

Survey shows cricketers ready to sacrifice careers for IPL

The Indian Premier League's (IPL) outstanding success is threatening to rock international cricket. A survey shows that more than half the players from the seven Test playing nations are ready to quit other two forms of the game for the huge money on offer in the Twenty20 format.

The Federation of International Players' Associations (FICA) surveyed seven of the 10 Test nations, with India, Pakistan and Zimbabwe not being members of FICA. Of the 64 players who responded, including a number of Australians, 33 claimed they were willing to sacrifice the end of their international career for IPL money.

The survey also showed that there is a strong call by players for an IPL window, which continues to be resisted by the International Cricket Council (ICC), with 62 of the 64 players polled supporting such a move, reports *The Australian*

In a major challenge to the Test cricket, two thirds believe the massive rewards of the IPL, which can be upwards of \$1million a year for a six-week tournament, will one day make the Twenty20 tournament more important than playing for their country.

The avalanche of money for the Twenty20 format, which includes millions from Texas billionaire Allen Stanford will force the ICC to have a reality check at its next week's annual executive board meeting in Dubai.

Another worrying factor for the ICC, which emerged in the survey, is that out of the 10 Test nations, 86 per cent said they also consider the rebel Indian Cricket League (ICL) an attractive option, even though ICL players are effectively banned from international cricket.

The grind of international cricket is also seen as a reason which would help hasten their premature retirement.

FICA chief executive Tim May claimed that with the advent of wealthy Twenty20 competitions, players were no longer simply tied to their countries.

'It is evident that today's player is less likely to be loyal to commitments to his home board, as cricket's employment market is freed from the power of governing bodies, who previously enjoyed an inequitable power base by virtue of being the only employer in the market,' May said.

'Simply, the freeing up of the market and the lifting of the citizenship barriers has resulted in more market-driven values for players, and the players not surprisingly are gravitating to that market.'

'The players and FICA feel very strongly that to preserve a healthy balance between club or franchise cricket (such as IPL and ICL) and international cricket, that the ICC needs to create a window in its international programming, or risk losing players permanently from the international cricket scene.'

The survey found that all but one player wanted Test cricket to maintain its elite status, but believed that one-day cricket would suffer significantly in both player and spectator interest as a result of Twenty20.

More than half believe that Twenty20 will make one-day cricket less attractive to play and 70 per cent feel Twenty20 will reduce the popularity of one-day cricket for fans.

To help raise the profile of Test matches in cricket's fast food age, the players have called for a championship of Test nations to be contested by the leading countries on a regular basis.

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