'ICARUS': INSIDE RUSSIA'S OLYMPIC DOPING SCANDAL

LOS ANGELES: When documentary filmmaker Bryan Fogel began looking into drugs in sport, he envisaged pulling off a bold stunt to show how easy it was to cheat anti-doping tests. Little did he know he would end up making a geopolitical thriller about state-sponsored doping involving death and the biggest scandal in sporting history.

Due for release on Netflix next Friday, Fogel's "Icarus" shows how maverick Rodchenkov, Russia's former WADA-compliant anti-doping laboratory director, was a key cog in the nation's state-sponsored doping programme. Freezing urine samples, crafting cutting-edge testing strategies, and the mastermind behind Russia's massive, state-run doping programme, Rodchenkov knew about the operation inside and out.

Rodchenkov was the highest-ranking Olympic cybernetic official in the world who knew about the doping scandal. Rodchenkov says his friend—the only other non-governmental anti-doping leader—was"the man who masterminded the fraud before defecting and tumbling Russia's Olympic machine, as revealed in a book with Sunday Times journalist David Walsh on doping during his post-race urine tests. He ended up being introduced to Russian doctor Grigory Rodchenkov, who oversaw all drug testing for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics in Moscow's World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) lab and, astonishingly, was only too happy to help.

Fogel spent six months being coached by the charismatic, maverick Rodchenkov into taking a variety of substances including human growth hormone EPO, as the pair talked over Skype and met in Los Angeles and Moscow.

"SUICIDE" PLOT

Then, on November 9, 2015, WADA accused Rodchenkov in a 335-page report after an 11-month investigation of being the mastermind behind Russia's massive, state-run doping efforts. The international furor forced President Vladimir Putin to order his lab shut down and had agents from the Federal Security Service (FSB) move into his home. Contacts told him the intelligence services were plotting his "suicide." Fearing for his life, Rodchenkov escaped to the United States after Fogel bought him a plane ticket.

The scientist arrived at Fogel's home in Los Angeles with a hard drive containing documents proving that state-sponsored doping had been going on for decades, not just in track and field but across all sports. His story convinced Fogel to write a book with Sunday Times journalist David Walsh on doping during his post-race urine tests. It started out as a simple plan to recreate disgraced cyclist Lance Armstrong’s blood doping regime and document exactly how easy it was to sail through the tests that ought to have caught Armstrong.

"The theory was, if this guy has been able to do this, what has changed in the last four years since his confession and, more importantly, what does this mean for all sport?" Fogel told AFP. He aimed to illustrate flaws in the system by using roughly the same blood-doping regime as Armstrong and getting an expert to coach him through evading detection during his post-race urine tests. He ended up being introduced to Russian doctor Grigory Rodchenkov, who oversaw all drug testing for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics in Russia's World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) lab and, astonishingly, was only too happy to help.

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INDIA LEAVE S LANKA FEELING AT 154-5

GALLE: India's bowlers tore through the Sri Lankan top order to put the visitors firmly on top on the second day of the first Test in Galle yesterday. Paceman Mohammed Shami picked two wickets in the same over and Umesh Yadav got rid of opener Dimuth Karunaratne after India posted a commanding 600 all out, their biggest total in Sri Lanka.

Former captain Angelo Mathews was batting on 54 with Dilruwan Perera on six when stumps were drawn for the day, with Sri Lanka still trailing by 446 runs with five wickets in hand. Indian batsman Cheteshwar Pujara, who struck a solid 135, said he was pleased that India had lived up to its billing as the number one Test side in the world.

"We would like to maintain that standard. We have scored enough runs, and we’ve got five wickets today. We are very well poised at this stage. "I think the key for us, even in the last season, was that we bowled really well. Our bowlers are bowling good lines and lengths,” he said referring to India’s 10 wins in the last 13 Tests. Sri Lankan opener Upul Tharanga struck a defiant 64 off 93 balls but was run out thanks to a quick piece of fielding by Abhinav Mukund.

Mukund, fielding at silly point, also took a fine one-handed catch off Ravichandran Ashwin to send back Niroshan Dickwella (eight) and reduce the hosts to a shaky 143-5. Yadav gave his side an early breakthrough after the Indian lower-order batsmen scored at a quick pace despite losing wickets at regular intervals.

Yadav had Karunaratne trapped leg before and although the batsman went for a review, the decision was upheld after replays showed the ball pitching on the middle stump. Shami, making his Test comeback after an injury layoff, then dismissed debutant Danushka Gunathilaka for 16 and Kusal Mendis for a duck in the space of four balls.

PRADEEP HEROICS

Earlier, paceman Nuwan Pradeep clinched his maiden five-wicket Test haul, putting the brakes on India’s free scoring. Pradeep (6-132) dismissed Pujara for 153, triggering a batting collapse which saw the tourists lose four wickets in a lively first session after resuming the day at 399-3.

"Though I didn’t start well, I thought I got better as I kept bowling. I got some rhythm,” said Pradeep who last played a Test in January. "We came to the match with a plan. But the way the match went and given the state of the pitch, we had to change our plans.

A lot of our plans didn’t work... But cricket is like that, at least we could get them out for 600,” Pujara hit 13 fours in his 265-ball knock to match his previous Test best of 153 against South Africa at ohanesburg in 2013.

Hardik Pandya struck a half-century on debut as India’s last two wickets added a quickfire 83 runs in 71 balls to lift the side from 517 for 8. Shami hit Rangana Herath for three sixes while Pandya lofted Pradeep for as many sixes in an attacking batting display by India’s lower order batsmen. Ajinkya Rahane (57) looked solid but was sent back to the pavilion after Karunaratne dived for a low catch on his right off fast bowler Lahiri Kumara.—AFP

Cricket Australia ready for arbitration in pay row

MELBOURNE: Cricket Australia said yesterday it will take its bitter pay dispute with players to independent arbitration if agreement cannot be reached by early next week, with a tour to Bangladesh looming. Chief executive James Sutherland said unless negotiations over the next few days produce a compromise, his organisation will seek the intervention of an industrial umpire-likely to be a retired judge-to resolve the impasse.

The first match on the Test tour of Bangladesh is due to start on August 22, followed by a one-day tour to India in September and October ahead of the showpiece home Ashes series, beginning in November.

"We are at the stage now where we need to address this situation and cricket needs to get on with the game," Sutherland told reporters in Melbourne. "We need players employed, contracted, focused not only on upcoming tours, but indeed an exciting season of cricket ahead."

"We feel what the ACA (Australian Cricketers’ Association) has proposed actually jeopardises not only the Bangladesh tour, but in turn the India one-day tour and even beyond that, dare I say it, the Ashes."

The ACA responded late yesterday saying it will be working to resolve its dispute with CA. ‘Arbitration is an adversarial process more akin to a court room,’ the ACA said in a statement. "A further concern is the time it would take for an arbiter to meaningfully understand the complexities of revenue sharing in elite professional sport and then to make judgement.—AFP

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