

# Tackling the age-old menace

Age fraud is pulling the country down in more ways than one and it is proving difficult to stop

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**MUMBAI:** Rahul Dravid once stood on a podium and spoke for 30 minutes on a topic he holds close to the chest: the menace of age fraud in sports.

"I think of this overage business as dangerous and even toxic," Dravid, the former India captain and one of the greatest batters in the game, said while delivering a lecture at the MAK Pataudi Memorial in 2015. "At 14, it may be a matter of age criteria, at 25 it may be fixing and corruption. How are the two different in any way? In both cases, is it not blatant cheating?"

The lecture took place 10 years ago, but to this day, the problem of age fraud continues to plague sports in India.

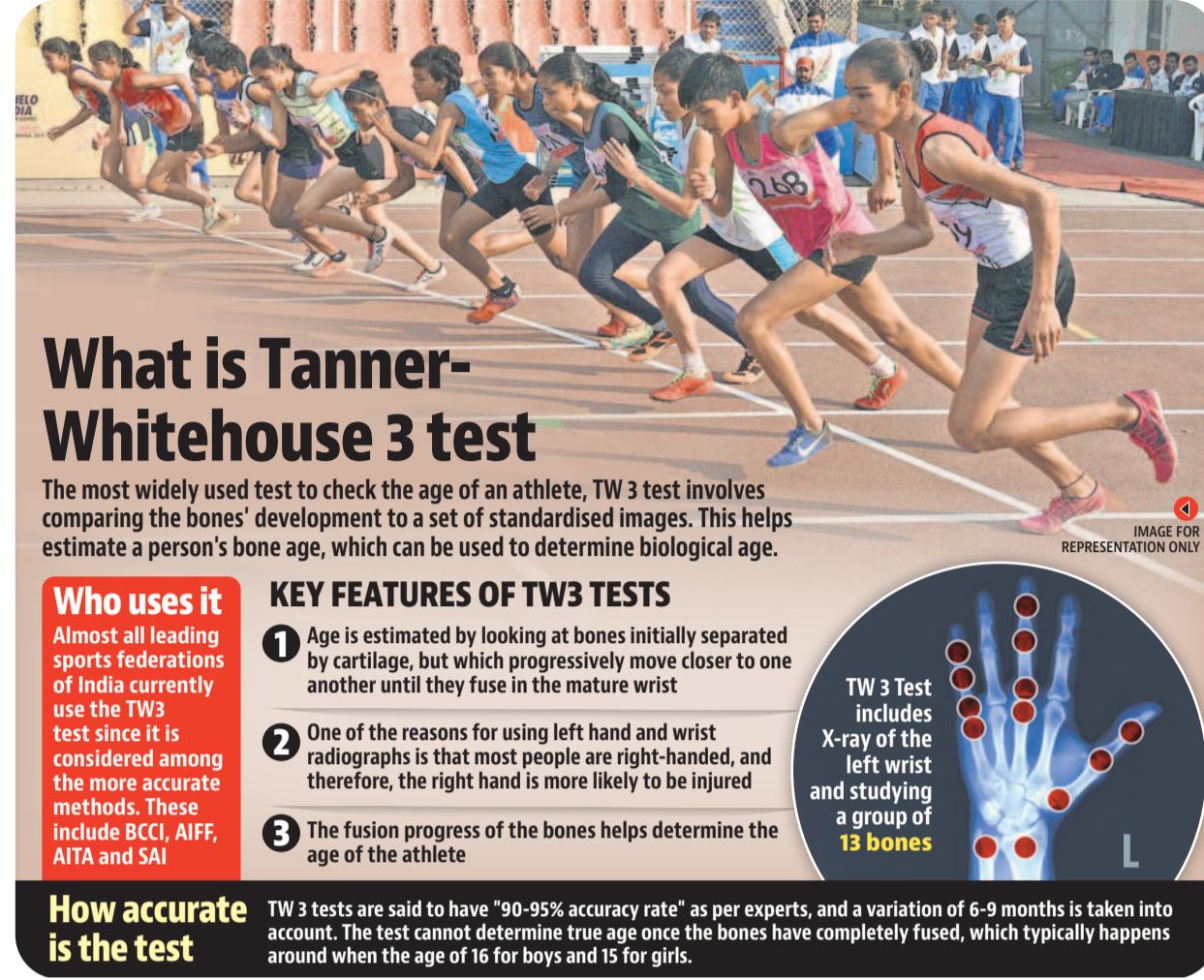
Last month, the Indian sports ministry took steps to address the problem by working on a draft bill to introduce 10 points in the National Code Against Age Fraud in Sports (NCAAFS). It's the first major step the ministry has taken in almost 15 years to address a problem that has affected sports for decades.

## Going back generations

No exact date can be attributed to when the problem started.

"I joined the sports industry in 1978, and it has been going on since long before then," said Dr Ashok Ahuja, former head of the department of sports medicine and sciences at the National Institute of Sport (NIS) in Patiala. "Even now, children are born outside hospitals, especially in villages. Not every birth is registered in our country. Only when they go to school do they rush to get a birth certificate."

Ahuja added: "Schemes like the National Sports Talent Contest (started in 1985) and Sports Projects Development Area (1988) all faced the age fraud problem. Even the Khelo India



## What is Tanner-Whitehouse 3 test

The most widely used test to check the age of an athlete, TW 3 test involves comparing the bones' development to a set of standardised images. This helps estimate a person's bone age, which can be used to determine biological age.

### Who uses it

Almost all leading sports federations of India currently use the TW3 test since it is considered among the more accurate methods. These include BCCI, AIFF, AITA and SAI

### KEY FEATURES OF TW3 TESTS

- 1 Age is estimated by looking at bones initially separated by cartilage, but which progressively move closer to one another until they fuse in the mature wrist
- 2 One of the reasons for using left hand and wrist radiographs is that most people are right-handed, and therefore, the right hand is more likely to be injured
- 3 The fusion progress of the bones helps determine the age of the athlete



TW 3 Test includes X-ray of the left wrist and studying a group of 13 bones

### How accurate is the test

TW 3 tests are said to have "90-95% accuracy rate" as per experts, and a variation of 6-9 months is taken into account. The test cannot determine true age once the bones have completely fused, which typically happens around when the age of 16 for boys and 15 for girls.

program of today faces it," Ahuja added. The chase for immediate results which, in turn, leads to scholarships and government job opportunities is the main motive. Because of the high rewards available, authorities are constantly on the lookout to certain one player was overage.

In the past 18 months, 15 over-age players have been suspended from competing in youth events by the Badminton Association of India (BAI). Then there was the case of the U-15 Nike Manchester United Premier Cup in 2008 in Sikkim, where top teams like Mohun Bagan and East Bengal were found guilty of fielding over-age players in event.

When Dravid was coach of the Indian team that won the men's U-19 World Cup in 2018, the

player of the match in the final, Manjot Kalra, was later found to have committed age fraud.

Former India Davis Cup coach Zeeshan Ali recalled an incident from a youth tennis event in which several parents were certain one player was overage.

"One parent was adamant and went to the hospital where the player was born," Ali said. "Turns out, the hospital did not exist at the time the player's claimed date of birth. It just shows how easy it is to get the paperwork changed."

Several national federations have started to make use of medical aids, like the Tanner-Whitehouse 3 (TW3) test, to check the age of athletes. But there have been cases of impersonation when the test is conducted.

The problem of age fraud now is so rampant that it has been "institutionalised," Ali placed the blame on coaches at the grassroots level. Shaji Prabhakaran, former secretary general of the All India Football Federation (AIFF), concurred, stating that academies across the country have been changing the ages of players, many times without the knowledge of the parents.

"In 2014-15, when we were preparing for the U-17 World Cup of 2017, we had a talent hunt. At one venue, some 100 boys had come for the trials and around 80 of them were overage," said Shaji.

**The TW 3 test**  
At the moment, the TW3 test is the most prominent and widely

used test available to check the age of an athlete. Essentially, an X-ray of the left wrist is taken and 13 bones are studied. The fusion progress of the bones helps determine the age of the athlete.

However, the TW3 test has its limitations. It has a 90-95% accuracy rate, but there are several variables as well, like genetics and nutrition, when it comes to bone fusion.

"We once had a case where identical twins had different results," said Ratnakar Shetty, the former Chief Administrative Officer of the BCCI. "The test results stated that one was under 16 but the other was over."

The BCCI started using the TW3 test in 2012. That same year, 22 players, including Nitesh

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અમદાવાદ શહેરમાં આવેલા નાળાનું ઈન્ટરલીક કરી પાણીથી ભરેલા રાખવાની યોજના હજુ પણ પરી નથી પણ ઉનાને સાથ ચુક્કાઈ જતા કેટલાક તળાવોમાં પાણી બતાવવા તંત્ર હવે ભર ઉનાને ગરના પાણી તળાવોમાં વહેવાડી તળાવ ભરેલા રાખવા પ્રયત્ન કરી રસ્તું છે. કોઈ પણ પ્રકારનું ટીટ કર્યા વગર ગરનું પાણી સીધે મીંદું તળાવોમાં ઢાલવવામાં આવતા ચાદલોલીયા વિસ્તારાના રીતોં હુર્ગે અને મચયોથી ત્રાસી ગયા છે.

(તસ્વિર : સુરેશ મિસ્ટર)

### વલસાડ હાઇવે પર શુગર ફેક્ટરીના લાલુક અક્સમાત

**મુંબઈના મિસ્ટ્રી પરિવારની કાર બે વાહન વચ્ચે સેન્ટ્વીચ બની : માતા-પુત્રીના મોત**

વલસાડ, તા. ૧૮  
વલસાડ હાઇવે પર શુગર ફેક્ટરીના લાલુક પાક કરેલ રસ્તાના પાણીના ભાર્યાની સ્વીટ્ઝેર્ટ કર રુંધુ ગયા અને બાદ પાણીથી આવતો એન્ડસર ટેમ્પો સ્વીટ્ઝેર્ટમાં તેની માત્રા ૧૪ મહિનાની પુરીનું ક્રમકારીબન્ધુ મોત નિપયું હતું.

વતન રાજ્યસાન એક પ્રસંગમાં હાજરી આપવા જતા પરિવારની સ્વીફ્ટ કાર ઉભેલા ડમ્પરમાં ભટકાઈ અને પાણીથી ટેમ્પો ભટકાયો

મુંબઈ મીંચાં રોડ જાણ મીંચાં એપાર્કેટના એલો પ્રાથમિક ભિન્ની અને તેમના પચી નેંડા મિસ્ટ્રી (૩.૧.૨૪), ૧૪ મહિનાની પુરી પિયુન, પિતા ગોપાળભાઈ મિસ્ટ્રી, ભારતીયાંત્રીસ્વીકૃતિઓના કર (ના. અમદાવાદ-૦૮-જી-૩૩૨૮) રામ પોતાના ગમ રાજ્યસાનના જેસલેર ખાતે એક પ્રસંગમાં જવા માટે નિયમ્ય હતું. તે દરમિયાન આપે શનિવારે વેહેલી સાથે આપાણે ૫૦૦ વાણ્યાના ૧૩૫ વ્યક્તિના મૃત્યુ માટે ૧૧૨ પીડિતોની પીટિશન

**મોરબી પુલ દુર્ઘટનામાં CBI તપાસ માંગતી અરજી સુપ્રીમકોર્ટે દાખલ કરી**

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મોરબી જુલાત પુલ દુર્ઘટનામાં CBI તપાસ માંગતી અરજી સુપ્રીમકોર્ટે દાખલ કરી

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મોરબી જુલાત પુલ દુર્ઘટનામાં CBI તપાસ માંગતી અરજી સુપ્રીમકોર્ટે દાખલ કરી

મોરબી જુલાત પુલ દુર્ઘટનામાં CBI તપાસ માંગતી અરજી સુપ્રીમકોર્ટે દાખલ કરી

મોરબી જુલાત પુલ દુર્ઘટનામાં CBI તપાસ માંગતી અરજી સુપ્રીમકોર્ટે દાખલ કરી

મોરબી જુલાત પુલ દુર્ઘટનામાં CBI તપાસ માંગતી અરજી સુપ્રીમકોર્ટે દાખલ કરી

મોરબી જુલાત પુલ દુર્ઘટનામાં CBI તપાસ માંગતી અરજી સુપ્રીમકોર્ટે દાખલ કરી

મોરબી જુલાત પુલ દુર્ઘટનામાં CBI તપાસ માંગતી અરજી સુપ્રીમકોર્ટે દાખલ કરી

મોરબી જુલાત પુલ દુર્ઘટનામ

