Not Just Cricket: The IPL as the Politics of Speed

Vidya Subramanian, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India

Abstract: The idea of speed has become central to much of modern sport. Contemporary cricket in India is no exception to this trend. In the shift from test matches to one-day and then to Twenty20 formats, however, there has been a profound reworking of the internal biology of the game itself. Cricket is no longer played out primarily for 'spectators'. Rather, the speeding up of the game has become contingent on redesigning cricket into a 'platform'; which is now animated by combining hitherto unrelated elements such as businesses, advertising, technology, and even Bollywood. In particular, the Indian Premier League (IPL) has made profound transformations in which the traditional building blocks of players, administrators, and coaches have been sutured, in varying combinations, with politicians, businesses, film stars, physiotherapists, nutritionists, software engineers, statisticians, specialised coaches, videographers, and public relations managers. The game, hence, both on and off the field, comprises multiple and often disjointed foci. In this de-centred sporting universe, however, several fragilities and instabilities have begun to set in: match fixing, betting, corruption, technological complexity, political control, and even the systematic blurring between sport and entertainment. Cricket in India has begun to increasingly play out, I argue, as the politics of speed.

Keywords: Cricket, Sport, Speed, Politics, Technology, Society, Spectator, Consumer, IPL, Indian Premier League

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, as the second edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) was being planned, an unlikely confrontation had become the subject of much attention. The problem was this: the IPL matches had been scheduled to be played in the middle of the country's general elections. The only too recent attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Pakistan (BBC 2009) made it but inevitable that battalions and platoons would need to be diverted from election booths to guard IPL matches instead; forcing the strangest of choices on the Indian government: between either securing democracy or enabling entertainment. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the then Commissioner of the IPL, Lalit Modi, were also in a fix. Compressing the schedule of the IPL would end up scuttling carefully aligned TV viewership with sponsorship deals.

By late March, however, Lalit Modi managed to pull off an unexpected coup. The entire tournament–in a last minute deal–was shifted to South Africa; and the second edition of the IPL was thus saved by a whisker. This rescue act, however, seemed to pale in comparison to the media frenzy the IPL was able to generate just a few months earlier when a 'live' auction was held for selecting cricket players. Hosted at the Fort Aguada Beach Resort in Goa, the auction was primed as a business and glamour spectacle by mixing film stars such as Preity Zinta, Juhi Chawla, and Shilpa Shetty with big money such as the Ambanis, Vijay Mallya, and Ness Wadia. In their book *IPL An Inside Story*: *Cricket and Commerce*, Alam Srinivas and

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COMMON GROUND

T.R.Vivek describe the auction as being "about BQ (Business Quotient), GQ (the men's fashion and lifestyle magazine), and EQ (Entertainment Quotient)." (Srinivas and Vivek 2009: 9–12)

The assessment brought to mind what the famous Trinidadian cricket writer C L R James asked, in his definitive cricket memoir *Beyond a Boundary*, almost half a century before the event: "What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?" (James 2005: Preface). The book was written in 1963, at a time when cricket was still played in white flannels and camera crews in stadia had not yet entered the cricketing imagination. But the question is perhaps still relevant today. Cricket is no longer a game played out only on the field. It has undergone, as is widely acknowledged, profound transformations in which the traditional building blocks of players, administrators, and coaches have been sutured, in varying combinations, with politicians, businesses, the entertainment industry, physiotherapists, nutritionists, software engineers, statisticians, specialised coaches, videographers, and public relations managers. Cricket, especially in India today, as I will argue, can be more convincingly declared a platform rather than a sport: repeatedly drawing in and linking diverse social, political and economic elements. And at the heart of these tenuously forged arrangements lies the recurring efforts at speeding up the game through technology. The politics of speed, in other words, best captures the many anxieties, dilemmas, vulnerabilities and the calculations that have come to drive cricket in India.

Changing Angles

Cricket, in C L R James' universe, was a game of the test match. Played over five days, the game was almost languorous in pace and a draw was not a rare occurrence. A batsman, for example, was expected to pace his innings, which referred to his ability to 'get his eye in'. In effect, it was okay to spend an over or two testing the pitch, getting used to the conditions and figuring out the strategies of the other side. It worked for the fielding side equally well. They could take a few overs to understand the psyche of the batsman on that particular day, in that particular innings. The game, as so many practitioners of cricket have claimed, seemed to actually play first in the minds of the players. The match, thereby, was more akin to a process with several different points and defining moments. Much like a good play or a movie, the meaning of a cricket match was not so much in the climax, as it was in everything else that happened in the middle. C L R James calls the test match "first and foremost a dramatic spectacle" comparable not with other sports but with theatre, ballet, opera and even dance (James 2005: 258–259). The speed, or lack thereof, in the play itself gave the players more opportunity for guile, for thought, for strategy. The end result of the match, James points out, was not of great importance. "Appreciation of cricket," he concluded, "has little to do with the end." (James 2005: 261) A cricket match did not necessarily lead to the *event* of the result. It arrived at a climax via–invoking the dramatic metaphor once again–grand soliloquies, quiet solid background set-piece moves, blistering action hero stuff, life-altering moments, the odd cameo performances and small, determining sub plots.

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, however, cricket in England was facing a massive financial crisis. Stadium audiences for county matches were dwindling: the number of spectators at county championship games had reduced from 20,00,000 in 1950 to 7,00,000 in 1963, and by 1966, the number fell by another 2,00,000. This meant a severe loss in revenue for clubs that were heavily dependent on gate money. By the 1970s, the seemingly leisurely five-day test match began to be accused of causing spectator impatience and even destroying interest in the game (Memom 1992: 20–25). It was also around this time that two new and major technological attractions began to vie for people's attention—the motor car and the television. Ayaz Memon termed these inventions as the "most powerful counter-attractions to all established forms of entertainment." (Memom 1992: 21) According to him, the car and the television, in concert, set in motion a slew of transformations that ultimately proved crucial in reworking

the internal biology of the cricketing world. And it is from that intense rewiring, in consonance with the changes occurring in society, that emerged the idea of the limited overs cricket match.

The Flying Circus

More crucially, however, the new format which looked like cricket but invoked a different feel in terms of pace and skill, lent itself to Kerry Packer's astounding plans for harnessing cricket through a mix of commerce and television. The initiative–World Series Cricket (WSC)–was best summed up by Osman Samiuddin, of ESPNCricinfo, who said that, "Kerry Packer changed the game completely" but "without changing the sport too much" (Samiuddin 2008). A keen businessman and perhaps amongst the first to recognise the impact and reach of television, Packer concluded that a potentially massive audience awaited cricket on the other side of the TV set. In spite of scathing criticism from the connoisseurs of cricket–Tony Lewis in the *Sunday Telegraph* disparagingly called the WSC "Kerry Packer's Flying Circus" (Lewis 1980)–and a disastrous first outing, Packer and the WSC came back for a proverbial second innings, bringing to the game several new and hitherto unthought-of changes.

The WSC was not *sold* to the public merely as cricket. With a blitzkrieg (for those days) of off-field publicity, and made-for-television technological inputs (like cameras on both ends of the pitch, coloured clothing, stump mikes, and flood-lit matches played at night), this was cricket as entertainment. Packer's marketing was specifically aimed at acquiring more and more eyeballs for the game. These changes, crudely stated, were meant to ensure an increase in the audience so that it would result in larger revenues. Critically as well, the heart of this daring initiative lay with the promotion of advertising. Women and children–not the primary target of cricket thus far–became central to Packer's marketing (Williamson 2007). The novelty of night matches, the strategic placement of cricketers as brands, and his ability to work the press; all resulted in the recruitment of new audiences for the game, and more importantly, for the advertisers and funders.

After Packer's successful tour of the West Indies in 1978–79, in April 1979, the Australian Cricket Board finally granted Packer what he had originally wanted: exclusive television rights to test and other matches in Australia for Channel Nine. And with that, from January 1980, the WSC was disbanded. In three years, Packer had taken the game and changed it irreversibly. In the words of Dr Greg Manning in *Wisden* Australia, as quoted by Gideon Haigh, "Packer didn't spend $12 million buying the game; he spent $12 million turning it into something that could be bought." (Haigh 2007)

What was once derided as 'pyjama cricket' soon became the standard order of play. With the commercial success of the World Cups–arguably cricket's first (but not last) import from the world of soccer–the format of the one-day game was given the legitimacy it lacked hitherto (Memon 1992: 3–4). Once the cricketing establishment wizened up to the immense monetary potential that one-day cricket held, it did not take long for the ICC to incorporate many aspects of Packer's WSC into the mainstream of cricket. The number of one-day fixtures organised by the ICC went up and the doors were flung wide open for corporate money to enter cricket. The assimilation of speed into the game could be viewed as a direct result of the infiltration of technology into the sport. Packer took a new device–the television–and an old sport–cricket–and created an entirely new sport that looked and felt and tasted like cricket, but was in fact something altogether different.

One-day Cricket and its Fatigue

One day cricket did seem to take-off even as it increasingly began to leave behind and drop entirely many aspects that defined the legacies of the five day match. Apart from new camera angles, stump mikes, and inevitably coloured clothing, the form and content appeared fundamentally altered. Having a result—either a winner or loser—became the primary purpose of

the game. For the batting side, scoring runs became the only aim, no matter how they came. Many connoisseurs lamented the loss of batting technique and style because of this need. And while the batting changed to accommodate the need for large scores, the bowling changed too. One-day cricket created the necessity for the bowling side to concentrate on keeping the scoring in check instead of trying to get the batsmen out. The intention in test matches was to bowl out an entire side twice in a match, but in one-day cricket, it was to restrict the other side's score and to keep them from scoring runs.

This meant that bowlers were no longer bowling imaginatively in an attempt to get wickets, but rather on maintaining a particular line and length in order to restrict scoring. The alternative was to bowl bouncers and rely on blinding pace. This pace and bouncers approach may have worked in the initial years of the WSC and one-day cricket, but as the game evolved, and a limit to the number of bouncers bowled was imposed, the most effective one-day bowlers emerged as those who could maintain a rigorous discipline in their bowling with respect to line and length (Memom 1992: 168). Memon argues that because of the emphasis on restricting batsmen, bowlers in one-day cricket were inevitably compelled to take a "backseat to batsmen". The heroes now had to be those who hit the ball hard and ran wildly. Several commentators believed that this new format of the game rang the death knell for practitioners of the art of spin bowling. In fact, in the years directly after the WSC and the first few World Cups, there was a sharp decline in the "quality and quantity" of spin bowlers. Memon quotes Bishen Singh Bedi, the grand master of spin bowling, as having said, "It is this wretched one-day game which has ruined our spinners". The fear that an over of spin bowling can prove to be expensive in a one-day game restricted spinners from deviating too much from the line and length routine.

Mukul Kesavan has argued that unlike the five-day test match format, in which the best bowler of the side had no restrictions on the number of overs he could bowl, in a one-day match, the 10-over restriction allowed even mediocre batsmen to 'impose' themselves. He writes, "One consequence of this is that middle-order batsmen in limited-overs cricket rarely face an extended spell from the best or most hostile pace bowlers," And given this new context, Kesavan concludes, "A player like (Michael) Bevan who can't find a place in Australia's test team, can shelter in the middle order in the one-day game and rack up the highest career average in the game" (Kesavan 2010: 86–92).

The one-day game, nevertheless, survived the assault of the connoisseurs and went on to become an integral part of the cricketing edifice and more importantly, the primary source of income for most of the Cricket Boards around the world. After three decades of dominating the world cricket scene, however, the one-day game, it was found, was losing its television and stadium audiences. According to Rohit Gupta, President of Sony Entertainment Television, the television ratings for one-day matches had tapered off from above ten in 2003 to almost three in 2008. The denouncement was total with the acerbic conclusion that "It clearly showed that viewers didn't have the eight hours to watch an ODI (One Day International). It meant that youngsters were moving away from cricket; forget about adding new consumers" (Srinivas and Vivek 2009: 44–46).

Purportedly in response to this declining viewer interest, an even shorter form of the game–Twenty20–was instituted. With a fresh infusion of speed and a revolutionary new format, a Twenty20 tournament was about to be born that would take the cricketing world by storm. This tournament was the glitzy, glamorous IPL (Indian Premier League). Importing the idea of privately owned franchises from a combination of soccer's EPL (English Premier League) and the American NFL (National Football League), Lalit Modi created a television-centric, cash-rich, celebrity-driven, non-national, cricket-based product that he intended to sell to the world. This was to be the stitching together of the best practices in the world of sporting entertainment. The time format was borrowed from English football and combined with television programming structured on the lines of America's NFL. To this were added players from cricket playing countries all over the world; their performances midwifed and amplified by the power of digital

technology. The IPL would start out as a truly globalised event. With corporate owners of franchises, player *auctions*, cheerleaders at every game, and programming schedules for almost all games to be played at night to ensure maximum viewership, this was a version of cricket that had its centre in business acumen and free market philosophies. Liquor barons, movie stars, large real estate developers and media management firms all came together to create a sporting league.

The 'target audience' for the IPL was not the traditional cricket fan, but everyone who had an interest in television, in cinema, or in celebrities; particularly the young, upwardly mobile city dwellers. Television commentator Harsha Bhogle claimed that "Cricket was desperately in need of fresh ideas because at least in the big metros it was losing kids to EPL. Children had begun to think of cricket as the dad's game" (Srinivas and Vivek 2009: 56). Another such 'origin story' is put forward by Vivek and Srinivas, who quote Lalit Modi as having said,

> We are not pitching IPL against cricket; we are pitching it against the prime time (7 to 11 p.m.) of general entertainment channels...To make a show a hit, one needs star attraction. We have cherry picked the best players from across the world...We have added a lot of music to the games. I think it provides entertainment to the crowds and between breaks. People are able to lap it up and enjoy it–it's an evening out. A Bollywood movie is three hours. This is a three-hour function. A lot of good food and catering and popcorn and ice cream for the kids.

This was a package that included entertainment, celebrities, cheerleaders, and cricket too. Cricket, in other words, was a platform that was going to stitch together advertisers, entertainers, movie stars, business and socialites as well.

Technological Makeover

It has become almost impossible to think of cricket without its technological trappings—be it umpiring aids like the Hawk-Eye, Snickometer, and HotSpot; training and coaching techniques like videography; or even the internet and the social networking through which cricket (and indeed, everything else) is discussed and interacted with. Such technology has brought with it, an inevitable acceleration within the sport. It can be argued that the injection of speed into the proceedings has resulted in a transformation in the way that the sport has hitherto been engaged with. Ivo Tennant has spoken of the amount of investment and the range of technology that goes into the coverage of a single cricket match. In reference to Sky Sports, which has been providing cricket coverage in High Definition (HD) since 2006, he describes the use of more than 30 cameras (including one in the commentary box, stump cameras, and extra ones for special 3D coverage), more than 40 microphones, 15 miles of cabling, an on-site production crew of 80 people, and an average of 15 trucks, which arrive at the cricket ground two entire days before start of play. In addition there is the director's truck, which he says is "the largest vehicle permitted on roads in Britain". This vehicle includes 78 screens and takes around four hours to 'de-rig' (Tennant 2001).

But it is not only in viewing the match that technology has become impossible to ignore. Preparing and training players for the rigours of sport entertainment and the IPL version of cricket will, not unexpectedly, be equally demanding of high technology investment. In an interview, S. Ramakrishnan, Director of the sports analytics firm Sports Mechanics[1], outlined how crucial digital technology has become to training the next generation. The firm provides 'up and coming' players with an option of videographing their techniques and play, and then

[1] Sports Mechanics India (P) Ltd. is a Chennai based firm, to be found online at www.sportsmechanics.in (accessed: 24 March, 2012)

solicit (paid for) online consulting and coaching that could help improve performance.[2] In a way, he averred, this could remove the need for an on-field coach altogether. The website brings together a team of coaches, physiotherapists, and "cricketing domain experts coupled with a right blend of technical professionals" to provide what it calls, "accelerated learning technologies to acquire skill sets and performance enhancements by offering e-learning capabilities to athletes, coaches and institutions to effectively govern, manage, (and) analyze."[3]

A quick survey of the 'Clientele' page of the website gives an indication of the reach that this sort of technology has come to acquire in the world of cricket today. From administrative bodies of international cricket teams such as India and Sri Lanka and several state cricket associations in India to bodies such as the ICC High Performance Programme and almost all IPL teams (the exception being Royal Challengers Bangalore), the company lists a large number of state level, national and international sporting bodies as clients who have used these technological services in the areas of coaching and training. With technology available that can help identify the 'weaknesses and strengths' of players, the future might look bleak for those lacking technological access or high investment input. This indicates a marked shift in the way new players are learning the sport too. As Derek Pringle points out in his *Wisden* article, players are surrounded by psychologists, nutritionists, and fitness gurus who keep a close watch on everything they do from eating to practice to exercise (Pringle 1998). Specialised training regimens, specialised diets, and corporate-style motivation seminars are crafted for individual players as they focus on honing necessary skills. Aided by the mediation of technology, all of this has spawned several entirely new industries that combine video recordings, software skills, medicine and nutrition. The IPL as a cricketing platform may just as well be producing players in its own image.

The Idea of Speed

"There is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting," says Milan Kundera in his novel *Slowness*. Illustrating the point, he considers a man walking down a road who suddenly wishes to recall something, but cannot remember it instantly. Kundera observes that in order to try and remember, the man automatically slows down. Contrast with someone who wishes to forget something disagreeable that he has just been through. This man would subconsciously speed up, "as if he were trying to distance himself from a thing too close to him in time." Kundera concludes, "The degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting" (Kundera 1996: 34). The era of (technologically unmediated) test cricket can perhaps be conceptualised as an era of memory, where the pace of the game and the end result was less important than the actual playing out of the match, and the latter was remembered as much for the performances as the results. The process, in other words, of reaching a conclusion seemed to matter more than the event of the climax.

Premised on the new (Twenty20) form of cricket, the IPL has brought more razzmatazz and speed to the sport than had ever hitherto been imagined. Several critiques of the IPL describe it as being 'instant cricket' and a game specially designed for, as Ivo Tennant calls them, "the modern, fidgety, fast-evolving society in which concentration levels are miniscule" (Tennant 2011). Speed then, not surprisingly, emerges as being almost as central to the game as the player on the field.

Writing on the subject of politics and war, French cultural theorist Paul Virilio in *Speed and Politics* describes speed as resulting in a compression of space. In a world of perpetual motion,

[2] This is accomplished through another website of Sports Mechanics India–www.cricketmentor.tv (accessed: 24 March, 2012)

[3] Cricket Mentor. "About Us"
http://www.cricketmentor.tv/Aboutus.aspx (accessed 24 March, 2012)

where the "dictatorship of movement" replaces the "freedom of movement" (Virilio 1986: 30), Virilio suggests that in the relentless pursuit of speed (*dromos*, from the Greek), the destination becomes insignificant; and in many ways irrelevant. Speed as the rationale for itself will lead, he seems to imply, to a self-inflicted implosion as the only possible end. In order to keep up with this continuous quest for greater speed, Virilio argues, the dromomaniac (here the spectator, the viewer, the audience) experiences a disconnect with space. In writing of the new records set by Olympians, Virilio observes (Virilio 1986: 94):

> ...those Olympic champions whose records first progressed by hours, then by minutes, then by seconds, then by fractions of seconds. The better they performed (the more rapid they became), the more pitiful were the advances they obtained, until they could only be noticed electronically. One day, the champion will disappear in the limits of his own record... For the dromomaniac, the engine is also a prosthesis for survival.

Virilio appears to imply that the only way to bridge this disconnect between space and time–that has been brought about by speed–is through the mediation of technology. Feeding the frenzy of Tennant's new fidgety 'instant-everything' generation, technology becomes essential to Twenty20 cricket: matches that become almost impossible to imagine and engage with without third umpires, slow motion replays and Hawk-Eye. Test cricket, on the other hand, was not intentionally designed to be technologically mediated. It offered the tactile presence of the stadium and the visceral guts and sweat drama of an unmediated experience. Slowness, in the Kundera sense, thus integrally characterized play that was liberally peppered with drinks breaks, lunch, tea and gaps between overs. Elaborate strategising, the practice of 'placing the field' in a specific way for specific batsmen off the bowling of specific bowlers on specific days required considerable time and thought on the field, while the match was on.

This sort of detailed involvement in every ball bowled appears to have been one of the reasons C L R James compared cricket to theatre and ballet more than any other sport (James 2005: 258–259). Such an interpretation is in stark contrast to the mathematical strategies that have been suggested for victory in limited overs cricket in recent times. In an unpublished paper, Colin Cannonier (Belmont University), Bibhudutta Panda (Wabash College), and Sudipta Sarangi (Louisiana State University), take up "a production function approach" to assess the outcome of a cricket match, defined as a "function of batting, bowling, fielding and other relevant variables". In attempting to find a "winning strategy", the authors arrive at a mathematically derived conclusion that "attacking batting" and "defensive bowling" is the winning strategy for both one-day and Twenty20 matches. And based on this "strategic convergence" between the two formats of the game and assuming the "absence of any format-specific skill requirements" the authors predict a shift in the future towards the "more rewarding" Twenty20 format (Cannonier, Panda and Sarangi n.d.).

After Kerry Packer took mainstream cricket into television, the reverse trend has begun to be displayed by the IPL: television has been critical to designing the format; not only to conquer prime viewership as a sport but as entertainment trying to out-eyeball reality shows and soap operas. In the words of Michael Miller, "Spectacle and entertainment on one hand, and the world of consumption, on the other, were now truly indistinguishable" (Ritzer 2012: 96).

'Consuming' Cricket

Zygmunt Baumann, one of Europe's foremost sociologists, has spoken of the modern day citizen as living in a 'liquid modern' world: simultaneously as both a consumer and a commodity, where "human bonds tend to lead through and be mediated by the market for consumer goods" (Baumann 2007: 82–87). It can, perhaps, just as well be argued that cricket too is a commodity to be consumed, along with the latest cell phone technologies, lifestyle choices, holiday destin-

ations, the personality cult, and everything else that is advertised. Baumann argues that nothing in the liquid modern world (a world in which individuals constantly "stagger under the weight of an accumulation of consumer culture") is uncommodifiable (Blackshaw 2007: 29–31). Commodified sport then becomes just one of the several things that can be consumed. Baumann describes consumption as using and then discarding the *item* until a *better* version comes along. He speaks of the inherent injection of speed into the proceedings in this "nowist" way of life and its constant "necessity to discard and replace" (Baumann 2007: 35–38).

For C L R James, test cricket is a game in which every moment plays out the complicated relationship between the individual and the social. The individualisation of the sport becomes a crucial frontier in the first stages of commodification. To this end, the techniques, technologies, and calculations used to meet the logic of commodification, have perhaps been most emphatically and profoundly crucial in shaping the IPL format. The IPL, sold as an 'improved' version of cricket, was centrally aimed at convincing advertisers and corporate sponsors by increasing 'eyeballs'. And in order to be appealing to this new society of consumers, cricket was transformed into another of the several commodities that could be *consumed*. The spectator of the sport thus became a *consumer* of the game, and watching a cricket match became equivalent to buying into the concepts and philosophies of the new universe of cricket—that of products, brands, glamour, etc. Even the commentary box has been roped in to the marketing of the game: from describing the game to hyping product and brand value. Writing on the commentators' new role, Osman Samiuddin flags the changed emphasis in which "Each six was a 'DLF maximum', each critical point in the game a 'Citi moment of success'... This was commentary as PR" (Samiuddin 2008). Commentary, thus, was now an advertisement itself—shepherding consumption and orienting brand focus.

As the centre of the match is transposed from the game itself, it has become, as Virilio outlines, a dromologically progressing state that is increasingly disconnected with the space it once was part of. In so doing, the very understanding of the game has had to be geographically reworked, with the players being un-tethered from region and nation. Teams and players of the IPL have been bought and their allegiance lies now foremost to their team owners. The fans, consequently, pick their teams as brands, which now are expected to endure.

In contrast to being the sport that Ashis Nandy once described as a "ritualised garden party" (Nandy 2007: 38–41), the cricket of the IPL is fundamentally a platform upon which ride several other interests and stakeholders. It is but a tenuous arrangement holding together a disparate set of elements that have been sutured through technology: engineers who design analytical software, film stars who seek publicity, players looking for quick money, businesses looking for a better advertising platform, and television channels trying to improve their ratings. In this de-centred universe, the game becomes only just one of the many elements, jostling for space and time.

As cricket becomes more technologically complex, more cash-rich, and faster paced, several fragilities and instabilities (such as match fixing and a deep politicisation of the cricketing structure—at least in India) seem to have become defining aspects. With the recent conviction of two cricketers in a spot-fixing case in England, and reports of the semi-final match between India and Pakistan in the 2011 World Cup being fixed–*Sports Illustrated India* has reported that allegedly four Pakistani players had been paid to underperform in the game (Pandit 2011)–the spectre of match fixing has become only too real. It was also widely agreed upon that the reason the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies was a monetary disaster was because the Indian and Pakistani teams crashed out in the group stages of the tournament, causing a major drop in interest in the Subcontinent—which is the major source of revenue for cricket (ET 2011).

This led to the format of the next World Cup being changed so that the 'best' or 'top' teams stay in the draw as long as possible. Making cricket more interesting and lucrative is then placed higher on the priority list than the spontaneous twists and turns within the game itself. Tour-

naments like the IPL take this logic to a whole other level. In order to make matches (and cricket as a whole) more interesting to viewers, which in turn provides advertisers the required 'eyeballs', the line between entertainment and sport (in this case, cricket) is often blurred; and in such a way as to almost entirely overshadow the latter. Just like reality shows or the World Wrestling Federation fake fights, why, logically, should the IPL not be scripted, some may ask.

Conclusion

Alive (and apparently kicking) in Baumann's liquid modern world, the sport of cricket appears to be as much a captive of speed as it is an ambassador for it. With a legacy of slowness for its history, and a technology-dependant present, the sport of cricket appears to have become a useful backdrop against which the politics of speed and the inherent instabilities that come with it can be examined. With allegiances formed around the size of paycheques, the gradual removal of slowness and guile from the game, and a projected decrease in the attention spans of its core audience, the game today has come quite a way from the time of W.G. Grace and Ranjitsinghji.

The story of cricket is marked with instances of great turmoil that have shaken the cricketing establishment to its core—be it Douglas Jardine's Bodyline series, Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket, the betting scandal that implicated Hansie Cronje, or the more recent birth of the Indian Premier League. It is possible to view the major changes in the transformation of the game–from five-day test matches to one-day cricket to Twenty20–as a series of ruptures in the fabric of the game. From being a sport to be played in a time of leisure, cricket has transformed into not just a profession and an industry, but also an enterprise that acts as a platform for advertisers, celebrities, businesses, and even fans/consumers. With cricket's transformation into the politics of velocity, the game now races beyond the boundaries of sport and becomes integral to the troubled shaping of "brand India".

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