

WHAT NEXT? INDIAN CRICKET TRYING TO KEEP IPL AFLOAT

NEW DELHI: Cricket organizers were in crisis mode yesterday, weighing options for how to keep the Indian Premier League afloat after a Supreme Court-appointed committee announced two-year bans on two of the top clubs. Justice Lodha committee announced the suspensions Tuesday on former champions Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals while also proposing life bans for Chennai team principal Gurusami Meiyappan and Rajasthan co-owner Raj Kundra for betting on IPL games or being in contact with illegal gamblers. Lodha's committee ruled that the clubs had to accept responsibility for the actions of the officials. Reducing the league from eight clubs to six would decrease the number of matches in the six-week season from 60 to 34, and would mean re-negotiating contracts with broadcasters and the remaining franchises because the tournament is based on a revenue sharing model.

The IPL governing council, created by the Board of Control for Cricket in India, has called for a meeting Sunday to discuss the situation amid pressure to restore credibility.

"It is essential ... to take all necessary steps so as to restore the credibility of BCCI and game of cricket in India," Sharad Pawar, the former head of India's national cricket association and the International Cricket Council, wrote to BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya. "It is necessary for the board to be proactive in this matter and take all necessary actions to clean the game of cricket."

There was a widely-held perception that the BCCI was shielding the team officials after its own disciplinary committee had cleared them of wrong doing. It took legal action by the Cricket Association of Bihar which ultimately led to action in the Supreme Court. A committee led by Justice Mukul Mudgal investigated corruption in the Twenty20 league and the Lodha committee was subsequently formed to determine the appropriate punishment. Meiyappan's role at the Super Kings was disputed initially. He was described as a "cricket enthusiast" early on by then BCCI president Narainaswamy Srinivasan, his father-in-law, who is now the chairman of the ICC. That description was widely criticized as Meiyappan was seen regularly in the team

dugout and player auctions.

Former IPL commissioner Lalit Modi, who was expelled by the BCCI amid charges relating to the administrative and financial management of the competition, said the game's national governing body had failed its fans in trying to cover up the scandal.

"BCCI cover up failed only because the courts intervened," Modi posted on Twitter. Former BCCI president Inderjit Bindra posted tweets saying Srinivasan should not be allowed to continue as ICC chairman because he'd tried to protect Meiyappan and the Super Kings. The "BCCI should take immediate action against him by withdrawing his nomination to ICC," Bindra said. Srinivasan "should step down immediately, failing which (the) board should take action."

Bindra said two new teams should be introduced in the next IPL season to ensure the value of the league, which is estimated at \$4 billion, does not suffer. "To make IPL viable BCCI could auction 2 more teams and after 2 years have IPL with 10 teams, as originally intended," Bindra said.

The BCCI, which will receive suggestions for reform by Lodha's committee, also has to decide how to accommodate the prominent and highly-paid players contracted to the two banned clubs.

Chennai, a two-time champion and the runner-up this year, is led by India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and features New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum, West Indies allrounder Dwayne Bravo and South Africa batsman Faf du Plessis.

Rajasthan, the inaugural IPL champ in 2008, is led by Australia's Steve Smith, and includes India batsman Ajinkya Rahane, and New Zealand pace bowler Tim Southee.

The IPL scaled back to eight clubs from 10 after expansion club Kochi Tuskers was scrapped for an alleged breach of contract in 2011 and Sahara Pune Warriors withdrew in 2013. The BCCI, which is currently considering appealing a compensation award to the Kochi franchise, announced yesterday that the Champions League Twenty20 - an annual tournament it helped launch in 2009 for the leading domestic teams from T20 competitions around the world - would be canceled. — AP



LONDON: Australia's Peter Nevill dives to make a catch during a nets session a day ahead of the second Ashes Test match against England at Lord's. — AP

CONFIDENT ENGLAND WARY OF AUSSIES ASHES BACKLASH

LONDON: The cracks appear to be showing in the normally-invincible Australian cricket team. The second Ashes Test starting at Lord's today follows hard on the heels of England's comfortable 169-run victory in the first game in Cardiff.

Australia's most effective bowler in Cardiff, Mitchell Starc, has been receiving injections in an ankle injury and veteran wicketkeeper Brad Haddin has withdrawn from the second match for what Cricket Australia described as "family reasons." The withdrawal means a test debut for New South Wales wicketkeeper Peter Nevill.

Haddin faced criticism in Cardiff for dropping Joe Root, who went on to score a crucial 134 in England's first innings. Root was on 0 when Haddin put down the catch. Pace bowler Peter Siddle is tipped to replace Starc if he does not recover.

Australia coach Darren Lehmann was clearly disappointed with the placid wicket in Cardiff that negated the bouncers used frequently in the past to intimidate England's batsmen. "I'd just like to be able to bowl a bouncer on day one. That'd be nice," he said after the defeat in Wales.

The Lord's strip is usually a perfect test wicket, offering a reasonable amount of pace and height, but does not have the bounciness often found in wickets at London's Oval or Australia's WACA and beloved by quick bowlers.

Having arrived in England tipped to easily retain the Ashes, Australia is now facing criticism that its squad is on its last legs, injury-plagued and generally too old. Several of the tourists, notably allrounder Shane Watson (34) and Haddin, looked awkward in Cardiff and several other players are in their mid-30s. England has already announced an unchanged team to the one that surprised the Australians in Cardiff. England's new coach Trevor Bayliss has only just started his job, and the team revealed a fundamental change in strategy in the series against New Zealand earlier in the summer, with the aggressive batting tactics delighting the fans. That experiment started before Bayliss was appointed, and continued in Wales when the batters played with freedom and real determination. Bayliss, an Australian, advised his players to beware his countrymen when they are cornered. "They don't like losing," he said after the Cardiff game. "They have a proud record and losing will mean they come out in the next

game trying to prove a point and trying to make up for their performance in this match." England captain Alastair Cook did not succeed with the bat in Cardiff, but was widely praised for his tactics in the field, especially the bowling changes and field placements. The new generation of test batsmen - Gary Ballance, Ben Stokes, Jos Buttler and Moeen Ali - all scored good runs and showed little fear of Australia's three-man pace attack.

Resisting the temptation to bowl bouncers, England's pacemen bowled a full length, finding swing that accounted for several Australians who were tempted into driving far too often.

"You have to adapt. A lot of our plans went out of the window when we saw the pace of the wicket, because there's no point constantly trying to get someone's edge when it isn't going to carry," Stuart Broad said.

"We had to think on our feet. I didn't want to waste a bouncer." Australia lost fast bowler Ryan

Harris before the Ashes even began when a knee injury forced him to announce his retirement from cricket. Allrounder James Faulkner was not due to play any part in the Ashes but may have been in contention for a spot in the one-day team until Tuesday, when he was charged in England, where he has been playing the county game, with drink-driving. He will appear in court in England later this month but Cricket Australia said he would not be considered for limited overs games after the Ashes.

The two teams clearly like to needle each other. The latest barb was aimed by England fast bowler James Anderson, who pointed to the Australian players having turned down a post-match beer in the England changing rooms in Cardiff. The tradition of players enjoying a drink after the game is widespread, but Australian players insisted they'd only sit down to sup with their opponents at the end of the five-match Ashes series in September. — AP

MCC PROPOSES 12-TEAM CRICKET WORLD CUP, NOT 10

LONDON: The MCC world cricket committee says dropping the World Cup to a 10-team event "is a retrograde step." The last two Cricket World Cups, including this year's in Australia and New Zealand, hosted 14 teams. The next two, in 2019 and 2023, have been planned with only 10. The committee, following a two-day meeting at Lord's, recommends 12 with a "preliminary qualifying round."

The committee said on Tuesday that 10-team events are "a retrograde step that damages the potential for growth in cricket's developing nations," and "is a handbrake for the development of the sport."

The committee, an independent think-tank chaired by former England captain Mike Brearley and including other past captains Ricky Ponting, Rahul Dravid, and Shaun Pollock, asked the International Cricket Council to reconsider the number of sides.

It also backed Twenty20 for inclusion in the Olympics. "The Olympics is a fundamental opportunity for cricket," the committee said, and wouldn't detract from its own world tournaments.

"Competing in an Olympic Games would be ... a massive boost to developing cricket nations, and give much greater exposure for the sport to a new audience."

The committee suggested the England and Wales Cricket Board, notably president and ICC representative Giles Clarke, had been a stumbling block to cricket's Olympic ambitions, but new chairman Colin Graves and new chief executive Tom Harrison were willing to rethink England's position. Brearley welcomed their open mind, and warned Clarke that as president, he "is an employee of the board and has to report to the board. He has to do what he's told." — AP



INDIA: In this photograph taken on May 12, 2012, Chennai SuperKings (CSK) captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (right) and CSK owner Gurusami Meiyappan attend the presentation ceremony. — AFP

NEVILL SWAPS GUITAR FOR GLOVES

SYDNEY: A guitar-strumming rocker when not keeping wickets, Australia's Peter Nevill will hope to hit the right note when he makes his surprise test debut against England in the second Ashes match today. Brad Haddin's decision to skip the Lord's test due to family reasons has cleared the deck for Nevill's test debut and this is not the first time the 29-year-old had to fill in for his mentor.

He flew to West Indies in 2012 as a reserve for second-choice Matthew Wade when Haddin was forced to return home due to his daughter's illness.

The competition with Wade for a playing spot in the Victoria team prompted Nevill to move to New South Wales in 2008 and that is where he blossomed both with gloves and bat and developed a close friendship with Haddin. "Brad has had a massive impact on my career, he's always so generous with his time," Nevill, who often carries a guitar with him, said during a News Corp interview in March.

"He's helped me out a lot and he's got a great eye for wicketkeeping and understands the technical aspects of it so well. "Just little things like talking to him about scenarios or mentally what he's thinking and his keys as a keeper. He's certainly helped me become a

better wicketkeeper." Nevill had his strongest Sheffield Shield showing last season for NSW, which earned him the Steve Waugh medal for the state's best player.

He scored 764 first-class runs at an average of over 76, including an unbeaten 235 against Tasmania in Hobart, and his form with the bat meant he played as a regular batsman for NSW when Haddin was available for domestic cricket.

Nevill also had 34 Shield dismissals in the last season, enough to earn a spot in the test squad as the second keeper behind Haddin on the tours of West Indies and the Ashes.

"I can always learn a lot from Haddis, but this tour I've got to prepare to play," Nevill said. "I need to be on top of my game and ready to go should that opportunity arise."

Now that the opportunity has arrived, his Australia team mate Peter Siddle was convinced Nevill would make it count. "He's played well in the opportunities he's had. His record back home speaks for itself, he's had a couple of great years in first-class cricket," said Siddle, Nevill's former Victoria team mate. "I played a lot with him as a youngster, being a Victorian boy. He gets his opportunity, I've got no doubt he will be ready to go." — Reuters

US OPEN ACES WIMBLEDON FOR GRAND SLAM PRIZE MONEY

NEW YORK: The US Open leapfrogged Wimbledon as the richest grand slam event in tennis as the United States Tennis Association announced on Tuesday a 10.5 percent prize money increase for next month's championship.

The purse for the US Open will hit \$42.3 million, with the men's and women's singles winners each pocketing \$3.3 million. The All England Club upped the Wimbledon prize money this year by seven percent to 26.75 million pounds (\$41.82m).

Singles winners Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams each received 1.88 million pounds, just under \$3m at the current exchange rate.

With Tuesday's announcement, the US Open has inched ahead, based on the current exchange rate, in what has become something of a wage race. Additionally, the top finishers in the Emirates Airline US Open Series of events leading up to the grand slam are eligible for bonus prize money.

In 2014, women's singles champion Serena Williams took home \$4 million, the biggest single payday in tennis history. She earned \$3 million as the US Open singles champion and a \$1 million bonus as the Open series champion.

"We continue our commitment to ensure that

the US Open offers one of the most lucrative purses in all of sports," USTA president and US Open chairwoman Katrina Adams said in a statement.

"As we have stated, total player compensation at the US Open will reach \$50 million by 2017." For 2015, the singles remuneration for each round will increase by at least 10 percent.

All 128 singles entrants are guaranteed \$39,500, with prize money almost doubling with each victory. The payout for the doubles competition will increase by 8.4 percent overall, with the men's and women's doubles champions earning \$570,000, the most ever at the US Open. — Reuters

MANAGER OF WOMEN COMMISSION FIM HAILS EFFORTS OF NASSER AL ATTIYAH



Nita Korhonen, Manager of Women commission FIM said all events happening in the Middle East are due to the support and the motivation of the FIM Deputy President, Nasser Khalifa Al Attiyah and the region thanks him for all those opportunities and the continuous help to promote women in motorsport in every possible way.

"I am extremely happy that the federations and manufacturers are working so hard to get more women into the motorcycling. I was recently in Lebanon where they organised their first women in Motorcycling seminar. Many Middle East countries are really doing a lot at the moment to improve the situation of female riders and this is just brilliant, she said."

Also many manufacturers are at the moment manufacturing more bikes that would attract women as they realize how important it is to get new target groups. So a lot has happened just in few years and I am so grateful for all the efforts everyone are doing at the moment!

As for me it's not that important to have girls or women in motorcycling, but the most important thing is that all the people no matter what the gender, are able to follow their dreams, do what they want and to have same possibilities as everyone else. If a girl or a woman wants to be involved in motorcycling I definitely would encourage them to do so because this is so much fun.