

Shoaib ban suspended, but fitness continues to haunt him

A Pakistani court on Friday allowed controversial pacer Shoaib Akhtar to return to international cricket for the summer by temporarily suspending his 18-month ban but the player will have to prove his fitness to make his comeback in the Pakistan team, an official said.

Chief selector Salahuddin Ahmed said that the national selection committee respects the suspension of Shoaib's ban by the Lahore High Court (LHC) but was quick to point out that the player's return to the national team will now depend on his fitness.

'We need to check his (Shoaib's) fitness before considering him for the Pakistan team,' said Salahuddin. Earlier Friday, a Lahore High Court judge suspended Shoaib's 18-month playing ban imposed by the Pakistan Cricket Board on the bowler for repeated breach of discipline.

Justice Zahid Hussain said in his ruling that the ban was suspended until after the summer break when the court resumes hearing the case. That is expected to be in September.

A PCB tribunal had originally banned Akhtar for five years and imposed a Rs.(Pakistan) 7 million fine. The ban was reduced to 18 months on appeal. The court said Shoaib still had to pay the fine.

Shoaib has a history of disciplinary and fitness problems. Earlier this summer, he featured for the [Kolkata](#) Knight Riders in the Indian Premier League but broke down after a stunning four-wicket haul against Delhi Daredevils.

Pakistan's next international assignment is a three-match one-day series against New Zealand in August at home.

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