

New Zealand done in by a bizarre set of rules

Arbitrary approach to determine the winner led to England walking away with the trophy despite the Kiwis 'not losing'

WORLD CUP

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

The gut-wrenching final at Lord's, visceral, brutal and explosive, was adjudged by a thoughtless, arbitrary number-of-boundaries rule that actually overlooked which team had lost less wickets in a tie after 100 captivating tension-filled overs.

The World Cup should have been shared between England and New Zealand and it's still not too late to right a grievous wrong that so cruelly denied the gallant Kiwis.

Idea of sharing honours
New Zealand coach Gary Stead is open to the idea of a shared World Cup if the ICC decides to re-look the events and circumstances of that epic Sunday that left millions of aficionados, cutting through barriers, feeling justice had not been done.

Former Sri Lankan World

Cup-winning coach Dav Whatmore said, "Sharing the Trophy would be the right thing to do but I don't know whether it is possible. This is the first time I have heard of a game being decided on the basis of boundaries."

New Zealand 'lost' by zero runs in both regular play and the Super Over, and was, unlike England, not bowled out during normal play.

Umpiring error

Then it emerged that the final over's pivotal moment – that left the luckless New Zealand devastated – when the ball rocketed off the desperately diving Ben Stokes' bat and shot past the ropes, was marred by a match-turning umpiring error.

The umpires awarded six runs which as celebrated umpire Simon Taufel revealed later, was a clear mistake. The batsmen had not crossed for the second run when Martin Guptill unleashed his throw and the umpires should have awarded En-

gland five runs and not six.

This also meant Adil Rashid would have been on strike and not the influential Stokes. These 'game-changing' umpiring mistakes hurt New Zealand in a game of such fine margins.

The umpires could have taken their time and referred the contentious extra run to the television umpire. Surely, they would have been aware of the rules.

In a game as big as this, the ICC should have left nothing to chance. At least, it could have continued with Super Overs until a conclusive result was reached much like penalty kicks in football that go on till a winner is found.

"This is actually a good idea," said Whatmore.

The never-say-die New Zealanders, gutsy, nerveless, skilful and full of grace and poise under extreme pressure, have been done in by a bizarre set of rules and questionable umpiring. Now, the ball is in ICC's court.



Not your day, mate! Chris Woakes consoles a crestfallen Martin Guptill after New Zealand went down in the World Cup final. •MICHAEL STEELE/GETTY IMAGES

Another Super Over should decide winner: Tendulkar

Several cricketers have also questioned the boundary-rule

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Sachin Tendulkar on Tuesday endorsed a second Super Over to decide the winner instead of considering the boundary count if such an extraordinary situation arises like it did in the World Cup final.

"I feel there should be another Super Over to decide the winner, instead of considering the number of boundaries scored by both teams. Not just in a World Cup final. Every game is important. Like in football, when teams go into extra time, nothing else matters," Tendulkar said to 100omb.

Current and former cricketers including Rohit Sharma, Gautam Gambhir and Yuvraj Singh, have questioned ICC's "ridiculous" rule on boundary count that decided the World Cup title.

Kohli's suggestion

After table toppers India was knocked out of the World Cup after losing the semifinal to New Zealand, skipper Virat Kohli had suggested IPL-like playoffs instead of knockouts in the World Cup, going forward.



For rule change: Tendulkar favoured another Super Over, not just in a World Cup final but whenever required. •PTI

Asked if the World Cup format needs to be changed in the knockout stages, Tendulkar said: "I think the two teams that finish at the top should definitely have something going for them for having played consistently through the tournament."

Dhoni's slot

During India's semifinal, former skipper M.S. Dhoni was sent at No. 7 with Hardik Pandya and Dinesh Karthik

being promoted in the batting order.

Asked what batting order he would have gone with for the chase, Tendulkar said: "Without a doubt, I would've sent M.S. Dhoni at his usual position, No. 5.

"With the kind of situation that India was in and the experience that he has, the need of the hour was for him to build the innings. Hardik could've batted at 6 and Karthik would've followed at 7."

I'm sure rules will be reviewed and possibilities explored: Stead

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

New Zealand coach Gary Stead has called for the Cricket World Cup's rules to be overhauled, labelling the showpiece final "hollow" after England defeated the Black Caps on a technicality.

The teams could not be separated at the end of both regular play and a Super Over shootout, so England was handed victory because it had a superior boundary count.

"It's a very, very hollow feeling that you can play 100 overs and score the same amount of runs and still lose the game, but that's the technicalities of sport," Stead told reporters in comments released by New Zealand Cricket on Tuesday.

"He said such a thrilling match, which has been hailed by many experts as the greatest one-day game in history, deserved a better way to determine the result.

"There's going to be many things they look at over the whole tournament – I'm sure when they were writing the rules they never expected a World Cup final to happen like that," he said.

"I'm sure it'll be reviewed (and) there's many different



Hollow feeling: Gary Stead believes such a thrilling final shouldn't have been decided the way it was. •REUTERS

ways that they'll probably explore."

Stead shrugged off suggestions England had been mistakenly handed an extra run after a throw from a fielder hit the bat of a diving Ben Stokes' and deflected to the boundary in the final over of regular play.

England was awarded six runs but former umpire Simon Taufel said it should only have got five as the batsmen had not crossed for their second run when the throw was made.

"I didn't actually know that," Stead said. "But at the end of the day the umpires are there to rule.

"They're human as well, like players, and sometimes there's a mistake but that's just the human aspect of sport."

'We didn't lose'

Skipper Kane Williamson pointed out his team was not defeated on the pitch, saying it instead fell victim to "fine print" in the rules.

He said that was a shame but the New Zealanders had signed up to the rules that governed the tournament.

"At the end of the day nothing separated us, no one lost the final, but there was a crowned winner and there it is," he told Newstalk ZB.

BCCI invites applications for coach, support staff

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The BCCI has initiated the process of recruitment for head coach, batting coach, bowling coach, fielding coach, physiotherapist, strength and conditioning coach and administrative manager of the Indian men's team.

The BCCI's contract with the present coaching and support staff ended with the World Cup in England, but most of them have been asked to continue till the completion of the tour of the West Indies that will run from August 3 to September 4.

The BCCI though has acceded to the wishes of physiotherapist Patrick Farhart and strength and physical conditioning coach Shankar Basu to be relieved after India's campaign in the quadrennial event.

According to a press release issued by the Supreme Court appointed Commit-

tee of Administrators, aspiring candidates have to apply for particular posts on or by July 30 after which the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) will take the recruitment process forward. The release also said that the current coaching staff will get an automatic entry in the recruitment process. The BCCI has posted an advertisement on its website. Bcci.tv giving details of eligibility criteria and experience required for different posts.

The former director of Indian cricket (2014 to 2016) Ravi Shastri returned as head coach of the team after a bitter end to Anil Kumble's tenure as head coach immediately after the Champions Trophy in June 2017. Once Shastri was appointed as head coach, Bharat Arun and R. Sridhar also returned as bowling and fielding coach. The present batting coach is Sanjay Bangar.

PM May thanks England for ending 44-year wait

Jacinda Ardern praises the Kiwis for putting their all on the line

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON/WELLINGTON

The prime ministers of England and New Zealand lauded their cricket teams' performance in the World Cup, which helped bring the sport into limelight in nations obsessed with football and rugby.

Prime Minister Theresa May thanked the England team for winning the showpiece and ending a 44-year wait. "You have helped the nation fall in love with cricket once again," May told the England players.

Sport at its best

"The final was not just cricket at its best but sport at its best – courage, character, sportsmanship, drama, incredible skill and even the odd slice of luck – all combining to create a real thriller, one of the great sporting spectacles of our time," she added. Football remains the

most popular sport in England, while rugby has a loyal following in New Zealand but cricketers in both the countries have caught the public imagination following the pulsating World Cup summit clash.

May added, "It was a fitting end to what has been a great tournament – and I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in once again making our country a sporting showcase for the world."

New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern praised the Black Caps for putting their all on the line and then accepting the gut-wrenching defeat with grace.

"That was undeniably an incredible game. I think as a nation we all aged a year in that super over. Congratulations to England. And to the Black Caps, I feel nothing but pride. What a team," wrote Ardern on Instagram.

Deserving winners England pump energy into fading format

It is difficult not to sympathise with the Kiwis for the non-defeat that ended all dreams, and the Cup might have been shared



BETWEEN WICKETS
SURESH MENON

The World Cup final was a celebration of cricket, revealing the possibilities of the 50-over game which was thought to be on its death bed. So England were lucky, we need to visit the rules afresh, and shouldn't New Zealand have won for good behaviour and long-term consistency? Yes, but what does all that matter when the game brought so much joy and gave us what all sport hopes to provide: a nail-biting climax?

For a long time, it wasn't a particularly good match. The Lord's wicket was too slow and the occasion seemed to get to the performers. But the finish changed everything. A tie is exciting enough, but a double tie? The questions will remain, though. Were England given an extra run when a diving Ben Stokes inadvertently deflected an overthrow to the boundary? What was that strange rule about boundaries deciding a match? How could England have won when New Zealand didn't lose?

Sport is not perfect. Often imperfection is the crack through which we see it at its best. After all, sport is, "the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles," as the philosopher Bernard Suits said, and the final was full of unnecessary obstacles. Rules are arbitrary, so it is as valid



Take away: England's triumph means that other teams might try to play like them, in a positive style. •AFP

to say the team with most boundaries wins as it is to say that the team which loses the fewer wickets does so. In the end, the best team took the title. Too much analysis and too many complaints will only extinguish the pleasure.

Diverse approaches

It may not be politically correct to say this, but New Zealand did not deserve to win the World Cup. They played a brand of cricket that was a throwback to the English style of old – overcautious, unadventurous, risk-averse. This, at a time when the format was in danger of being wiped out by T20, and the sport itself was struggling to attract new fans. Something was needed to provide the energy and flair that would revive it, and England delivered that in style. The ac-

cent was on attack – whether batting or bowling – and the approach attractive.

The essential difference between white ball cricket and the red is this: in the shorter formats, the result is everything, the ends justify the means. The longer format demands logic, style, and emphasis on the process as much as on the result. Only one question needs to be answered in white ball cricket about strategy, tactics, selection: did the team win? If it did then it was all brilliant. If it didn't, it's time to move on.

Good for the game

World Cup-winners tend to set the agenda. Had New Zealand won, it might have been a step back. England winning means that other teams might attempt to play like

them, in a positive, sexy style that can only be good for the game.

New Zealand were the underdogs, they have been the best-behaved team in international cricket, and in Kane Williamson they had a gracious captain with a fine tactical brain. It was difficult not to love him and his team – I wrote here earlier how a New Zealand win would be something to look forward to. It is difficult not to sympathise with the team for the non-defeat that ended all dreams, and in the ideal world, the Cup might have been shared.

But sport abhors such fragmentation. Competition demands that there be one winner, and all games have rules for breaking the tie from penalty shootouts to (in the old days) bowl outs and Super Overs. It is not a perfect system, but it is there, no one

had an issue with it before the tournament began when all teams approved.

The case of 'extra run'

Former umpire Simon Taufel has said that England were given an extra run, six instead of five, when Stokes' bat deflected the ball. A philosopher in a US University has countered that by saying the law is ambiguous thanks to a misplaced comma, and five runs was right. Interpretation is everything. The argument that England's 'extra run' led to victory assumes that everything else would have remained exactly the same. But one variable can affect others too in real-life situations.

Tournament rules (framed by the International Cricket Council) and laws of the game (the preserve of the Marylebone Cricket Club) are not written in stone, they evolve. Before Duckworth-Lewis appeared and fans stopped complaining about results because they didn't understand the rule, ODIs were decided in a variety of ways. We can get too mathematical about the Lord's final, and forget the human drama and the spirit of the players involved. Ben Stokes, for one, deserves better.

The final will have greatness thrust upon it over the years as more people than the ground could possibly accommodate claim to have watched it live. It was unforgettable, even if Williamson might not echo Roger Federer's words after his loss at Wimbledon a few kilometres and a few minutes away: "I shall try to forget."

For the moment, that is enough.

SEWERAGE MAINTENANCE DIVISION, CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPTT.
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Date of release of tender through e-procurement solution : 16.07.2019
Date and time for pre-bid meeting, if any : --- N/A ---
Last date/time for receipt of tenders through e-procurement solution : 23.07.2019 upto 3.00 PM
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To be The Global Benchmark for a Capital City

'Adapting to different coaching styles not difficult'

Reid believes that our finishing and defending have to improve, says Manpreet Singh

HOCKEY

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA
BENGALURU

Over the last five years, the Indian men's hockey team has had Australian, Dutch and homegrown coaches in charge, with the frequent changes at the helm now a matter of routine.

When Graham Reid was appointed in April this year, he became the team's third coach in less than 12 months, after Sjoerd Marijne and Handra Singh. Adapting to varying coaching styles and philosophies may appear to be a tough task for players, but Manpreet Singh disagrees.

"It's not difficult at all," the Indian captain says.

"Whenever a [foreign] coach comes to India he tries to see what India's best qualities are and he wants to retain them. So far, we've never found it hard to adjust to any coach. Because coaches adapt to the team they have; they don't have one fixed style they impose on all teams. They always take their time and see what they



Gelling well: Manpreet says Reid talks to all the team members and spends time with them off the field too. ■ BISWARANJAN ROU

have to do. It's the same with Graham."

Reid has sought to make the most of India's attacking strengths while building on the defence, states Man-

preet.

"Graham has been watching India for some time. He's not trying to change much. He believes that our finishing and our defending have to

improve. He sees that we are good at attacking and counter-attacking. We have quick forwards; so his idea is for us to move the ball forward as quickly as possible. The

higher up the pitch we play, the better it is for us," he says, after a training session at the SAI here.

Working with Reid has apparently been enjoyable.

I know it's a matter of qualifying for the Olympics but we shouldn't come under pressure

"He's a friendly man," says Manpreet. "He talks to all of us. He spends time with us off the field too."

India will travel to Japan next month, for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics Test Event, before preparing for the all-important Olympic qualifiers, to be played in October-November.

The identity of India's opponent in the two-legged affair is not yet known but Manpreet is not worried.

"I know it's a matter of qualifying for the Olympics but we shouldn't come under pressure," he says.

Confident

"We just want to play our best hockey. If we are at our best, we can beat any team in the world."

"We are not worried about who our opponent is going to be. No matter who we play, we are confident we can win."

Shubhankar to tee off alongside Koepka

THE OPEN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PORTURUSH (NORTHERN IRELAND)
Reigning Asian Tour Order of Merit champion Shubhankar Sharma will get another opportunity to play alongside World No.1 Brooks Koepka of the United States after being paired together in the opening round of The 148th Open starting on Thursday.

Together with 2010 Open champion Louis Oosthuizen of South Africa, the trio will tee off at the Royal Portrush as they commence their quest of lifting the iconic Claret Jug at the year's final Major.

After six years

Shubhankar was only 16 and playing in his first professional event when he was paired with Koepka in the final round of the Gujarat Kensville Challenge on the European Challenge Tour in 2013.

"Brooks is the World No.1 and I've played with him before in India. He came for the Challenge Tour event in 2013 and I'm looking for-



Shubhankar. ■ REUTERS

Hopefully more people back home in India will watch the event

ward to playing with him again," said Shubhankar.

"Obviously there's going to be a lot of people following us and hopefully more people back home in India will watch it too. It's always going to be fun playing with the Major champions," said Shubhankar.

"It was a long time ago. I haven't spoken to him since then. It will be fun to play with him again," said Koepka.

AITA Trust starts talent hunt

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The cream of junior talent across the country is all set to get financial and technical support from the All-India Tennis Association (AITA) Trust.

Players in the under-14 age group have been called from various States for a selection camp to be held at the DLTA Complex from July 19.

Each State has been asked to nominate a boy and a girl for the selection. Overall, 16 boys and 16 girls are scheduled to assemble. To start with, 50% of them will be chosen for support.

A panel of coaches, including Vishaal Uppal and Ankita Bhambri, will be part of the committee in the selection process.

The players will be supported for competing in tournaments at home and abroad, and there will also be possibilities of coaches travelling with them to enhance their performance.

The selected players will be monitored through the year, in consultation with their coaches, and appropriate measures taken periodically for further improvement.

Since one of the States did not send its share of two players, Delhi will field four players for the selection camp. There will be more players added for support in due course of time, to cover all the best players from across the country in the age group.

Arrangements have been made for lodging at the R.K. Khanna Stadium. The accompanying parents will be able to stay in nearby hotels at special rates.

PKL: Nitish to lead UP Yoddha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

UP Yoddha announced on Tuesday that young defender Nitish Kumar will lead the side in the seventh Pro Kabaddi League, starting on July 20.

"UP Yoddha's team captures the warrior spirit of Uttar Pradesh and its players are ready to give their blood, sweat and tears in the battlefield. Nitish Kumar will be the captain this season," Team UP Yoddha said at an event to announce its smartphone as their official partners.

The Greater Noida based franchise made its debut in the fifth season and ended third in both the editions it has participated in. The team will play its first game on July 24 against Bengal Warriors in Hyderabad.

India was unlucky with injuries, says Whatmore

'Gill, a fantastic young batsman, could well fill the No. 4 slot'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Celebrated coach Dav Whatmore was here on Tuesday to promote Sports Exotica's Luxury Sports vacation and the launch of its Cricket Leisure League, but predictably ended up answering a barrage of questions on India and the recent ICC ODI World Cup.

Whatmore said, "India had a good tournament. It topped the group after nine matches, made runs, had a very good bowling attack, both pace and spin."

He added, "But India ran into New Zealand in the semifinal, and the Kiwis made full use of helpful conditions."

Whatmore said, "The team-management made decisions which were in the best interests of the team. India was unlucky with injuries, lost some key players."

Right technique

He observed, "But the No. 4 issue kept raising its head. India should look at the future. Shubman Gill is a fantastic young batsman and he could well fill that slot. He's got the technique."

Whatmore added, "Then



Right calls: Dav Whatmore said the Indian think-tank made decisions which were in the best interests of the team. ■ PTI

Dhoni's contribution has been enormous. He alone should decide when he leaves the international stage

you have Vijay Shankar who is a fine batsman and a useful medium-pace. Unfortunately, he got injured during the World Cup. As a coach I am always worried about cricketers picking up injuries during net sessions."

He saw a bright future for Virat Kohli as captain.

'Just one defeat'

"It's just one defeat in a World Cup semifinal that can happen to any team.

New Zealand did too much damage in the first 10 overs. India has got some powerful stroke-makers and a potent attack. It should do very well in the coming days."

Turning his attention to M.S. Dhoni, Whatmore said, "You need to look at the influence he has on the team and the youngsters as a senior player, on the field, dressing room, team meetings, in the bus."

"Dhoni's contribution has been enormous. He alone should decide when he leaves the international stage."

Whatmore's message was clear - Give Dhoni the respect he deserved.

Manpat — a mentor for the shooters

Apurvi Chandela and Meghana Sajjanar are among his students

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

He is too young to be a coach, but too good, not to be one! The 28-year-old Rakesh Manpat, who beat Olympic champions Abhinav Bindra and Alin George Moldoveanu to the gold, with a borrowed weapon, in the Intershoot at the Hague in 2016, is mentoring the women's world No.1 air rifle shooter Apurvi Chandela, among others.

Rakesh also trains Meghana Sajjanar at his base in Bengaluru, where he is all set to open a second training centre, better equipped.

It has been a golden season for Olympian Apurvi this year, as she won two gold medals with world record in Delhi and Munich, apart from the mixed team silver.

"Apurvi has been mentally very strong. She is able to keep many things off the lane in control and focus on herself more than anyone else in the world."

"It makes her a world beater. She has been shooting well in the past as well," said Rakesh.

After the spell of World Cups, Apurvi has been training in Bengaluru. She makes it a point to visit the centre once every two to three months.

"We are currently training



Grooming champions: Rakesh Manpat with Apurvi Chandela and Meghana Sajjanar. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in Bengaluru at our new academy. We are able to train in a very controlled environment."

"Depending on the need, we train overseas as well. Earlier this year we trained in the Netherlands," said Rakesh.

It has been a long association with Apurvi, who has

been training with Rakesh from 2013. There was a break around the Olympics in Rio in 2016, but Apurvi resumed the stint in 2017.

Apart from Apurvi, Rakesh has been working with Meghana Sajjanar for the last three years.

"Meghana has shaped up well in the last three years.

The second year was sensational. We changed the rifle and it was a slight burn out owing to the number of competitions she has played. Now she is able to recover well. This year she had two scores around the 630 mark. She is able to gain the confidence back.

"Working with the shooters on the fundamentals is where I try to match up their current determination to realise potential", observed Rakesh.

There is demand for training from more shooters, and Rakesh feels that the two centres with a total of 12 electronic targets, and six manual targets for beginners, would help him mentor more shooters to world class standards.

Good team

In the Elite Shooting Academy, he has a good team, including sports psychologist G.U. Sathwik. "Together we enjoy our work, which is about 15 to 18 hours a day of late", said Rakesh.

He continues to shoot whenever he gets the time, and Rakesh feels that he has "not lost any touch".

Rakesh Manpat is on a "mission", and is "extremely happy" to guide and ensure quality training for his athletes.

Leaner Australia means business

Coach Jacco Verhaeren sets tough qualifying standards for the Gwangju meet

WORLD SWIMMING

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Coach Jacco Verhaeren has set brutally difficult qualifying standards to make Australia's team for this month's World swimming championships team after a poor showing two years ago.

Australia, a traditional powerhouse, had a disappointing campaign last time in Budapest, slumping to eighth on the medals table.

It's haul of just one gold, five silver and four bronze in the pool left it badly trailing the table-topping Americans, who scooped 18 golds.

Verhaeren's new selection policy means the Aussie team that competes in Gwangju from July 21 is smaller than usual, but looks very strong.

He has moved the Australian trials much closer to the championships - emulating the all-conquering Americans - while setting qualifying times far harder than required by swimming's governing body FINA.

It means the team is down to 27 swimmers compared to the upwards of 40-strong squads who have featured previously. Verhaeren said



Raring to go: Former World record holder and two-time Olympic champion Cate Campbell is determined to make amends for her poor show at the last Worlds. ■ FILE PHOTO

that while it was leaner it was also meaner with all swimmers clocking times that should put them in medal contention. "There have been some fantastic individual performances," said the Dutchman. "We now have to convert and capitalise on these performances."

Serious threat

The Dolphins will be a serious threat in a host of events, headlined by Olympic 100m freestyle champion Kyle Chalmers and former World record holder Cate Campbell. Mitch Larkin boasts a World-leading time

in the 200m individual medley and will also line up in his favoured backstroke across 100m and 200m - for which he was World champion in 2015.

There are also high hopes for a handful of Australia's younger generation, led by teen sensation Ariarne Titmus, who recently set a new Commonwealth best of 3:59.35 in 400m freestyle.

While Mack Horton failed to make the grade in either the 200m, 400m or 800m, he was added to the squad as a discretionary pick, meaning he will almost certainly renew his bitter rivalry with

China's Sun Yang.

Horton is the only man to topple Sun over 400m in major competition over the past eight years, winning the Rio Olympic gold after publicly calling the controversial Chinese giant a "drug cheat" in the lead-up to the race.

"He's an Olympic champion, it's not panic stations, he could turn it around in weeks," Verhaeren said of Horton's inclusion.

Chalmers qualified for Korea in 47.35sec to put himself in prime position for gold and perhaps even threaten Brazilian Cesar Cielo's 10-year-old World record of 46.91sec.

Campbell is also in fine form, clocking the fastest 100m time this year of 52.12 - quicker than the 52.27 swum by American Simone Manuel to win the world title in 2017. The two-time Olympic champion is desperate to make amends after famously flopping in the Rio final as the red-hot favourite, but acknowledged everything must click perfectly.

"It is the trickiest race," said Campbell. "That is why it's the blue ribbon event. Your margin for error is so small."

Indian boxing looking up: Amir

Credits the system; backs Bhidhuri to win Olympic medal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Former Olympic medallist and professional star, Amir Khan feels India has a robust system in place to keep producing good boxers for the world stage and singled out 2017 World Championship bronze-winner Gaurav Bidhuri for Olympic glory at the 2020 Tokyo Games.

The 32-year-old from Bolton, who clinched the WBC international welterweight title during a Super Boxing League (SBL) bout in Jeddah last week, believes India has the wherewithal to produce champions, who can follow the likes of Vijender Singh and MC Mary Kom.

"Indian boxing is doing very good. What I like is that they have a system which not many countries have," Amir, who had knocked out Australian Billy Dib last Saturday, told PTI during an interview.

"In India, all fighters get an opportunity to fight international tournaments, they are funded and they also get paid, because these boxers can't get jobs as they have to focus on boxing."

"All countries should follow this system. That's why



Amir Khan. ■ REUTERS

they have Olympic medallists like Vijender and Mary Kom and many more will come from this, it will only inspire the next generation."

Asked if India can win a medal at the 2020 Olympics, the British-born boxer said: "One kid I follow is Gaurav Bidhuri, he is a very good boxer. I like his style, I like how he fights, how he pushes himself. I have seen his videos. This kid will get far, if he can stay focussed. He is in the national team and he made a lot of noises, he had some good performances," added Amir.

Bidhuri is only the fourth Indian boxer to get a medal at World Championship, claiming the bronze at the 2017 edition in Hamburg,

Germany.

Takeover by IOC

Speaking on other issues in boxing, Amir said it is a shame that the AIBA was suspended last month and the International Olympic Committee took over the qualification and competition for the Tokyo Olympics.

"It is crazy what is happening in boxing. IOC has taken full control and AIBA has been stripped off. I fought under AIBA rules and it was fine when I was around, but it is just a shame, you know they are not giving opportunities to young fighters," he said.

"AIBA needs to be there and so they need to set up a proper committee and work hand-in-hand. It is the only way boxing will work. Without amateur boxing, I won't be here. Champion boxers like Mike Tyson, all of them started from amateur. So without AIBA it is going to be difficult."

Amir said he is planning to open super boxing gyms in India and Pakistan next year. "I would like to help these boxers in any way I can. I would love to open an academy in India."