

T20 Destroys West Indies Cricket?

Isn't it amazing that cricketers that are injured for Test matches suddenly get fit for the T20's? They probably reason that it's too much stress playing a five-day match when they can play for four hours and make more money.

As far as Test cricket is concerned West Indies should take a break from it. The players would then have the time to rethink their game and embrace discipline. They may also want to look at the role of cricket in the social structure of the Caribbean.

The performance of West Indies against South Africa in the Tests was abysmal. We can't change the results but what we can do is to learn from them and hopefully use the mistakes to construct a team with a fighting spirit.

There is no question that Test cricket is demanding and that it calls for hard work and sacrifice. Many of the established players will attest to the fact that Test cricket is rigorous. Playing a game over five days and under intense pressure can tax the spirit of the best of us. An exciting draw can be more pleasing to the palate than a dull victory as was with the final Test between Australia and India in Sydney in the 2015 series.

Test cricket has evolved into the ultimate

test of character and wit due to the strength, stamina, and ability to sustain pressure for long periods. The game in the West Indies developed an aura, a magic that captured the imagination due to superlative performances of

no doubt that Test cricket brought out the best in players both in terms of skills and emotions. The introduction of the one-day format led to the World Cup and since it is 50 overs a side players are still required to apply good cricketing skills.

But the introduction of the T20 format has arguably brought an insidious aspect into the game in which skills are replaced by slogging. The finer points of the game are markedly absent and the vast sums of money

Viv Richards was a mentor to the Delhi Daredevils when he made this observation. He would know that Test cricket has indeed taken a dive. The big attendance is not there anymore. Test cricket is played to empty stadiums in the West Indies as fans are not interested in seeing the stars. Meanwhile there are more crowds at T20 games. This form of instant cricket appeals to many but it is not without criticisms.

Ian Botham says that the IPL offers the perfect

Stanford doled out \$1 million to players in a T20 game in 2009. Today there are T20's in various countries with the result that players are so busy that they do not have time for Test matches. What is even more alarming is the fact that T20 strokeplay has entered Test cricket. There are irresponsible shots and wickets are falling like bowling pins.

It will be recalled that West Indies were bowled out in a single session in their tour to New Zealand in 2013 and this was in a Test Match. The rash strokes played by the West Indians were reminiscent of those in the T20's and the coaches seemed unable to reorient the thinking to the longer format. Then there was the recent South African Test series. The batting was brittle and the influence of T20 was quite evident. Marlon Samuels was going well in the Third Test and then he played a loose shot and the collapse began.

The situation is so desperate that Clive Lloyd was forced to make a statement. He said that T20 has 'messed up' cricket in the West Indies. According to Lloyd, 'We are small islands and if you get a whole host of money, you are a king. The T20 has messed our cricket up.' Lloyd gave the example of Andre Russell whom he said is one of the best all-rounders in the world. Russell said that due to an injury he could only play T20 cricket.

Lloyd is of the opinion that playing for one's country is not important anymore. He would like to impart to players, 'the importance of playing for your country. Money is a subsidiary of success.' The recent Australia versus India Test series also drew criticisms from the purists. When one looks at both teams on finds that David Warner, Steven Smith, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Ravi Ashwin, Virat Kohli, Suresh Raina and Rohit Sharma played T20 cricket before Tests.

There is no doubt that Warner, Kohli, Smith and Lyon that have adapted well to the format but the others are still struggling. Raina got a 'pair' in the Sydney Test for playing loose shots and Rohit Sharma does not have the discipline to play Tests.



Dr. Dhanpaul Narine

Raina and Sharma will return to the IPL where they will hit 4's and 6's galore. Does Test cricket have a future? Many observers seem to think that its days are numbered.

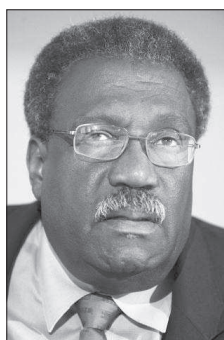
Money lies at the heart of Test cricket's impending demise. The highest paid cricketers in the world are either in the IPL or the Big Bash. M.S Dhoni is worth about \$27 million and it is little wonder that he has quit Test cricket to focus on the one-dayers. Dhoni is not alone as more Test cricketers are finding it difficult to juggle the schedules to fit the formats.

But the proof of the popularity of Tests is in viewership. Test cricket is played to almost empty stadiums and the loss of revenue is made up by packing T20's into the fixtures. Andrew Strauss, the former England captain says that, 'If we are arrogant enough to assume that Test cricket will always be there, we are sowing the seeds of our own downfall.' What are the chances of Test cricket prospering in the West Indies? The prospects are not good, according to Tony Cozier. He says that the players can read the signs that Test cricket is in the last throes and the results of the last twenty years attest to this decline.

West Indies is at the near bottom of the Test rankings but its players are some of the highest paid in cricket.

In the meantime Clive Lloyd is at pains to explain why Kieron Pollard and Dwayne Bravo are not in the World Cup team. If they are so good at T20 then they are suitable for the World Cup format. This is not the first strange selection policy in West Indies cricket and the fans may be in for another long wait to celebrate.

The views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of the THE WEST INDIAN.



Clive Lloyd



Dwayne Bravo



Kieron Pollard

its heroes. The exploits of Learie Constantine, George Headley, the three W's, Garfield Sobers, Rohan Kanhai, Wes Hall, Viv Richards, Brian Lara, and others, are legendary.

Many a schoolboy would walk miles to see them play and budding players would celebrate the opportunity to be in their presence. There is

offered is said to be killing Test cricket. In 2013 Viv Richards was asked whether the T20 format was destroying Test cricket. He said, 'Nothing wrong with that at all. At one point I felt that Test cricket was starting to take a dive, maybe with attendance. T20 is basically the savior. It is still cricket.'

opportunity 'for betting and therefore fixing.' He continues, 'I am worried about the IPL-in fact I feel it shouldn't be there at all as it is changing the priorities of world cricket. Players are slaves to it. Administrators bow to it. How on earth did the IPL own the best players in the world for two months a year and not pay a penny to the boards who brought these players into the game?'

Botham concludes that the IPL has become too powerful and should not exist. Michael Holding is of a similar view. He predicted that T20 will 'kill Test cricket in twenty years.' Holding is so opposed to T20 cricket that he refuses to watch it. He said, 'I cannot support it. Because T20 will destroy the game I love. Where are the youngsters going to come from to play Test cricket? They can't develop into Test players if they play T20. If I am a young man growing up today and you are going to pay me \$800,000 for six weeks work, I'm gone. I'm certainly not going to spend time in the nets busting a gut improving my technique to play Test cricket.'

Holding could have mentioned that Allen

IN THE NEWS

Sheriff's Office Accidentally Prints 'In Dog We Trust' On Rugs

LARGO: The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office in Florida has gone to the dogs. Well, at least its rugs have.

Department spokeswoman Cecilia Barreda said Wednesday that a new, \$500 rug at the sheriff's administration

building said "In Dog We Trust" instead of "In God We Trust."

The forest green rug with the sheriff's yellow badge was in the entrance area for a couple of months when the error was discovered Wednesday by a deputy.

Barreda says the error was made by the rug manufacturer and it's in the process of being corrected. A second rug did not have the misprint.

The rugs were rolled up and put away Wednesday. It's not clear if the new carpet smell had worn off.

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