

# “Fixing” the problems in cricket – How to do it?

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The reputation of cricket, once a universally acknowledged term which stood for the highest standards of integrity, in whatever context in which it was being used, has been seriously damaged over recent years. Like many other major sports such as football and boxing, “fixing” the outcome has become a matter of world-wide concern. Is all that can be done, being done to fix it?

Events of the past few years have exposed corruption which have acquired labels such as “match-fixing”, “spot fixing”, “pitch tampering” and “ball tampering”, all creations of those who benefit from the gambling which takes place on the outcomes and other aspects of the game. They are phrases which send a shiver down the spine of any right-minded cricketing fan, at whatever level of the game they give outlet to their enthusiasm.

Most recently, Sri Lankan Cricket (SLC), a world-class side, has being seriously affected. Over the past few months it has been the subject of investigations and disciplinary actions. Its reputation has been damaged within the world of sport, and as importantly, in universal economic terms. It has produced many stars of the game and it will no doubt, given the chance, continue to do so.

The background to the problems blighting the sport is well known and stretches back to the globe-rocking revelations of 2000, when culprits from Pakistan, South Africa and India were publicly exposed leading to bans, with more serious examples in the UK leading to sentences of imprisonment for convicted players. Very recently, an SLC ex-captain was banned for two years after admitting corruption charges. Investigations of individuals such as Aneel Munawar, Dinesh Khambhat (“DK”) and an organisation known as “The Company” revealed notorious large-scale organised crime groups profiting out of corruption in cricket. Perhaps the most recent events should be viewed against the broadcasting of two documentaries last year by Al Jazeera. SLC was a prime target of the programme. It named

and shamed players, and groundsmen alike, for various forms of match-fixing and pitch tampering.

Earlier this year the International Cricket Council (ICC) investigation into allegations of corruption at the club announced an amnesty of 15 days. Alex Marshall, head of the ICC's Anti-Corruption Unit, said at the time that, *"This is the first time the ICC has held an amnesty and it is in response to the very specific challenges we face in Sri Lanka"*. He said it would assist in the ICC's *"ongoing and wide ranging"* investigations into Sri Lankan cricket.

The amnesty produced a further 11 *"whistleblowing"* reports from players and others associated with the sport which, at the time of writing, are understood to be still under investigation.

The ICC is the global governing body of cricket. It currently represents some 104 members and governs and administers the game. Through its Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) it coordinates action against corruption and match fixing. As the ICC itself states on its website, *"Since the ICC ACU's inception, awareness and responses to corruption in sport globally has grown and improved considerably, however, corruption continues to plague many sports, most notably football (soccer), tennis and cricket. No sport is immune from this issue"*.

In its attempts to repair some of the damage done, and to preserve the good name of cricket in the future, it makes clear that, *"sound intelligence and investigation processes, and working together remains critical in the fight against corruption in cricket.....whilst the risks persist they will continue to be a major threat to the integrity of the game"*.

In developing its Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) which seek to *"ensure professionalism, transparency and uniformity in its work"*, it has adopted five essential principles the first of which, *"Effective Partnerships"*, is one of the focuses of this article. It is the responsibility of all those in the sport, or care about it, to do what they can to work with the ICC.

In working with the ICC in line with this principle it's other four principles, which involve information gathering, improved coordination and communication as between clubs, prevention, education, proactive investigation and prosecution will be fulfilled.

The ICC ACU in Dubai serves as the central information hub for all intelligence gathered by the ICC ACU. The ICC ACU has Anti-Corruption Managers (ACMs) based around the world to help coordinate the ICC ACU's prevention measures. While the ICC ACU takes primary

responsibility for protecting the international game, protecting domestic cricket is the primary responsibility of the ICC Full Member Domestic Board ACUs. Each of these Domestic Units have each adopted their own Anti-Corruption Codes (modelled from the ICC Anti-Corruption Code) which governs players in certain standards of domestic cricket. The ACU's central intelligence base is also in Dubai.

Presently, the following countries have ACU's: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh and India, England & Wales, Ireland, Pakistan, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, South Africa, West Indies and Zimbabwe. The ICC website tells us that, "*Ireland and Afghanistan...are currently in the process of embedding domestic anti-corruption regulations and processes*".

"*Points of contact*" are also being established by the ICC ACU to expand cricket's anti-corruption network with each Associate Member.

The reputation of cricket has never been under closer examination, now through the lens of "informed" public opinion. The reputation of each country, its team, its officials, its players and every club supporter are affected by it. The roots of the integrity of cricket, in the (now becoming distant) past acknowledged to be without reproach, is under serious threat.

With the exception of the controls and discipline imposed by the cricketing authorities, the ICC, is presently the only independent body attempting to police the situation. The responsibility for rooting out these evils lies with each and every person associated with the sport, and at every level.

How do/should clubs try to deal with their situations and ensure professional and economic survival? Prevention is always better than cure, and by working in partnership with the ICC seeking to achieve common aims is the obvious starting point.

However, once a club is under the microscope and is responding to an allegation of corruption within its ranks, probably the only publicly acceptable way of doing so will be to establish its own *independent* board of inquiry which must be headed by a totally independent and disinterested person. This would, to the outside world be seen as a separate and distinct investigation, set apart from any investigation the club itself or the ICC conducts. The club could then be seen to be operating transparently. It would demonstrate to the world that not only is the individual club concerned about itself, but that it wants a thorough, such an inquiry to investigate the accusation, deal with it and move on.

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