

If you're not brave against Man City you don't have the chance of even a point."

JURGEN KLOPP
ON LIVERPOOL'S MATCH AGAINST MAN CITY

Cops connect dots: From KPL to Abu Dhabi T10 League

Owners who influenced cricketers CM Gautam, Abrar Kazi to fix games in Karnataka T20 tournament have had stakes in high-profile UAE extravaganza

JOHNSON TA
BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 8

TWO KARNATAKA Premier League franchisees whose names have cropped up prominently in the ongoing match-fixing scandal in the T20 tournament, and who allegedly influenced cricketers CM Gautam and Abrar Kazi to fix matches, have also owned teams in the star-studded T10 League in Abu Dhabi.

Gautam, a former Karnataka Ranji captain, and Kazi, another Ranji player from the state, were arrested on Thursday on the charges of fixing as many as four KPL matches in 2018 and 2019. A day later, the Bengaluru police said the duo did so at the insistence of Belagavi Panthers' owner Asfak Ali Thara, who was nabbed in September in the KPL fixing racket, and Bellary Tuskers' Arvind Venkatesh Reddy, who has been questioned by the police.

Thara was a co-owner of the now-defunct Kerala Knights team in the ICC-approved T10 League. Some of the players in the Knights squad included England limited-overs captain Eoin Morgan and Jonny Bairstow, and West Indies' T20 guns for hire, Chris Gayle and Kieron Pollard. The Knights do not feature in the 2019 edition of the league, which begins on November 14 at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium.

Reddy remains the co-owner of the Karnataka Tuskers team (previously known as Rajputs), which has on its payrolls names such as South Africa's Hashim Amla, West Indies' Evin Lewis and Marlon Samuels.

Multiple fixes

According to a preliminary investigation report of the Bengaluru crime branch police on the arrest of Gautam, captain of Bellary in the KPL T20 tournament, and Kazi, an all rounder for the same team, the duo conspired with team owners and bookies to fix matches.

In one instance of alleged spot-fixing, Belagavi owner Asfak Ali Thara offered Gautam Rs 7.5 lakh to get a bowler to give more than 10 runs in an over during a game between Bellary and Bengaluru Blasters.

Gautam, a seasoned hand who has also played for Royal Challengers Bangalore, Delhi Daredevils and Mumbai Indians in the IPL, allegedly set up a deal with the off-spinner Kazi during a practice session ahead of the match. Kazi was given an advance of Rs 2.5 lakh for the job. During the match Kazi gave 11 runs — including two wides — when brought on to bowl his first over of the game, the match records reveal (KPL 2019, 12th game).

In the final of KPL 2019, Gautam was allegedly asked by Thara to bat slowly during his innings. Gautam scored 29 of 37 balls and Bellary lost the game by eight runs while chasing a target of 152 set by the Hubli Tigers. According to police, Gautam received Rs 15 lakh as payment from Thara as part of the deal.

In two other games — Game 19 of the 2019 season against Mysuru Warriors and Game 21 of the 2018 season — Gautam was asked by his own team owner Reddy to under perform, the Bengaluru police have alleged.

The crime branch police have also identified Amit Mavi, a small-time cricketer, as being a key intermediary between the bookies, the owners and the players in the fixing scandal.

"CM Gautam, his team mate Abrar Kazi along with Ali Asfak Thara, Arvind Reddy, Amit Mavi and others have indulged in cheating in the 2019 edition of the KPL and



In the final of KPL 2019, Gautam was allegedly asked by Belgavi owner Thara to play a slow knock. Screenshot from the final

Belgavi's Thara was the co-owner of the Kerala Knights team. Some of the players in the squad included Eoin Morgan, Jonny Bairstow, Chris Gayle and Kieron Pollard. Reddy has a share in the Karnataka Tuskers team, which has on its payrolls names such as South Africa's Hashim Amla, West Indies's Evin Lewis and Marlon Samuels.

have earned money through illegal means," the crime branch police have said the report.

Thara, 40, was arrested by the police for placing bets on KPL matches with a Dubai-based bookie. He is alleged to have influenced many other players in the KPL to participate in the fixing racket.

Thara, a travel and tours operator with business interests in Dubai, and Reddy, 45, a real estate businessman, purchased Belagavi and Bellary, respectively, in 2017. Reddy later roped in the Kannada film actress Ragini Dwivedi as co-owner of Bellary.

Reddy's association with the T10 League began in 2018 when he bought stakes in the Rajputs, which has Brendon McCullum as captain and icon player.

Treasurer Dhumal bats for fixing law

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 8

MAKING MATCH-FIXING a criminal offence will help curb the corruption menace, Arun Dhumal, the cricket board treasurer, observed. His comment came in the wake of the KPL-gate that so far has seen seven arrests by the Bengaluru Police, including an IPL regular like CM Gautam, for their alleged involvement in betting / fixing in the Karnataka Premier League. This is for the first time a BCCI office-bearer expressed his views on the alleged corruption incidents in the T20 leagues organised by the state associations.

"That's the problem. We don't have a law against match-fixing/spot fixing. The Lodha reforms did nothing, so to say, on this. They had taken a view on everything. They should have put their mind to this also, what needs to be done. Traditionally the BCCI has taken a strong position on those who have been involved in this (corruption). But through the judicial process, punishments got relaxed. The BCCI had a stronger view on the basis of our inquiry (against the accused) vis-à-vis what came out through the judicial process. And that's because there's no law against match-fixing/spot-fixing," the BCCI treasurer told *The Indian Express*.

This year, the Tamil Nadu Premier League, too, was under the scanner, as alleged approaches had been made to the players, coaches and team owners. Those approaches were reported to the BCCI's Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) that launched an inquiry. The Tamil Nadu Cricket Association, too, had set up a three-member inquiry panel which gave its league a clean chit.

"These leagues are run by the state cricket associations. But after the incidents that have been portrayed in the media, we have to take a view on this. So far, what we have seen are media reports. But we need to know the facts (from the ACU and state associations). When we meet-up, we have to look into all the aspects and then take a view on how to deal with it," Dhumal said, adding that it may come up for discussion at the BCCI AGM.

Asked, if any added anti-corruption measure will be taken for the next year's IPL, he said: "Our ACU is doing a fine job, with regards to the IPL. But there has to be legal measures (to deal with sports corruption). So there needs to be a law."

In July last year, the Law Commission had recommended that match-fixing and sports fraud should be made criminal offences with severe punishments. It also called for legalising sports betting in India, leaving the final call to Parliament and the state legislatures.

Last month, while speaking to this paper, The BCCI's Anti-Corruption Unit chief Ajit Singh, too, had said corruptions would continue trying to influence matches until there's a law against sports corruption. "Once there's a law, then police can take action against them. Right now the police's fact-finders take a lot of time (and) until and unless they get other corroborative evidence (they can't make a watertight case). As far as Sreesanth is concerned, this has been the case," he had said.

Sreesanth's life ban, handed by the BCCI disciplinary committee for his alleged involvement in the 2013 IPL betting and spot-fixing, was set aside by the Supreme Court earlier this year and accordingly, the cricket board's ombudsman Justice (Retd) DK Jain reduced his suspension to seven years that would end in September 2020.

Before that in 2012, the Andhra Pradesh High Court had struck down the life ban imposed by the BCCI on Mohammad Azharuddin. The former India captain now helms the Hyderabad Cricket Association. It needs to be seen if the proposed uniform sports code incorporates the recommendations made by the Law Commission.

Meanwhile, the BCCI will not allow the IPL franchises to go and play exhibition matches abroad. "This has no merit," Dhumal said.

'Prima facie, fixing is covered by Section 420'

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
NOVEMBER 8

FORMER MAHARASHTRA Cricket Association president and senior lawyer Abhay Apte explained the criminal aspect of match-fixing.

What crime does a player commit when he fixes a cricket game?

Without a specific law, the crime here is largely based on interpretation. If it is covered under the general criminal law of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which is cheating, the point of intention becomes very difficult. The Law Commission has strongly recommended that there should be a separately law for match-fixing and sports fraud. That's the need of the hour, because without a specific law it's very difficult to cover the cases successfully. When the IPC was made in 1860, this situation didn't arise.

Which Section of the IPC is breached, when fixing happens?

Prima facie it should be the Section 420, which deals with cheating and dishonesty.

If it is cheating, who has the accused cheated?

The spectators. In a bigger context, it can be team owners and all the stakeholders of the game. Because, nobody comes to see a fixed match. Honesty is the very essence of sport. Also, sportsmanship. If you do something in a predetermined way to defraud someone and make wrongful gain, then that's cheating.

Even with a specific law, how can you prove before the court that somebody has deliberately batted slowly, or somebody has intentionally bowled a no-ball?

Of course the entire conspiracy has to be brought on record. Just by saying that somebody batted slowly or somebody gave away three runs in three balls, won't be enough. The intention has to come on record that there was a planning, there was a decision, there was a betting, what has been betted — all those things will have to come. The complete chain of circumstances should show the conspiracy. Mere unpredictable performance per se cannot be called match-fixing.

Will a specific law with severe punishments help curb the menace?

Yes, it will. I give you an example; earlier cheque bounce was also covered under cheating. But there also, judging the point of intention was difficult. That's why a specific law was needed and accordingly the Negotiable Instruments Act was amended. Under Chapter 17, new provisions have come. So now it has become very deterrent and speedy.

With CoA gone, BCCI CFO, staff step down

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 8

DAYS AFTER the change at the top in the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the Indian board's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Rangnekar tendered his resignation. Two of his staff too resigned. During the tenure of the Supreme Court appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA), Rangnekar and the office bearers were at loggerheads over multiple issues. The matter once escalated to the apex court where Rangnekar alleged that he received death threat from the then BCCI treasurer Anirudh Chaudhary.

At one stage, his official travel to West Indies, via United States of America, was questioned by former acting secretary Amitabh Choudhary and CoA member Diana Edulji.

Rangnekar confirmed his resignation. "I have submitted my resignation to the BCCI and I felt it's the right time to move on. It was great learning experience for me to be part of Indian cricket board. Life moves on and am thankful for BCCI for giving me the opportunity," Rangnekar told *The Indian Express*.

He added that he wasn't quitting because of any pressure. Rangnekar submitted his resignation to BCCI chief executive officer Rahul Johri.

However, it's not clear whether he will be serving his notice period or be relieved with immediate effect.

'Spinners need to keep calm & carry on'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAJKOT, NOVEMBER 8

INDIAN OFF-SPINNER Washington Sundar feels tweakers have a huge role to play in T20 cricket even though they are most susceptible to being hit all over the park in the shortest format.

Sundar's assertion came after the second T20 International against Bangladesh, which India won by eight wickets here on Thursday night.

The spin duo of Yuzvendra Chahal (2/28) and Sundar (1/25) played a big role in stemming the run flow after Bangladesh got off to a bright start by reaching 60 for no loss in seven overs.

"Spinners definitely have a big role to play in the shortest format of cricket because they take the pace off the ball. Sometimes pitches can give little assistance to the spinners as well," Sundar said at the post-match press conference.

In fact, it was Chahal's double breakthrough in the 13th over that helped India restrict Bangladesh to a sub-par 153 for 6, which the hosts chased easily to level the three-match series.

"It's all about knowing what to do, knowing where the batsmen is going to hit you and other small, small things. Obviously it is important to keep things simple and be calm and composed. You can get hit badly in a few games, but that happens in this format of the game," he added.

Sundar heaped praise on senior pro Chahal, saying the Haryana bowler is an "asset" for any team as he knows the art of picking up wickets in the middle overs of a T20 game.

"It is very important to be honest, espe-



Tweakers Yuzvendra Chahal and Washington Sundar pulled things back for India in the middle overs.

cially for someone (like Chahal) who can bowl in the middle overs and change the dimension of the game. We have seen him (Chahal) doing that in ODIs and T20 as well. He comes in the middle overs, takes 2-3 wickets and changes the game completely," the lanky off-spinner from Tamil Nadu said.

"He (Chahal) is very experienced in this format and knows what to do to get wickets in the middle overs. We have seen him being very successful in the powerplays as well. He is definitely an asset for any team.

"The way he (Chahal) changes his pace and he knows what the batsman will try and do and which batsman is going to hit where.

Different batsmen will have different plans but he is very clever. He is very calm and composed under pressure," added Sundar.

The 20-year-old, who has played 14 T20 Internationals, said Indian bowlers did a fine job in restricting the opposition to 153 on a Rajkot wicket, which offered good bounce and carry. "To be honest the wicket was very beautiful, the bounce and carry was really good. We thought 180 was par (score), we would have liked to get that if we had batted first. But to have restricted them for 153, I think as a bowling unit we did a very good job," he observed.

He said, after a not-so-impressive start, the Indian bowlers pulled things back in the middle overs.

"They (Bangladesh openers) batted really well. We thought spinners will play a crucial role on this wicket. There was very good bounce and pace, and it was very important for us to take the pace off the ball," Sundar said.

Sundar is confident of India winning the three-match series at the final T20 scheduled to be played in Nagpur on Sunday.

"We have just lost one game (in Delhi) and that was also a close game. If a couple of things had gone our way in that game we would have won. But I think in this game we won convincingly. We can expect a similar track in Nagpur," he said.

Sundar also lavished praise on stand-in skipper Rohit Sharma, whose 43-ball 85 ensured an easy chase for the home team, saying the right-hander is a treat to watch when in full flow. "I had the best seat in the house to watch him (Rohit) bat. If he plays like this then it is a treat for anyone in the stadium. Certain boundaries he hit were unbelievable," he said of his skipper.

BCCI vs ICC: 'If demands not met, won't sign MPA'

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 8

SAFEGUARDING INDIA'S interests at the ICC has become the BCCI's top-most priority and the Indian board might even refuse to sign the Members Participation Agreement (MPA) for the 2023-2031 cycle if their demands are not met.

"That's our top-most priority. We are seriously going to oppose their (new) governance structure, business model and the Future Tours Programme (FTP). If it comes to a crunch, then I don't see the BCCI is signing the MPA," cricket board treasurer Arun Dhumal told *The Indian Express*.

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During the ICC Board meeting in Dubai last month, the global body had proposed eight flagship events in eight years — from 2023 onwards — as part of their next broadcast rights package. This was done ostensibly to highjack the BCCI's share of revenue from potential broadcasters for the 2023-2028 cycle.

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For the ongoing cycle, 2015-2023, both the BCCI and the ICC have the same official broadcaster, Star Sports, for their home series and global events respectively.

The ICC has also kept the BCCI out of its newly-formed working group that will look into the future governance structure of the world body.

Revenue loss

India contributes to over 70 per cent of the ICC's revenue. But in 2017, as the global body disbanded the 'Big Three' model and revamped its revenue distribution system, the BCCI's projected revenue came down to \$293 million over an eight-year cycle. Under the 'Big Three' model, India stood to earn at least \$440 million over an eight-year period from 2015-2023. Based on profits, it could even rise to \$570 million.

After taking charge as the BCCI president, Sourav Ganguly, too, has spoken about how time has come to assert India's case at the ICC.

"... sometime less is more in life. So we got to be careful with that (more flagship ICC events). And the football World Cup happens every four years and you see the madness. That's a decision the ICC has to make. I'm not in a position to talk or comment on it. As in, when I get an opportunity to be a part of the discussion, I will speak," Ganguly had said.

"The ICC's holiday is over," said former BCCI treasurer Anirudh Chaudhary.