

Sports

Will saliva ban threaten cricket's kings of swing? ICC to decide on Wednesday

Spinners have chance to shine during saliva ban: Kumble

LONDON: An International Cricket Council board meeting on Wednesday could see the global governing body uphold a recommendation to prohibit the use of saliva in order to stop the transmission of the coronavirus. Bowlers traditionally get the ball to move or swing in the air, thereby making it harder for batsmen to hit, by applying shine to one side via sweat — which can still be used — or saliva.

However, as a temporary measure to combat COVID-19, the ICC's cricket committee has suggested banning the use of saliva.

AFP Sport shines a light on the issue:

MASSIE'S MATCH

One of the most extraordinary individual performances in cricket history saw Australia swing bowler Bob Massie take 16 for 137 on his Test debut against England at Lord's in 1972.

Yet Massie won just five more caps and took only 15 more wickets, with the bowler himself saying he had struggled on a subsequent tour of the West Indies where he adjusted his action and was never the same cricketer again.

Massie's remarkable maiden Test and the lavish swing he generated at Lord's led to suggestions he'd applied lip salve to the ball in order to maintain the shine — an accusation he has always denied. "Some days things go just right," Massie said by way of explaining his remarkable introduction to Test cricket.

REVERSE SWING

It used to be thought that as a cricket ball got older it would swing less. But a technique pioneered by Pakistani paceman Sarfraz Nawaz, partly in response to the

slow and batsmen-friendly pitches of his homeland, led to the development of reverse swing.

"Just using sweat won't be of much help because that will only make the ball wet and that shine will be missing," said Sarfraz. Sarfraz confused a succession of batsmen by bowling in-swingers with an old ball.

He helped compatriot Imran Khan add reverse swing to his armoury and in the 1990s there were probably no better exponents than the Pakistan fast-bowling duo of Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis.

In 1992, the pair took 43 wickets between them as Pakistan won a five-match Test series in England 2-1.

MINT CONDITION

Over time, teams all round the world came to realise that in order to generate reverse swing it was vital the ball was 'looked after' properly, with one side polished and the other kept bone dry. Swing bowlers such as Andrew Flintoff, Matthew Hoggard and Simon Jones were pivotal to England regaining the Ashes from Australia in 2005. But it was England opening batsman Marcus Trescothick who later revealed he had put Murray Mints sweets to good use in the field because sucking them stimulated most saliva, which could then be applied to the ball.

PLAY ON WITH POLLOCK?

— It seems unlikely cricket chiefs will row back from the saliva ban but former South Africa paceman Shaun Pollock, even though he is a member of the ICC cricket committee, gave current swing bowlers a glimmer of hope by suggesting health checks in place for next month's behind closed doors three-Test series between

England and the West Indies might make it redundant.

"I think the environment that'll end up being created is almost going to be like a bubble," Pollock told the Following On Cricket Podcast.

"People will get tested, they'll go into a two-week camp where they're just going to sit and monitor how the conditions of their bodies change.

"And if there are no symptoms, it doesn't really matter about shining the ball then, because you're in the bubble and no one you come into contact with will have coronavirus." "So you can just get on with normal proceedings."

Meanwhile, Cricket chief Anil Kumble hopes a ban on using saliva to shine the ball after the coronavirus shutdown could see a resurgence of spin bowling in Test cricket. The International Cricket Council is expected to order a temporary ban next week on using spit as a shining agent, as part of measures to get the sport restarted.

Fast bowlers could struggle to swing the ball under the new rules with Australian quick bowler Mitchell Starc saying the game could be come "boring" if batters dominate. But Kumble, the former Indian Test captain and now chairman of the ICC cricket committee that recommended the ban, is hoping spinners could play a bigger part as a result. —AFP



King of swing Wasim Akram.

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World football's governing body intends to finalise plans in the coming weeks for a financial relief package following the economic damage caused to the sport by the global health crisis.

FIFA announced in April it would release \$150 million (133 million euros) to its 211 member associations "as the first step of a relief plan". UEFA shortly afterwards said it had allocated 236.5 million euros to its 55 member federations.

Last month, the German FA and Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge urged industry talks about a salary cap and reforming the transfer system to keep football "credible".

"On the financial and governance aspects, I also heard some interesting proposals on a wide range of topics," Infantino wrote in an open letter to FIFA's members.

"From salary caps to transfer fee caps or other taxation mechanisms, to the possible obligation for governing bodies, competition organisers and clubs to build reserves or to contribute to a reserve fund which can be of assistance in hours of need such as now.

"I personally advocate for clearer and stricter financial regulations, imposing full transparency and good governance principles, and not only limiting this to the transfer system, but to the entire football ecosystem.

"FIFA is doing already a lot of work on this area, even if we face some strong vested interests who fight against our plea for a better global governance in our sport."

A recent study by accounting firm KPMG said the transfer value of players in 10 of Europe's top leagues could plummet by up to 10 billion euros due to the economic crash caused by coronavirus.

The French league, declared over in late April, said it would have to take out a government-guaranteed loan of some 225 million euros to tide over clubs impacted by the loss in income from broadcasters.

Last season's Champions League finalists Tottenham have received a £175 million loan from the Bank of England to help them through the crisis as the club predicted losses of £200 million over the next year.

Infantino is hoping to push through the rescue package by the time of the next FIFA council meeting later this month.

"The need for top club football to resume has understandably taken priority, but we must also consider national teams, women's football, lower-tier domestic leagues, youth and the grassroots game," Infantino said.

"We have to show unity across all aspects of football and make sure football can resume in its globality. This is our priority and our financial relief plan will also follow this principle."

While domestic leagues are gradually restarting, the international calendar has been decimated with Euro 2020 and the Copa America both postponed until next year.

However, Infantino said a reworked international schedule could be published shortly.

"On another very important topic, namely the international match calendar, I am happy to report that we also made some good progress," he said.

"In consultation with different stakeholders, we are closer to present a balanced solution that takes into account everyone's challenges and needs." — AFP

Solskjaer backs extra subs change

LONDON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer believes the introduction of extra substitutions will be "welcome" when Manchester United resume their Premier League campaign later this month.

The coronavirus pandemic forced the English top flight to be suspended in March. But even though Britain's official virus death toll has now topped 40,000, 'Project Restart' is set to see the Premier League get going again, with United returning to action away to Tottenham Hotspur on June 19.

United face fellow European qualification hopefuls Sheffield United on June 24, with the FA Cup quar-

ter-final at Norwich and league match at Brighton following soon afterwards.

With games coming thick and fast, Premier League clubs have agreed managers will be able to make up to five substitutions per match from an expanded nine-strong bench as a way of helping sides cope with a three-month backlog of fixtures.

"I think that's helpful because footballers, after being out for so long, going into competitive games will be a challenge for them and we have to look after their injury-wise and fitness-wise," United manager Solskjaer told the club's website.

"We can't just flog one player and say to them, 'you play every game and every minute' because it might be a period when we have to rotate quite often." United are currently three points adrift of a place in next season's Champions League, and Solskjaer said: "It does feel like a new season but then again, the first



DORTMUND: Dortmund's Portuguese defender Raphael Guerreiro and Hertha Berlin's Dutch forward Daishawn Redan vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match BVB Borussia Dortmund v Hertha Berlin on June 6, 2020 in Dortmund, western Germany. — AFP

McKennie. I am proud of Marcus Thuram. I am proud of Achraf Hakimi. The whole world saw their message," wrote Ujah in an article for German daily FAZ.

German champions Bayern Munich became the highest-profile club in the country to show their support for the protests.

Prior to their 4-2 win at Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday, players warmed up in T-shirts bearing both the Black Lives Matter hashtag and the slogan of the club's official "Reds Against Racism" campaign.

"As players, we always have the same message: we are tolerant, we are open, we are open to the world,"

logistics and safety protocols, with Brady saying stadiums would be divided into red, amber and green zones. "Red zone will be the most severely restricted area, including the pitch, the tunnel, technical areas, changing rooms will be limited to 105 people maximum, to include players, coaching staff, match officials and all the essential staff only," Brady wrote in her Sun newspaper column.

"And only those who have tested negative for COVID-19 in the past five days can enter this area... "The amber zone will be restricted to the minimum number of staff required to meet contractual requirements for broadcasting, media and club staff... And anyone entering this area will be subject to a temperature check and a health questionnaire.

Bayern captain Manuel Neuer told Sky after the game. Bayern's players also wore black armbands bearing the words "Black Lives Matter" during the match. "FC Bayern stands for a world in which racism, discrimination, hate, injustice and violence have no place. The death of George Floyd and the images from the USA have shocked us all," said club president Herbert Hainer in a statement.

"It's a matter of actively and loudly showing our colours. Black Lives Matter and Reds Against Racism. We stand for togetherness that goes far beyond sports." — AFP

Dortmund, Hertha take a knee at Black Lives Matter protests

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund and Hertha Berlin took a knee in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter protests on Saturday as players across the Bundesliga showed support for demonstrations sparked by the death of George Floyd.

With thousands assembling in Berlin and Munich to demonstrate against police brutality and for racial equality, Dortmund and Hertha's starting line-ups gathered around the centre circle at Signal Iduna Park before dropping to one knee.

Dortmund players also wore messages on their T-shirts during their pre-match warm-up in honour of Floyd, a black American man who died in Minneapolis last month while being arrested by police officers.

Jadon Sancho and Achraf Hakimi wore the messages "no justice, no peace", while midfielders Axel Witsel and Emre Can's T-shirts displayed the words "black", "white" and "yellow" crossed out, with the word "human" below.

Earlier Pierre Kunde Malong also took a knee after scoring the second goal in Mainz's 2-0 win at Eintracht Frankfurt.

The Cameroonian will face no sanction from the German Football Federation (DFB) for the gesture after it gave the green light on Wednesday to players who wanted to honour Floyd or support the protests which have raged across the USA.

Sancho and Hakimi had also avoided punishment by the DFB following their on-pitch calls for justice last week.

Union Berlin's Nigerian striker Anthony Ujah said he was "proud" of the Bundesliga players who staged on-pitch protests, and pledged to do the same if he scores against Schalke on Sunday.

"I am proud of the players who are taking a stand. I am proud of Jadon Sancho. I am proud of Weston

Stadiums to be split into 'zones' as EPL returns

LONDON: Premier League stadiums will be divided into three zones when the season resumes behind closed doors, West Ham vice-chairman Karren Brady said Saturday. The Premier League will resume on June 17 after a three-month absence due to the coronavirus pandemic. Clubs met on Thursday to discuss