**POPULARITY OF IPL AND RANJI CRICKET AMONG YOUTH IN DELHI AND NCR**

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**ABSTRACT**

IPL which is one of the biggest T20 leagues all over the world contains all domestic teams within India. IPL has been introduced so as to bring young talent from domestic areas to compete on bigger stages i.e. internationally. The Ranji Trophy is a domestic first class championship played in India between teams representing regional cricket associations. Ranji Trophy is less popular as compared to the Indian Premier League. The main objective of this study is to find out the impact and popularity of IPL over Ranji cricket among the youth. IPL is a shorter format than that of Ranji Trophy format. Even Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is promoting IPL on a very large scale which is diminishing the importance of Ranji. In the present scenario young aspiring cricketers are focusing more towards T20 cricket or the IPL. Earlier very few people thought cricket as a career option but gone are the days when parents used to stop their kids to play cricket outside. Now with the coming of the IPL the mindset has changed. The parents are also supporting their children in fulfilling their dreams. The players can make money for themselves, their families and most importantly can make a name for themselves in the cricket history. A good IPL season can instantly bring you into the spotlight. The Ranji Trophy i.e. the premier domestic competition of Indian cricket has passed its promising stage and is 82 years old now. It is important that the BCCI understands that an urgent change is required in the manner in which it is carried out. The study uses quantitative research method approach in which structured questionnaires based on the study was made.

**INTRODUCTION**

Indian Premier League is a Twenty 20 cricket tournament launched in 2008 as a competitive response to the Indian Cricket League (ICL). It is a tournament where different franchise teams participate for the title and it usually takes place in the months of April and May. The IPL Governing Body members includes Rajeev Shukla (Chairman), Sourav Ganguly, Anurag Thakur, Ajay Shirke and Anirudh Chaudhary. They are responsible for all the functioning of the tournament. The IPL followed the same format as that of the English Premier League and the National Basketball League (NBA) of the US. The idea was initiated by then BCCI vice-president Lalit Modi. The IPL works on a franchise system based on the American style of hiring and transferring players. In the inaugural season all the franchises were put for auction and they were sold for a total of $723.59 million. The highest bidder won the rights to own the team. Bollywood has also made its presence felt in the IPL. Till now, IPL has been contested nine times and the tenth season is on the way. The most recent edition was the IPL-9 held in 2016 where the Sunrisers Hyderabad won. 13 teams have competed since the league’s first season and 6 of them have won the tournament at least once. In the fourth season, two new teams joined in as Pune Warriors India and Kochi Tuskers Kerala. The former withdrew from the IPL over financial differences with the BCCI after playing two seasons and Kochi tuskers Kerala was terminated after playing just one season. In the recent times, IPL has been under a scanner of match-fixing and betting scandals. On 14 June 2015, Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals were suspended for 2 years. Then on 8 Dec 2015, following an auction it was revealed that Pune and Rajkot will replace the two suspended teams and that again makes it to a total of eight teams. Currently the tournament is a round robin wherein eight teams compete with each other in the league stage and the top four qualify for the next round.

The Ranji Trophy is the oldest running domestic competition of Indian cricket. It was launched as ‘The Cricket Championship of India’ in July 1934. Until 2001-02 seasons a fifteen team knockout tournament was held in all those years since its inception. In the 2002-03season, the format was changed with the zonal system being abandoned and a two division structure was in place. State teams and cricket associations and clubs with first-class status play in Ranji Trophy. In a Ranji Trophy knockout match if there is no outright result, the team leading after the first innings is declared as the winner. Mumbai has won the recent title in 2015-16 and has been the most dominant team in the history of Ranji Trophy cricket with 41 titles to its name. Currently 28 teams participate in the Ranji Trophy.

**Research Objective**

The main aim of my study is to experimentally investigate why t20 is more popular than Ranji and is it affecting importance of Ranji?

Following are the research objectives of my study:

* To understand about the popularity of IPL over Ranji Cricket.
* Is Popularity of T20 affecting Ranji.

**Research Questions**

The questions to be answered in this research are:

1. Why preferring t20 over long format?
2. Why print media is giving more coverage to IPL over Ranji?
3. What improvements must be done to bring Ranji back into notice?

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Aakash Chopra, former Indian opener comments on his blog (2011), he says he has played at those levels, he has felt that difference. He says at the grass-roots a lot of young and old players ask this question when he is coaching. . He feels cricket is mostly played in the mind and the mentally strong are the ones who make it. He believes most of the players are playing Ranji cricket just to comply with the rules of a minimum participation of 60% to be eligible for the IPL. “More, they use these five months as a pre-season training program for the all-important IPL and hence don't lose their sleep if they underperform often. That's where they're getting it completely wrong” (Aakash Chopra, 2011)1. For him Ranji is the format from where he gets the confidence to stay at the crease for longer time which helped him at the international level. He believes that Ranji and the longer formats improve the players cricketing skills than the IPL. “The country's premier domestic tournament deserves respect, both by the cricketers and the officials. The IPL is a great concept and hence should be promoted and accepted fully, but not in opposition to first-class cricket” (Aakash Chopra, 2011)1.

Rahul Dravid (April 2015), According to him players need to take Ranji Trophy very seriously to play in the IPL. He says we see Ranji performance of the players when we pick them in the IPL. The skills needed for the T20 is different but we see the consistency and how the player has performed under pressure. It is no joke to straight away perform in the IPL if you haven’t performed well in the first class season.

Gautam Gambhir (May 2015), According to him, he believes that first class cricket should be the yardstick to judge a player. He praises IPL for improving the temperament of the players and making them mentally tough to perform under pressure. He says it is difficult to judge a young talent in t20 because there are times when a player doesn’t get enough opportunities. "I feel if you really want to see a young talent, you should see him in first-class cricket and your first-class cricket should be given more importance than IPL. People in India consider IPL bigger than first-class cricket but I think the first-class cricket of any country should be far more important than the IPL because in the T20 format it is very difficult to judge a young batsman” (Gautam Gambhir, 2015)2. He believes IPL is a good opportunity but a player’s technique can only be tested in first class cricket.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Delhi and NCR region. For my research, the population selected included both male and female falling in the age bracket of 10-35 years. Quantitative research method approach was used, in which structured questionnaires based on the study was made. Random sampling was conducted. I used random sampling from different cricket lovers in my locality. Questionnaire consisted of questions about IPL, t20 and Ranji cricket and what form of cricket they preferred to watch.

**RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

The sample size of the study was 100 in which 80% male and 20% female answered the questionnaire. The percentage distribution of various age groups who filled the questionnaire includes 20% of people within the age bracket of 10-16, 40% within 17-24, 25% within 25-30 and 15% within the age bracket of 31-35. The findings of the study shows that 95% people prefer to watch IPL over Ranji Trophy. The study conducted showed that 40% of the people agreed that the growth of T20 is harming the popularity of the game whereas 50% people disagreed and 10% were neutral. 90% people believed that the number of teams should be reduced in Ranji. In Print Media, IPL is given more coverage and importance as compared to Ranji Trophy. Ranji Trophy covers a smaller portion whereas IPL covers the center page of the sports. According to facts, if IPL and Ranji is going on hand in hand still IPL will cover most number of articles. When it comes to Electronic Media, there are several sports shows based on cricket. Experts have complete discussion on IPL matches but when it comes to Ranji Trophy only stats are shown and there are no further discussions being done. This shows how much importance we are giving to IPL and the diminishing importance of Ranji. The findings also show that in the last few years, players performing in the IPL have been given the national cap which includes the likes of Hardik Pandya, Pawan Negi, Mohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah to name a few.

Is T20 a more exciting format than Test match?

12% Strongly agree, 42% Agree, 6% Neutral, 30% Disagree & 10% Strongly disagree

80% people agree and 5% people disagree that T20 creates carnival like atmosphere in the stadium.

70% people agreed that foreign players should be allowed in Ranji Match.

64% people disagreed that T20 will supersede Test Cricket as the global form of game.

50% people say that T20 is killing the skills of player.

**CONCLUSION**

It has been observed that IPL has now reached at a level where performances from the players counts more than performances in Ranji . According to West Indies captain Darren Sammy, IPL is the Mecca of T20 cricket. There was a time when Ranji Trophy was considered as the premier domestic cricket competition in India. Countless Indian legends have made their way into the Indian team through this competition. But since the time IPL has started, Ranji Trohy has been losing its significance and the players are also focusing more on IPL to get a chance to play for the Indian team. Except the odd player here and there, most of the Indian squad nowadays is selected on the basis of a player’s IPL performance. The ultimate form of cricket has to be test cricket. Test cricket is what makes a player better than the rest. That is where a player’s mental toughness, technique and his true character comes to display. Experts of the game have also believed that Test cricket is the best form to judge a player’s potential. I think all three formats of the game are important. There are players who want to play all three formats of the game and want to do well in each format. T20 has improved the rate of scoring in test cricket and in today’s time we can see so many results in Test cricket. The batsmen are playing more shots which have also helped the bowlers in picking up quick wickets. The game is now played at a faster pace because of T20 cricket. So many changes have been transpired in the game of cricket but still our Ranji Trophy hasn’t changed much in these 80 years except for a few minute changes. In India, cricket is followed as a religion but still India is yet to become a dominant force in Test cricket. This is because of our Ranji Trophy format where people have lost interest. The tournament lack followers and the level of cricket that is at display is not up to the mark at times. Ranji trophy stats can be misleading at times as some players score big and take lots of wickets because they are playing against a weaker opponent or in conditions which suit them.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

* The number of teams in Ranji Trophy should be reduced to six which should include the East zone, West zone, North zone, South zone, Central Zone and Mumbai. This will ensure improved standard of cricket.
* Duleep Trophy must be scrapped off from the domestic calendar.
* Throughout the season Ranji trophy, Syed Mushtaq Ali trophy and Vijay Hazare trophy trophy must be played simultaneously.
* Foreign Players should be allowed to participate in the domestic competition.

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