

JONATHAN AGNEW



While Joe Root, the fresh faced 22-year-old Yorkshireman, was reinforcing the traditional values of cricket by scoring his first test century at Headingley, the world's richest and most controversial cricket competition, the Indian Premier League, was becoming mired in a betting scandal so serious, it threatens the tournament's future.

Players have been arrested, officials suspended and an umpire relieved of his duties by the International Cricket Council

– all because of an investigation into betting and spot fixing that was started by Delhi police. The list of those arrested include the son-in-law of the President of the Indian Cricket Board, the BCCI, N Srinivasan, whose outrageous conflict of interest in owning the powerful IPL franchise, the Chennai Super Kings, while also running Indian cricket, has been just one of many scandals waiting to erupt.

I should put my cards on the table, and admit that despite living a life that has always been entirely immersed in cricket, I have never been the least bit attracted to the IPL. I reported from Chennai on one of the early matches – which ran an hour and a half over time – and have never watched another game; not even on the television. Why? Because it has become cricket's equivalent of WWF wrestling – tacky, dumbed down 'entertainment' in which scantily dressed dancing girls on the boundary edge and Bollywood

stars hiding behind ridiculous sunglasses are supposed to add glamour to the tournament. The television commentary is so absurdly over-hyped and devoid of editorial judgment, it is beyond comical. Little wonder when you are part of such a circus that some players might be tempted to treat it as such – and one lesson for the

Indian administrators whose task it is to clear up this mess must be that, only by respecting the sport, can they restore credibility to the IPL.

Sadly this scandal suggests spot betting in cricket is still alive and well. It seems astonishing after the

English case involving three Pakistan players – all of whom served prison sentences – that cricketers are allegedly still foolish enough to take a bribe. And for those who really cherish cricket, that is a far more worrying state of affairs than merely the future of the IPL.

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