

WHAT ARE YOUR CHANCES TOMORROW?

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It is axiomatic as to which came first – gambling or sport. But the two have been inextricably linked since time immemorial. Betting was common on Roman chariot races and gladiator contests as well as the ancient Grecian games. Needless to say corruption in sports with the aim of enriching an “informed” gambler has existed from the outset and only the most naïve would believe that boxing matches are not routinely fixed and that all racehorses perform on their merits

Until relatively recently, the aim of such corrupt practices was relatively straight forward, usually to ensure a certain person/animal/team either won or was prevented from winning an event. Accordingly there was always some chance of the corrupt practice being discovered, for example, by way of a steward’s enquiry into a horse’s form reversal but the widespread and diverse methods of wagering now in existence have made the detection of such practices extremely difficult.

I propose to discuss some of the methods and problems created thereby in relation to cricket but it should be noted that none of the matters discussed hereunder relate to any event or investigation connected with my duties with Cricket Australia.

There have been recorded instances of gambling on cricket matches to the 18th century and such wagers usually involved predicting the outcome of matches or individual performance such as who would score the most runs or take the most wickets. Cheating was not uncommon and the great WB Grace on having his bails dislodged by a good ball was seen to replace it commenting about the strength of the wind on that day. When

the bowler objected he pointed out to him that the crowd had “come to see me bat and not you bowl.”

“Betting on the big matches at Lord’s was often on a big scale and corruption was rife. Bookmakers indeed formed such an important aspect of the game in the early part of the nineteenth century that they were permitted to sit in full view right in front of the pavilion. The “selling” of matches was often a profitable sideline for racketeers and a source of added income for the more venial players. The “Marylebone legs” as the bookies were known, went to deplorable lengths to ensure that they could not lose. They fanned out into the countryside just before the season started, concentrating especially on Hampshire to offer tempting bribes to good players. But the main “softening up” venue was a pub in Oxford Street, The Green Man and Still where many of these out-of-town cricketers stayed. There the legs lushed up those they thought they could corrupt. Small teams with only one or two outstanding players and single wicket matches for big purses were the obvious targets, particularly the latter. It had been recounted that (before wides counted in the score) a farcical situation was reached – a batsman made no strokes and the bowler bowled way off the wicket because both had “sold “ the game.” John Marshall, “Lord’s”, The Sporting Book Club Ltd, 1970 at p 15.

The recent explosion of one day matches and their enormous popularity on the subcontinent has led to the establishment of an associated multi-billion dollar gambling industry both legal and illegal. Like other sports before it, cricket has become enormous business and is subject to the same pressures from unscrupulous bookmakers and organized criminals that have applied to American baseball for nearly a century and English soccer for many years. Incidents like the Chicago Black Sox and the Cincinnati Reds in the 1900 series and the allegations against Bruce Grubbs went to the very heart of the integrity of their respective sports.

The lengths to which such criminals are prepared to go is highlighted by incidents such as the lights going out at the home of the Charlton Football Club during a match. Such tactics have been used by Asian gambling syndicates to cause and or prevent a match result.

Match fixing in cricket came into prominence in the early 1990s and in 1994 a former county cricketer, Donald Topley, wrote in the *Sunday Mirror* that in a county match between Essex and Lancashire in the 1991 season, both teams were heavily paid to fix the match.

As noted by Justice Malik Muhammad Qayyum, in his Commission of Inquiry into Pakistan Cricket in 1998, “Time and again, former and present cricketers (e.g. Manoj Prabhakar going into pre-mature retirement and alleging match-fixing against the Indian teams; the Indian Team refusing to play against Pakistan at Sharjah after their loss in the Wills Trophy in 1991 claiming matches there were fixed) accused different teams of match-fixing. The Sri Lankan Board ordered an inquiry after a complete batting collapse led to their loss in the Singer Cup Final against Pakistan, the match that at that stage they were easily winning”.

Fortunately the incidents of such match-fixing have been heavily reduced because of the timely intervention of the International Cricket Council and various national governing bodies who have employed special investigators to deal with cricket corruption. (It should be noted that the then Australian Cricket Board was the first organization to make such an appointment).

Such investigators work in conjunction with the International Cricket Council’s Anti-Corruption Unit initially headed by Sir Paul Condon, (now Baron Condon) a former Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. Much of the unit’s work is directed toward education of players and officials and other such

preventative measures although it employs many highly qualified investigators that have uncovered corrupt practices (recently a former Kenyan captain was banned for 5 years as a result of an ACU investigation) and ensured a very significant reduction in corrupt practices in international cricket. Although Baron Condon still heads the ACU, the day-to-day running is in the hands of former Detective Chief Superintendent Jeff Rees who has been with the unit since the outset.

To fully understand the opportunities for corruption in cricket one must be aware of the nature of the events that are gambled upon. They include the following:

- a. The winner of a match, and/or the number of runs/wickets by which the match is won.
- b. The highest and lowest scorers in a match.
- c. The best and worst bowling figures in a match.
- d. The number of runs scored in a match, or a segment of a match. Most bookmakers and international gambling houses now divide one day matches into three segments, the first fifteen overs, the second fifteen overs and the final twenty overs and take bets in relation to performances in all three segments.
- e. The number of sundries, no-ball, wides, or leg byes bowled during a match by a particular team or by a particular bowler.
- f. The make-up of a team including twelfth man.
- g. The opening bowlers for each team and from which end they are to bowl.
- h. Which opening bat will take strike first.

- i. Who will win the toss.
- j. Which side will bat first.
- k. Whether teams will wear white floppy hats or traditional hats, and which players will wear sunglasses.
- l. How many seagulls will land on the pitch during a match or how many seagulls will be hit by a ball during the match.
- m. In some countries bookmakers will be widely dispersed amongst the crowd and offer odds on any single event as the match progresses. Eg. 10/1 that the next ball is hit for four.

All of the above is complicated by the rising popularity of “spread betting” which is legal in many countries including the United Kingdom. A bookmaker or firm will calculate a spread for a certain event eg. Batsman A will score between 32 and 45 runs or Team B will score between 250 and 290 runs. A punter then can bet on “unders” or “overs” in relation to the spread, for example if a punter bets \$10 on unders for Batsman A, and the batsman scores 2 runs, the punter will win \$300. However if the batsman scores 145, the punter will lose \$1000.

The science in spread betting can be quite sophisticated and the amounts involved very substantial. Prior to the 1999 World Cup in England an astute punter reasoned the following factors would cause more wides to be bowled than allowed for by the bookmakers spread.

- a. A new ball being used for the tournament would swing more than previous balls.

- b. Guidance to umpires was to be strict on leg-side wides.
- c. Cricket balls usually swing more under English conditions.

Accordingly the punter wagered a substantial sum of money on “overs” and when their exposure was £600,000 part way through the tournament, the bookmakers laid off the bet by buying it back from the punter for £900,000. If the punter had not sold his bet back he would have eventually won £1.2 million.

This was a legitimate bet on events which would have little or no effect on any particular match and hence the possible basis for ‘harmless’ corruption of individual players who could be asked to contribute to an event with little risk of adversely affecting their team’s chances.

One can only speculate as to the temptation for a highly rated batsman to perform below expectations in a match in which his team is sure to win or where the result will not affect their overall chances in a particular tournament.

It is also relatively easy for punters to externally affect some of the factors. If a punter has bet on a certain number of runs being scored in a session and the scoring rate becomes a little too high for comfort he can slow it down by paying children to walk in front of sight screens or perhaps a streakers to ‘strut their stuff.’

Accordingly unscrupulous bookmakers and/or organized criminals will use any method to extract information from naïve players and/or entrap them into becoming a paid tool.

Any information not generally available for the public or other bookmakers will place a bookmaker in an advantageous position. Such information may include: whether or not a team

intends playing a finger-spinner; whether they would like to bat first or which particular member of the opposing team they wish to target.

Hence such bookmakers and/or their hench-men will attempt to stay in the same hotel as their targeted cricketers and then to proceed to ingratiate themselves in the hope of picking up appropriate information.

Once a relationship is established they will bestow seemingly harmless gifts or favours upon the player who may then unwisely divulge more information than appropriate.

If a player realizes he is being used he may attempt to cease contact only to be told by the unscrupulous "friend" that he has no option but to continue to supply him information or be exposed for having participated in an inappropriate relationship. The player then is between a rock and a hard place with the hard place softened being softened by substantial amounts of cash.

It is not uncommon for threats to be made against players' families should they not provide relevant information or perform to expectations and many of you have no doubt read of varying incidents of unexplained large amounts of money being found in players' lockers or bank accounts.

If time is short the method in entrapment of a player can be far more direct and brutal. An American sportsman thought his luck had changed when he was propositioned by two attractive young women who accompanied him back to his hotel room. He was later drugged and sodomised by a large Negro in such a way that on the video presented to him later, made it appear consensual. He was then blackmailed into doing the bidding of a crime syndicate.

Officials are working hard to limit the chances of inappropriate contact but more needs to be done to limit the amount of options

upon which punters can bet as well allowing transparency of betting transactions.

Betting exchanges could see a dangerous escalation of corrupt practices if they allowed participants to structure their own scenarios and odds. Betting exchanges are very popular because they take a much smaller percentage of wagers than more traditional methods and Betfair has proved to be an outstanding success (especially for its promoters) in the United Kingdom. Fortunately it has been working closely with officials to exclude inappropriate scenarios and does not allow inappropriate structuring. All bets placed with Betfair have to be structured around a published result but we can't expect non regulated betting exchanges to so behave.

Recent events in the United Kingdom including the investigation of champion jockey Kieron Fallon have placed betting exchanges in the spotlight but at least the records of legal exchanges are available to assist in such investigations whereas records from illegal bookmaking will rarely be available.

Gambling will always be with us so it is imperative to keep it and its records in the open so that there is always a reasonable prospect of detecting corrupt practices/players.

At the end of the day there will always be the problem with player naivety, especially outside their home environment and hence the need for continual education as to how to handle questions from "friends and well wishers". A casual, seemingly well meaning inquiry has the potential to compromise a player who merely thought he was helping a mate.