emerged for the Australian coach. Though Lehmann has stood by his player till now, there's still the most obvious fact that Watson's contributions with the bat aren't accounting for much. Even promoting him down the order in the second innings of the third test didn't make any sizable difference to Watson's score-line. As valuable as he is for the Aussies, the team would need to re-consider his inclusion into the team for the remainder of the series. Or possibly, in case they don't want to ruffle feathers anymore, try to retain him into the squad by shuffling the team's batting order further; thus giving him yet another opportunity to make his presence truly felt.

At this point however, nothing is certain. Least of all the trajectory of the remainder of the two matches in the series. Especially more so when considered that England have never lost a test match at Chester le Street. But in the wake of the fact that Australia have indeed managed to avoid a much discussed 5-0 whitewash, it's Australia on whom all eyes now rest, to make the 2013 Ashes all the more interesting.

# Men that made the difference

## Kevin Pietersen

Most International runs for England  
(Tests+ODIs+T20s)

Most International 100s for England  
(Tests+ODIs+T20s)

13232 – Kevin Pietersen  
13190 – Graham Gooch  
13140 – Alec Stewart  
11401 – David Gower  
11315 – Andrew Strauss



32 – Kevin Pietersen  
30 – Alastair Cook  
28 – Graham Gooch  
27 – Andrew Strauss  
26 – Marcus Trescothick

# 38 players have scored 20 or more test 100s. But Kevin Pietersen is the the only one to register at least ONE test 100 each year in his test career

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## Michael Clarke

# Michael Clarke has been part of 7 of the last 8, 200+ partnerships for Australia in Tests



# Michael Clarke who was adjudged Man of the Match for his 187. This was his 7th MoM award in tests and 3rd as captain

# Michael Clarke's 187 was his 6th inning of 150+ as captain in Tests. Only Bradman (8), Lara (7) and Jayawardene (7) are ahead of him

# Michael Clarke's 187 as captain at Old Trafford is the second highest score by an Australian captain behind Bob Simpson's 311 in 1964

# Michael Clarke scored his 24th test century and his 10th as captain. This was his 5th Ashes 100, 3rd in England and 1st as captain in the Ashes



## From the Caribbean to the safari trail – India's tour of Zimbabwe, 2013

- The Professor



After playing non-stop for about two months, right from the Champions Trophy in England and a short trip to the Caribbean for another tri-series, the Men in Blue deserved a break. However the BCCI organized a trip to Zimbabwe immediately after the West Indies triangular series, to commence on July 24.

There were the usual murmurs about how the cricketers were being made to play more without a break, 'money-hungry' wolves in the cricket body, and so on. The Board clarified that the trip had been planned beforehand, but was put on hold due to their 'concerns' about player fatigue. Spare us the crocodile tears!

Anyway, most of the regulars in the side decided to relax and unwind after a gruelling schedule. Skipper MS Dhoni got enough time to rest a troublesome hamstring, while a young squad was chosen under the leadership of Virat Kohli. Now, one reason behind this tour was to try out a few new faces, with the 2015 World Cup in mind.

And it worked, at least to some extent. The side now had fresh and hungry fast bowlers in Mohit Sharma, Jaydev Unadkat and Shami Ahmed. Leg-spinner Amit Mishra received a call-up, as did J&K all-rounder Parvez Rasool. With the usual suspects Kohli, Raina, Rohit Sharma and co. already in place, the squad arrived in Harare to play the first three matches of a five-game ODI series.



Stranger things have happened in Indian cricket. On their last trip to Zimbabwe, an inexperienced Indian side, with Raina at the helm, didn't even make it to the final. This time around, Kohli was determined to change that.

In the first game, Zimbabwe were put into bat and scored 228/7 in their allotted 50 overs.



The score was built largely around Sikandar Raza's glorious 82 and a cameo 43 from former captain Elton Chigumbura.

Mishra was the pick of the bowlers with 3/43 off his 10 overs. In reply, India romped home with relative ease, with skipper Kohli cracking a sublime 115. Debutant Ambati Rayudu also played a good hand, finishing on an unbeaten 63, taking his side 1-0 up in the series.

The second game tested the inexperienced Indian line-up, with left-arm pacer Brian Vitori troubling both the openers and Kohli. Raina continued his wretched run and Rayudu also departed early, leaving the Indians tottering at 65/4.

Shikhar Dhawan's 116 and his 167-run stand with Dinesh Karthik (69) enabled India to get past the 230-run mark. But it was Vinay Kumar's explosive cameo in the final over that took them to 294.

The Men in Blue went through some anxious moments as Zimbabwe got off to a flying start, with Vusi Sibanda scoring 55 at the top of the order. But young left-arm seamer Jaydev Unadkat joined the party with a four-wicket haul, and despite a valiant rear-guard action by Chigumbura and Prosper Utseya, India achieved their second win of the series.

The third match was a complete rout, with Zimbabwe folding for 183 and India chasing it down without a fuss. Virat Kohli made an unbeaten 68 while Mishra took his second four-wicket haul of the series. For the hosts, Sean Williams made 45, but it was excruciatingly slow batting on display for much of the day. With this, India took the series 3-0 and both squads moved to Bulawayo for the final two games.

Unfortunately for the hosts, a change of scenery failed to work its magic on them. Both the games were comfortable wins for the visitors. None of the Zimbabweans could pick Mishra's googly, while both Rohit Sharma and Raina returned to form with half-centuries in the fourth ODI. Cheteshwar Pujara and Mohit Sharma made their debuts in that game; the latter picking up the Man-of-the-Match award. Ajinkya Rahane returned into the fold for the last game and scored a crucial 50, Mishra took his first six-wicket haul in ODIs and India swept the series 5-0.

Most fans would have liked to see Rasool get a game. Well, at least he got to be part of a squad that annihilated the opposition. Zimbabwe managed to find a few bright spots, with the performances of Williams, Chigumbura, Vitori and Malcolm Waller. A good workout for the Men in the Blue, ahead of the South Africa tour, was essential. In the context of the series, this outing should actually do the hosts a lot of good, because they now know the importance of building an innings. The more they play against the top-ranked teams, the better they'll get.

There were plenty of fringe benefits for the Indians, although they really need to work on bowling out the opposition in every match. With most of the experienced lot returning for the South Africa tour, it promises to be a thrilling end to 2013!

# RECORDS AND MILESTONES

This is the first time India has beaten a team 5-0 in a bilateral series overseas

## India's victories by 5-0 in ODIs

vs Eng, 2008 at Home  
vs NZ, 2010 at Home  
vs Eng, 2011 at Home  
vs Zim, 2013 OVERSEAS



Mohit Sharma on his debut bowled 3 maidens. He is only the 5th Indian bowler to bowl 3 or more maidens on ODI debut. Only Mohammad Shami bowled 4 maidens on his debut

Mohit Sharma who was the Man of the Match on his debut is only the second Indian after Sandip Patil vs Aus, 1980 to win MOM award on ODI debut

Ambati Rayudu scored 63\* on his ODI debut. He is the 11th Indian to score 50+ on ODI debut

Amit Mishra had figures of 6/48 in the final ODI. These are the 5th best bowling figures for India in ODIs

Amit Mishra with 18 wickets in this ODI series became the joint highest wicket taker in a bilateral ODI series

4 Indians made their debut in this series - Jaidev Unadkat, Ambati Rayudu, Cheteshwar Pujara and Mohit Sharma. Similarly when the last time India toured Zimbabwe in 2010 for a tri series, 6 Indians made their ODI debut - Ravichandran Ashwin, Pankaj Singh, Naman Ojha, Ashok Dinda, Vinay Kumar and Umesh Yadav



## Virat Kohli's captaincy in the India - Zimbabwe series

- Ashton



Cricket is one of the few team sports where the role of a captain goes beyond wearing the armband and going for the toss. A captain is the pivotal figure in the team and is supposed to take decisions which directly impact the result of the game. Mahendra Singh Dhoni has done exceedingly well to establish himself as the captain of the Indian team, having achieved success in all formats of the game. At the age of 32, he's almost certain to play for at least another 4-5 years before hanging up his boots, and is likely to lead the side for most of that period.

However, given the demanding cricket schedule these days and increased possibility of injuries, it is imperative that Team India has a captain to fall upon in case Dhoni is injured or needs to be given a break. Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir and Suresh Raina have taken on the captaincy role in the absence of Dhoni in the past. However, at present Sehwag and Gambhir are not in the scheme of things for the selection panel, and Raina is not featuring in the Test side.

This has given the opportunity to Virat Kohli to stake his claim to be the understudy to Dhoni for the position of captain. Having led India U19s to World Cup glory and also captained Royal Challengers Bangalore team in the IPL this year, he has some prior experience in the role. When Dhoni got injured in the tri-series at West Indies, Kohli was chosen to be the team's stand-in captain. With the appointment, the selectors sent out a clear message stating that they were looking to groom Kohli to be Dhoni's deputy and future replacement. After losing his first two games as skipper, Kohli went on to lead the Indian team to the final of the tournament, which they won under Dhoni.

With the selectors deciding to send a second-string squad to Zimbabwe for the bilateral series, and opting to give Dhoni a much-needed break, Kohli got the chance to prove his captaincy credentials in a full series.



Matches against weaker opposition are usually tricky. Victories aren't appreciated much, while defeats are frowned upon and criticized. Hence it was important for Kohli to go about doing his job efficiently and get the results.

The team left nothing to chance, and with a clinical performance, whitewashed the opposition 5-0. This was India's first ever whitewash in a five-game series on foreign soil. The last time when India had toured Zimbabwe, the second-string squad failed badly. But this time round, the youngsters put their hands up and performed.

When asked about the experience of captaining the side, Kohli replied

"It is a team of very talented players; it is not that difficult as captain; it is not difficult to motivate them. It has been a beautiful thing to be part of this team and now to lead it. This is an eager bunch of 15 who have gone out there and performed."

Kohli impressed everyone with his shrewd captaincy. He set the tone for the series by scoring a match-winning century in the opening game. What stood out was his marshalling of the resources and team tactics when the Indians were bowling. He kept the pressure at all times, not allowing the batsmen to settle down.

An excellent display by the bowlers, backed by Kohli's captaincy ensured that Zimbabwe never threatened at any stage in any game in the series. Amit Mishra was given full freedom to attack for wickets, and the strategy paid off with Mishra taking a record 18 wickets in the series. Jaydev Unadkat also impressed with his line and variations to finish as the second-highest wicket-taker.

As the series went on, Kohli became more flexible with the team's batting order, allowing the likes of Raina, Karthik and Jadeja to get some invaluable batting practice. The decision to play Rayudu at number 4 on his debut turned out to be a masterstroke as the rookie scored an unbeaten half-century.

But having said that, Rayudu got only 3 chances to bat in the 5 games, and Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane could have been given more opportunities. Rahane scored a half-century in the only game he played, and Pujara will feel hard done by the fact that he got to play just 2 matches, in which he failed to do anything of note.

Another contentious move by Kohli, which was hotly debated back home, was the non-inclusion of Parvez Rasool in any of the matches, including dead rubbers.



Kohli defended the decision, saying "Parvez realises we had a set bowling combination and we didn't want to make any changes to that. It was unfortunate he didn't get a game, but it just didn't go according to our plans. Maybe in future when he plays more series he'll get a few games to test his skills out."

However, it can't be denied that there wouldn't have been a better opportunity to give the youngster his international debut than in a dead rubber against a weak opposition. Mohit Sharma was given a go by Kohli in the dead rubbers, and the seamer impressed in both games, and a similar chance could easily have been given to Rasool.

While leading the team to a series victory against Zimbabwe wouldn't have tested Kohli much, he did a good job at ensuring the team stuck to its tasks and got the desired results, without letting complacency creep in. And this sets a good platform for him to take on a more active role in the team's decision making unit, and strengthen his claim to take over the team's reign when Dhoni does decide to move on. There's still a long way to go, but a beginning has been made, and it has been good.

# The Virat Kohli Show

Virat Kohli became the first Indian captain to win an ODI series 5-0 away from home

Virat Kohli also became the second youngest ODI captain to win a series 5-0. The youngest is Prosper Utseya of Zimbabwe

Virat Kohli scored his 15th ODI century in his 106th ODI inning. He is the quickest to score 15 ODI 100s



## Quickest to 15 ODI 100s

- 106 - Virat Kohli
- 143 - Saeed Anwar
- 144 - Sourav Ganguly
- 147 - Chris Gayle
- 161 - Herschelle Gibbs

Virat Kohli now has the joint third most centuries for India in ODIs

## Most ODI 100s for India

- 49 - Sachin Tendulkar
- 22 - Sourav Ganguly
- 15 - VIRAT KOHLI/Virender Sehwag
- 13 - Yuvraj Singh
- 12 - Rahul Dravid

Virat Kohli also completed 4500 ODI runs. He is the joint second quickest to complete 4500 ODI runs in 107 innings.

## Quickest to 4500 ODI runs

- 98 - Sir Viv Richards
- 107 - Virat Kohli/Gordon Greenidge
- 108 - Brian Lara
- 110 - Dean Jones
- 115 - AB de Villiers

## INDIA vs ZIMBABWE:

## Indian youngsters who made a mark during the series

- Omi

As expected, the India - Zimbabwe series turned out a gross mismatch. Team India walloped the tiny African nation, 5-0, to complete a whitewash for the first time in an ODI series on foreign soil. Although, the triumph is very comprehensive, there is nothing much to celebrate. It comes against a feeble opponent, who were never expected to put up a resistance against India, even though India fielded a second string side.

But the biggest positive that team India will carry home is the good performance of its young brigade. With the seniors being handed a "much needed" rest, the young contingent of Indian cricket was provided with an audition ground to showcase their talents. And they didn't let the selectors down.

Here is the list of young players who impressed during the tour:

**AMBATI RAYUDU:**

Rayudu was once hailed by his coaches at the National Cricket Academy as the next great Indian batsman. He was compared by many - who saw him bat in his early years - with the Legendary Sachin Tendulkar. He even captained the India U-19 team in the 2003 World Cup, where the likes of Irfan Pathan and Raina played under him. Anyone who saw him bat during that period would bet on him to make an India debut soon.

Instead, after the initial success at the domestic level, his career slipped through an extremely slippery slope. His fate could be attributed to a mixture of temperament issues, wrong decisions, and a lot of bad luck. There was a time when his dreams of playing for India looked very slender, as his career almost ended when BCCI banned him, because of his contract with the rebel ICL. Later the ban was revoked and Rayudu was back to the grind of first class cricket, piling on heaps of runs, and staking his claim to put on the Indian colors. Also his stint with the Mumbai Indians in the IPL, where he played along with stalwarts like Sachin and Ponting, helped him a lot.

In the Zimbabwe tour, his long wait at last came to an end. Rayudu made his debut in Harare in the first ODI. The 27-year-old scored a sublime 87 ball 63 on his debut, forging a decisive 159 run partnership with Captain Virat Kohli.



He played his role of sheet-anchor to perfection, while Kohli played attacking cricket at the other end. Rayudu waited for the ball to come to the bat, and had loads of time to play his strokes. Although, he didn't get too many opportunities in the rest of the series, he definitely staked a claim to feature as a regular in the Indian ODI set-up.

Though the India debut has come late for this talent from Hyderabad, everyone would hope to see a lot of him in the future. At 27, he has still a lot of cricket left in him.

## JAYDEV UNADKAT:

Jaydev Unadkat made his India debut, even before going through the toil of First class cricket. He was surprisingly drafted into the India's test tour of South Africa in 2010.

Even though he had represented India at the Under-19 level, he lacked much experience at the higher lever. The selectors chose him on instinct and it turned out nothing short of a disaster. He played his only test at Centurion and didn't look ready to play at the level, thus going wicket-less. Since then, it has been a rough ride for the lad from Saurashtra.

But, he got back into national reckoning with consistent performances in the Ranji Trophy. Also playing for RCB in the IPL, he gained a lot of experience bowling in the nets, to the likes of Chris Gayle and AB de Villers on flat tracks of Chinnaswamy and with some impressive performances for the Bangalore based team. It didn't come as a surprise to many, when he got selected for the tour of Zimbabwe.



The young Saurashtra bowler played all the 5 matches in the Zimbabwe series. He impressed with his line and length right through the series, as a result maintaining an economy rate of under four runs per over. The 21-year-old, finished with 8 wickets and as second highest taker behind Amit Mishra. His run up and the ability to land the ball on the seam was very impressive. In the notable absence of Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma, he showed a lot of patience, by applying pressure with his disciplined line and length bowling. Throughout the series, Unadkat consistently produced deliveries that moved into the batsman and followed it up with an away going one.

Unadkat looks a work horse now, who bowls with his heart on his sleeves, and looks a lot fitter and stronger since the last time he played in South Africa. With Zaheer Khan almost at the end of his career, Unadkat has the potential to take over from him, to become the next left arm fast bowling spearhead of the country.



## MOHIT SHARMA:

Before the IPL began this year, the Haryana pacer was an unknown entity even in the Domestic circuit. The 24 year lad, who had played no more than 11 first class games, was a surprise inclusion to the already strong Chennai Super Kings line up. By the end of the IPL, he had turned out as their most successful bowler.



On the basis of the performances in the IPL, the selectors chose him ahead of Ishwar Pandey and Pankaj Singh who had great first class seasons. Mohit got his opportunity late in the Zimbabwe series, but he made sure he grabbed it with both hands. As a strike bowler with the new ball, he impressed with his line and length. Mohit consistently bowled around the 135kmh mark.

In the fourth ODI of the series, Mohit became just the second Indian cricketer after Sandeep Patil to be adjudged man of the match on debut. He bowled with raw pace and maintained a good line. Given the major responsibility with the new ball, he bowled an excellent first spell, making the ball move both ways. It was a dream debut as he ended with a match figures of 2/26 in 10 overs, which included 3 maidens.

It is still early days in his career to judge, but the little that has been on display has been very exciting. Mohit certainly possesses the talent to be embarked as a future prospect.

## The BCCI-IPL fiasco: A dilemma getting worse

- Matthew



The Indian soap channels are running low on TRPs. Reason? The Indian Premier League. With its entire package of exhaustingly exaggerated extravaganza, the glamorous IPL never ceases to entertain you during the scorching Indian summers. As if that is not enough, the brainchild of BCCI is now here to amuse you all the year round with its additional package of controversies as if in warm up to the Season 7.

Of course, you don't mind the drama. But it strikes you somewhat hard deep down when the credibility of your religion is put to question and the Gods you have worshipped for so long fall from grace.

What began with an arrest of three Rajasthan Royals players that took the entire country by surprise (more so, since the skipper of the franchisee is a certain Rahul Dravid whose position at the highest echelon of discipline in the Gentleman's Game is unanimously accepted and admired) extended through numerous twists and turns, the content of which continues to bewilder even the most analytic brains with its bizarre perplexity.

Shortly after their arrest, the tainted trio was blasted with a unique analogy of 'rotten eggs' by the BCCI Chairman whose voice oozed confidence as he assured the healthiness of the remaining 'eggs' in the basket. Ironically, this was followed by another arrest that not only rendered humiliation to the statement but also embarrassed BCCI like nothing else.

As son-in-law Gurunath Meiyappan strolled towards the police station with an air of indifference, one had expected BCCI President N. Srinivasan to withdraw himself after such a loss of face. But surprises galore from the head of India Cements, he hooked every rising delivery off the front-foot (an art that eludes the Suresh Rainas) instead of concentrating on his defense on the back-foot.

With 1.2 billion prayers for his resignation bulldozing him, Srinivasan showcased his classic knack of obstinacy as he released an incredulous statement that stripped Meiyappan of ownership of the Chennai franchisee and reduced him to nothing more than an 'enthusiast'. Like a child claiming innocence after a blunder, Srinivasan declared cleanliness of his actions and demanded the support of his colleagues.

Destiny, however, appeared all too keen to mock the poor BCCI President as the very next day witnessed the beginning of calls for his head. With friends-turned-foes turning up the heat in the pressure cooker, Srinivasan fell back upon the Indian public in a futile attempt, the thwarting failure of which ultimately persuaded him to 'step aside'. Mind you, he did not 'resign'.



Srinivasan's departure turned out to be a comeback for Jagmohan Dalmiya, albeit as interim President, who spent no time in attempting to turn the stakes in his favor. Analytic probabilities, critical reasoning and calculated assumptions continue to get viral as Dalmiya looks to consolidate his position ahead of rival Arun Jaitley. With another pertinent question looming over Srinivasan's third term as the President, no wonder the BCCI-IPL dilemma remains an intriguing topic of gossip.

The IPL scandal is now getting stale, yet the highest cricketing organization in the country seems eerily keen to drag the drama, the gradual unfolding of which is now getting on people's nerves. The more you peel an endless onion, the more fatigued you get wondering how many more layers are left.

The tight international calendar and an overdose of cricketing action appear to be a perfect tunnel to divert the fans' attention away from the fiasco. Public memory is short enough and for politicians, it's more often a boon than a burden.



In a country like India where cricket enjoys the status of religion, it is not astonishing that the devotees will return to their deities no matter what. It is this loyalty of aficionados that is well exploited by the administrators who are more eager to provide a stylish cover-up to blatant lies than ensuring fairness to the truth.

Lust for power is a motivation sturdy enough to propel one blindfolded towards the path of negativism. Power is an addiction. And when addiction amalgamates with self preservation, it becomes one of those lethal tracks where retreat becomes impossible.

It is as much uncomfortable as disheartening to witness the allegiance of the followers of the game striking up a plumb contrast with the infidelity of those in charge of running it. The commoner, though, has little say in dictatorial arrogance steeped with self interest and narrow politics.

One can only cross his fingers for a cloudless sky and hope that justice will, one day, get to see the light of the day. Till then, the Men in Blue are out there to keep you engrossed.

## Should BCCI come under the RTI?

- Aditi



Big issues are a relative term.

The past few months have been quite challenging for BCCI. One hurdle after another. And no, these are not (sadly) hurdles pertaining to the essentials of cricket. Match fixing scandals, allegations, discrepancies and some more discrepancies. Now in what seems to be the umpteenth time in history, BCCI is all set to be at loggerheads with the Sports Ministry over the draft of a new Sports Bill. A committee headed by Justice (retd.) Mukul Mudgal, and consisting of imminent sports personalities like Olympic gold medallist Abhinav Bindra, proposed a draft for the new Sports Bill. This sports bill, if passed by the parliament of India will make it mandatory for all sports federations in India to come under the Right To Information (RTI) Act, failing which they will not be allowed to play under the name 'India' in any international event. Under this act the petitioner is allowed to ask, seek and question anything about the way the sports federation functions. However, one cannot question the selection of particular players or appointment of coaches, nor can one seek details of a player's contracts, medical health etc.

This doesn't seem like an unfair demand does it? But the BCCI has already drawn swords and is sketching war plans. The BCCI is not a government recognized body i.e. it is not a National Sports Federation. It does not rely on government's grants and presumably does not tolerate any kind of government interference. Thus, they treat the RTI Act as a breach of their policy of complete non-governmental functioning.

But let us ask the very obvious question that arises from these speculation-does the government really gain control over the BCCI, if the latter agrees to come under RTI? The answer is no. The reason being the government itself fears the RTI. The government's love – hate relationship with the RTI Act continues, with the political parties attempting to hide from the radar of this law. Not one of the political parties has unabashedly shown its support to the RTI. The RTI empowers the people of India to know better, the ongoing of government organizations. By virtue of this act the scales on the balance would tip in favour of we, the people and give us a sense of truly being a part of the largest democracy. It would give us the authority to solicit answers and basically attempt at a transparent administration. Of course we cannot question and seek defence secrets, but finances of the BCCI or the administration is hardly a matter of national security right?

Why then is the guilty conscience of the BCCI prickling? What does it have to hide from the devoted fans and spectators of this glorious game? The ardent fan following and mass viewership has filled up the coffers of BCCI. Every man with vested interests be it politicians, businessmen and even a few ex-cricketers want to pet this gold egg laying goose. This has led to corruption to the deepest level imaginable. You would expect that the richest sports body in international cricket owe it to the public, to keep its records clean. However, given the recent facts that have surfaced, even an optimist would find it difficult not to scorn. Delhi based RTI activist Subhash Chandra Agrawal, in an application asked for the details of the BCCI finances and tax records.



The IT department refused to comply with his request but the CIC budged. The fact that stares at us in the face is that the BCCI owes the IT department a whopping Rs.550 crore in taxes for the years 2007-2011. What's even more astonishing is that the IT department has been casual in its assessment for the years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, despite being well aware of the previous disparities. Why this free leash, to an organization that has with it the public as stake holders not only in terms of money?

The power mongering BCCI is obviously not happy with the turn of events. This huge secret that it has been sitting on is out in the open and it shames the already faltering BCCI. But thick skinned, that most of them are, they will come up with a legal recourse, as they did in the spot fixing scandal. A core committee consisting of 3 members appointed by the BCCI, of which Sanjay Jagdale stepped down, worked in a given frame of reference, ignoring all the proof that was presented, hastened to give a clean chit to all those accused in betting and spot fixing allegations of IPL. These included son in law of N.Srinivasan and owners of the Rajasthan royals. They did not even bother to wait for the charge sheet filed by the Delhi and Mumbai police to come out. When Bombay High court scoffed at the 'clean chit' awarded and disregarded the committee itself, Srinivasan had this to say, "I do not know why you people are making a big issue of it".

We aren't supposed to make a big deal out of this. We're supposed to be pacified by the Indian team's triumphs. Celebrate its success, be glad that we have immense talent even to warm the bench and sing its glory. Why bother with what goes on behind the scenes and under the table? There are so many skeletons in the cupboard. We're just supposed to look at the showcase full of bright and shiny trophies and be mesmerised.



This is what the BCCI is afraid of. That we might bang on the doors; ask the cupboards to be opened. But it's going to be difficult. It may blatantly deny, put gag orders on everyone associated with it, take everyone on a ride on legal matters and make you lose your way in the maze it creates. And we might be fooled again. Unless we look at the Sports Bill as a solution. Apart from the RTI clause, BCCI would also have to abide by the unethical practices in sports clause which essentially aims at making sport doping free. This should be something BCCI should definitely agree to.

To expect a massive cleanup from BCCI would be foolishness, given that their President amidst all the conflict of interest has managed to retain his seat and not many stood up against him. Loopholes in the legislation would allow them to continue with the farce. But RTI can certainly be the first step. It owes it to the people of India who so naively but religiously follow cricket. Or we should brace ourselves to watch the INDIA from the jersey be replaced by some other, outrageous name. Anything goes, right?