Cricket in COVID

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With the COVID-19 affecting all sports including cricket to a great extent, there has recently been a lot of movement in different parts of the cricket sphere. While some have already let their players start training for a potential return, others are still holding tight too see how the next stage of the pandemic plays out.

Many cricketers like James Anderson, the English fast bowler, have already stressed on the requirement of high safety standards for players during training and cricket matches which may possibly start in the future considering all circumstances. It is yet to be seen how the cricket world will resume to normal even with safety guidelines in place and most importantly, how effective will those guidelines and rules be.

Its highly possible we will be seeing closed-door cricket matches considering the risks of having an audience due to the present COVID-19 situation. The Cricket Boards across the world will, as a result, also lose out on the Gate revenue which is a significant amount in their income. But of course, a cricket match without audience if compared in the simplest form, is a ball without a bat. Until there is an audience to liven up the environment, the heat and the intensity of the match enjoyed by one and all, without doubt will be missing. It is to be seen whether Cricket will indeed follow on the path of recent football matches which were played without an audience.

The ICC Cricket Committee had already issued guidelines for world cricket resumption recently including an important ‘no-saliva’ recommendation where the players cannot use their saliva to shine the ball. Many cricketers, especially famous fast bowlers like Mitchell Starc and Jasprit Bumrah, have diverse opinions about the topic regarding its viability.

Regarding matches, The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and Cricket Australia (CA) remain highly hopeful of the marque series between India and Australia under some restrictions and new rules, of course. Also, West Indies Cricket Board remain hopeful as well of their players arriving in England to play a series. The Cricket Boards wish to start cricket across the world but the whole concept of having matches right now is unfortunately subject to travel restrictions and any other laws the governments of the various countries prescribe.

The ECB has already made its goal clear, while announcing 55 men training squad. It eyes 'gold standard' bio-secure environments for international cricket resumption. However, former Indian Cricketer Rahul Dravid recently said that, ‘cricket in a bio-secure environment is an unrealistic concept’. The pertinent questions that arise to the same is what would happen if a cricket player suddenly tests positive for the virus or about the fact that players may have to be away from their families for long periods of time.

The ICC has already made the rules banning use of saliva on the ball. It has also permitted the replacement of players during a match if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms along with allowing the use of non-neutral or home umpires and giving teams the privilege to opt for a review one more time in order to allay any fear of bias. They have surprisingly also allowed logos on the Test shirts of Cricket players so as to give the Cricket Boards an opportunity to recover from the economic losses. These rules have surely brought major changes in the cricket sphere but again the world is in a situation which demands such changes.

The International Cricket Council Board has deferred deliberation on the marquee event T20 World Cup for later to see how the situation turns in the future. But one thing that can be guaranteed in the future is the unpredictability of the cricket sphere and whether they are in for a smooth ride or not considering all circumstances.