The Great Game: The rise of Afghan cricket from exodus and war

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Afghanistan continues to make inroads into the world of cricket. The men’s team has progressed from being a disorganised band of reckless hitters of the ball in the early 2000s to a well-balanced team. Two Afghans recently got contracts to play in the biggest cricket league in the world, the Indian Premier League, with deals worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. AAN’s cricket-loving Sudhanshu Verma and ‘not very interested in cricket’ Kate Clark look at how, in two decades, Afghan men have come to compete with the big boys of the game. Afghan women’s cricket, though, they say, has barely begun.

For any reader who finds cricket something of a mystery, a brief description of how the game works can be found in an Appendix. For readers interested in sport generally, they might also like to read our reports on Afghan football, brought together in a dossier here.

18-year-old Afghan national team player, Rashid Khan, was in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, playing for Afghanistan in a One Day International series on 20 February 2017, when bidding for
the Indian Premier League (1) began. The IPL is the biggest, richest cricket league in the world, watched by millions and attracting the world’s top players. Every year before the season starts, the eight IPL teams bid for new players. In the IPL, the money bid goes to the players themselves (although, as in football, teams may also ‘buy’ players from other teams). “My parents woke up early to watch the auction,” Rashid told the website, ESPNcricinfo. “I was still sleeping when they called me and told me to get up and watch because I was coming up.” He had doubts, he said, as to whether he would attract any bids from any of the IPL teams, but then heard his name called out.

https://twitter.com/SunRisers/status/833570600455118848

Rashid is a special type of bowler, a ‘leg spinner’ who makes the ball spin, or turn, leading it to bounce unpredictably on the pitch and making it tricky for the batsman to play. The bidding for him was the biggest surprise of the 2017 IPL auctions. He is only an ‘Associate player’ (a middle rank related to the level of cricket he has played) (2) and has been playing international cricket for less than 18 months. Nevertheless, two top teams, Mumbai Indians and defending champions Sunrisers Hyderabad, bid for him, hard and fast (you can watch Rashid’ bidding here). Rashid bagged one of the most lucrative contracts this year: Sunrisers offered him a jaw-dropping sum of four crore (forty million) Indian Rupees (about USD 600,000).

“It feels unreal,” Rashid told The Deccan Chronicle, “that I will be sharing the dressing room with the players I have grown up watching on television.” He named such cricketing stars as India’s Yuvraj Singh and Shikhar Dhawan, Australia’s David Warner and New Zealand’s Kane Williamson.

Rashid will also have a fellow Afghan on the team. In the same auction, just ahead of him, his Afghan national team-mate, Muhammad Nabi, became the first Afghan cricketer to join the IPL, also snapped up by Sunrisers Hyderabad. Nabi has an outstanding track record at the international level, ranked by cricket’s governing body, the International Cricket Council (ICC), as the seventh best all-rounder (ie he bats and bowls) in the world in One Day Internationals cricket. Nabi is also one of ten players in the last two years who has scored more than 600 runs and taken over 60 wickets in the shortest version of the professional game, known as T20 Internationals. Nabi also has the third-best ‘economy rate’ – a statistic which measures a bowler’s ability over his career – in T20, (3) in T20, behind only two men, both stars of world cricket, West Indian Sunil Narine and Pakistani Shahid Afridi. Nabi was the top wicket-taker in the 2016 World T20. (For any readers, now feeling lost amid the cricketing terms, the basic message here is that Nabi is world class. See also the Appendix.)

https://twitter.com/SunRisers/status/833566659986210817

It is immensely important for the national game that Afghan cricketers are getting into the IPL. It provides them with an environment where they can raise their game further and there is the hope that popularity on the international stage will filter down into Afghan cricketing more generally, boosting aspiring youngsters to train and play better. It is also a remarkable success
story, given that, 20 years ago, cricket was scarcely played by Afghans at all.

Origins

Afghan cricket is a child of conflict and exodus. When Afghans fled the Soviet occupation to cricket-loving Pakistan in the 1980s, youngsters growing up there learned to play ‘tape-ball’ cricket. It is a popular Pakistani street version of the game, which uses makeshift cricket bats and covers tennis balls with gaffer tape to take the bounce out of them, so that they more closely resemble the leather ball used by richer players. In the 1990s, Pakistan was one of the dominant cricketing nations, winning the World Cup in 1992 and cricket flourished at the local level in Pakistan. It also became a popular amateur sport for Afghan refugees living around Peshawar and it was refugees, among them Taj Malik and Allah Dad Noori, who set up the Afghanistan Cricket Federation in the 1995 (see here).

Kate Clark remembers meeting members of the Afghan cricket team in Kabul in the last years of the Taleban regime when they were playing on what was then open ground in Wazir Akbar Khan near the (current) British Embassy – they competed for space with Kuchis grazing animals and occasional travelling bee keepers. In 1999, the Afghan cricketers also came to the attention of one of the oldest cricket clubs in the world, the Marylebone Cricket Club, the MCC. Once also the sport’s governing body, the MCC still administers the rules of the game and, in 1999, had only recently broken two hundred years of tradition by allowing women into the ground (4). An
MCC member, Stuart Bentham, came to Kabul as a shareholder with the mobile telecommunications company, Afghan Wireless and Communications Company (AWCC), then being set up. He saw cricket being played and persuaded the MCC to donate kit – bats, balls, pads and wickets – to the players. The Afghan cricketers played a match in the Kabul stadium – with official blessing from the Taleban, then in power. This was not unusual – football, martial arts and other sports were also played there – but it did lead to a fine opening line in a Reuters report, that two of the most patriarchal organisations in the world, the MCC and the Taleban, had cooperated over the game of cricket.

Afghans playing cricket in Kabul, 1999, in a field in Wazir Akbar Khan, near the roundabout in front of the current British embassy. The field was also used by Kuchis for grazing their animals and by beekeepers. It is now built on. (photo: Stuart Bentham)

The return of millions of refugees after the fall of the Taleban boosted the game on Afghan soil and it began to develop rapidly. If one tries to put together the journey of Afghan cricket since then, some of the major milestones would be:

- May 2003, the Afghan Cricket Federation hosts the very first Afghan national cricket trials, with players coming from across the country to the Chaman-e Huzuri Maidan in Kabul after hearing about the trials by word of mouth. In the opening match of the ‘First Olympia Lube Oil Cricket Tournament’, an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) team lost to that of Malik’s Kabul Academy. The eventual winners of the tournament were the Khost cricket team.
- 2004 Asian Cricket Council Elite Cup, an event in which Associate and Affiliate members of the ICC compete. Afghanistan beat Bahrain – its first international victory – (although they lost all other matches).
- 2007 Afghanistan won its first international trophy (shared with Oman) at the Asian...
Cricket Council T20 tournament, a tournament for Affiliate and Associate teams (low ranking members).

- In 2008 and 2009, Afghanistan won two more entry-level international cricket tournaments Division Five and Division Three of the World Cricket League. (4) It was then eligible to compete in the qualifiers for the 2011 World Cup. It only finished sixth, meaning it missed out on the World Cup. However, that sixth place meant Afghanistan could now play One Day Internationals for the first time (see here and here). “Today,” one of the players said, in a moment caught on camera by the makers of the documentary film “Out of Ashes, “we bought Afghan cricket from refugee camps to international recognition!”

- 2009, Afghanistan went on to again win the Asian Cricket Council T20 tournament.

- February 2010, Afghanistan defeated Ireland to qualify for the World T20, but could not win any match in the final tournament. In December of that year, Afghanistan won the Intercontinental Cup at its very first attempt; this is a ‘First-Class’ tournament, ie teams play matches of at least three days (see Box 1) organised by the ICC. In the same year, Afghanistan also won the Asian Cricket Council Trophy and in 2011, Asian Cricket Council's T20 tournament.

- In 2012, Afghanistan played its first ever One Day International, against Pakistan in Sharjah, but lost the game. It was a big moment in Afghan cricket history and even the Taleban’s spokesperson sent a message of support to the Afghan team. That year, Afghanistan finished as runners-up in the World T20 qualifiers and qualified for the World T20. Again, it failed to register any win during the final tournament.

- 2013 Due to their consistently good performance, Afghanistan was promoted from Affiliate (a status it shared with 55 other countries) to Associate member (along with 36 others) of the ICC. That year, Afghanistan came second in the World Cricket League Championship and qualified for the 2015 World Cup. Also in 2013, Afghanistan registered its fourth consecutive victory in the Asian Cricket Council T20 tournament.

- 26 February 2015 Afghanistan registered their first victory in a Cricket World Cup match, defeating Scotland by 14 runs. They lost all other matches, however, and went out in the first round.

- 2016 Afghanistan played in the World T20 in India. This time, Afghanistan won all its group matches and managed to get into the second round of the final tournament but was unable to qualify for the semi-finals. However, they did defeat the eventual champions, the West Indies, during their final match in the second round of the tournament. They also almost wrecked the English batting. A ‘giant killing’ looked to be on the cards until English batsman Moeen Ali rescued his team. Kate describes how, in the AAN office, little work was done by Afghan colleagues during this game. Not being a cricket fan herself, I was not watching, but when the taunts tailed off into silence, I gathered England was asserting itself and indeed they did win.

https://twitter.com/ICC/status/846164875831398401

Afghanistan’s performance and (when appropriate) post-victory dance of the attan – at the ground made them overnight stars in the world of cricket. During the competition, Muhammad
Shahzad, the team’s wicket-keeper batsman, known for his theatrical celebrations, was the fourth highest run scorer in the tournament, ahead of many big names in the game. Mohammad Nabi and Rashid Khan, the two Afghans players who got IPL contracts this year, were the top two wicket takers, ahead of many feared bowlers in the tournament.

This year, the Afghan team has pulled off another stunning feat by soundly beating Ireland (along with Afghanistan, the best team at the Associate level) in their third T20 match on 12 March. Afghanistan scored runs at an unprecedented speed to send T20 International records tumbling. Muhammad Nabi scored a blistering eighty-nine runs at an unheard ‘strike rate’, of 296.66 (5). This enabled Afghanistan to make 104 runs from the final six overs – the highest total ever added from the final 36 balls in T20 International’s history. Afghanistan finished with 233 runs, the highest ever score by an Associate side and the eighth highest score of any team in a T20 International competition. The Afghan onslaught ended particularly badly for Irish bowler Barry McCarthy. He was hit around the ground for sixty-nine runs off four overs; it was the most expensive bowling spell in the history of T20 International competitions (see here). Afghanistan have also just won a One Day International series against Ireland by winning three of a five match series on 24 March 2017.

https://twitter.com/ARG_AFG/status/845242341115899904

While most records in cricket do not last very long, they are an essential element for performance evaluation in this sport. Afghanistan has now won eleven T20 games, surpassing England and Ireland’s joint record for the most consecutive T20 International wins. The ICC currently ranks Afghanistan’s Muhammad Shahzad as the fourth highest scorer in T20 Internationals, and the seventh best batsmen in the world at this level, Rashid Khan as the fifth best bowler and Muhammad Nabi as the fourth best all-rounder.

https://twitter.com/ICC/status/840895214764085248

Domestic Challenges, passion and international support

The Afghan national team’s rise has been spectacular, an achievement made even more remarkable by the backdrop of the ever-spreading conflict in their homeland, with its heavy cost to lives. Andy Moles, former New Zealand coach, who coached the Afghanistan’s team for the 2015 World Cup, described how:

*Sometimes you hear a boom go off somewhere when coaching in the middle. You see Black Hawk helicopters flying over the ground, going on missions and coming back. Like coaching in a war movie. Actually it is a very surreal situation because I don't feel threatened. I don't feel scared when leaving for work in the morning.*

Cricket has flourished in Afghanistan despite not just the insecurity, but the lack of infrastructure. Rather, passion and self-belief has allowed cricketers to thrive in such a hostile environment. There has also been international support. Afghanistan cannot host home games
because of the conflict and the lack of good enough facilities. The United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka and India have all stepped in over the years to host its games; currently Afghanistan’s home ground is at Greater Noida, right outside New Delhi in India.

https://twitter.com/ACBofficials/status/809653046410170368

Afghanistan has also had agreements and received support from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India to develop cricket in the country. Their players have received training in Bangladesh, and technical support from Australia and the MCC in England. They even had an opportunity to train under the Pakistani batting legend Inzamam ul-Haq before the Pakistan Cricket Board recalled him to be the chief selector for the Pakistani national cricket team. To help Afghanistan develop domestic talent, India is funding the building of a stadium in Kandahar. Non-cricketing nations have also helped, with €700,000 funding from Germany to build a stadium in Khost. The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, a non-governmental organisation with a long history in the country, and the UK government have also backed the development of the game, supporting the construction of cricket pitches in 20 schools in Kabul, Kunduz, Laghman, Nangarhar and Wardak. Another NGO, Afghan Connection founded by a British obstetrician, Dr Sarah Fane, and supported by the MCC, has also helped nurture cricketing talent and built local cricket facilities in twenty-two provinces. Cricket is one field where international cooperation has truly worked. At least, it has for the men’s game.

https://twitter.com/ACBofficials/status/813636846219591680

In Afghanistan, cricket is still somewhat associated with Pashtuns, particularly easterners who live in close proximity to Pakistan, a traditional cricket nation –, as early members of the team and administrators were from this group and so cricket developed more strongly in the east. (See one commentary here) It is not uncommon to hear arguments about what Afghanistan’s ‘national sport’ is – football or cricket (before the wars it might even have been hockey, forgotten since)? – as if there had to be one sport only, and buzkashi might not be picked if there did have to be choice. Players from Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, Pashai and Nuristani backgrounds, Afghan journalist Malik Achakzai told The Diplomat, were all now playing and had made their way into the domestic cricket teams, just below the national team. So, the era of an exclusively Pashtun national team may soon be over. Also, if the Afghan national cricket team continues to advance and compete well against the best in the world, the game’s popularity nationwide could well follow.

**Men Only?**

A more intractable problem may be the dire state of Afghan women’s cricket. Like most of the cricket playing nations, men dominate the Afghan game. Unlike other countries, however, in Afghanistan, women have barely got onto the pitch. Like men’s cricket, the women’s game was brought back from Pakistan by a refugee, Diana Barakzai. She created and captained a women’s team in 2009. The Afghan Cricket Board officially established a women’s division in 2010. Scarcely anything, however, has been done to develop the women’s game, at a
domestic or national level, despite support from donors. Afghan women have never represented their country in any official game, although they did play in a local six-team tournament in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in 2012. The Afghan team, captained by Barakzai, won.

Shafiqullah Stanikzai, chief executive officer of the Afghanistan Cricket Board, claimed to The New York Times that the national women’s cricket programme was operating in secret. “We are not publicizing that due to certain limitations,” he added. “The national team is functioning but at a very basic level, as they are not good enough to compete at an international level.” However, Peter Anderson, an Australian cricket coach who was appointed as the head of Afghanistan’s National Cricket Academy in 2014, told the paper the Board had dismantled the women’s team that emerged during initial progress in 2009-10. Diana Barakzai backed this up: the Afghan women’s team, she said, had not even practiced for years, yet alone played. Social sensitivity is certainly a challenge, especially when, as Barakzai contends, it extends to the Afghan Cricket Board. She resigned from the team in 2014, telling Reuters the Board had obstructed its progress because of a belief that women should not leave home unescorted, or be given the chance to learn the sport. “Afghanistan's cricket board does not support cricket for women,” she said, “even though I have 3,700 girl cricketers across Afghanistan.”

Social conservatism is certainly a barrier for women and girls wanting to play cricket. Sarah Fane, founder of the cricket-promoting NGO, Afghan Connection, told the cricket news website Cricwizz, that they work “in a very culturally sensitive way, only in communities where they want...
us to be there. Boys and girls are taught separately.” Diana Barakzai, who is now an ICC-certified coach and works with girls at the school level, also says there is no lack of enthusiasm or ambition among Afghan girls to play cricket, just lack of opportunity.

Not having an Afghan women’s game is significant and not just for women cricketers. If Afghanistan wants to become a full member of the ICC and be eligible to play test matches, the five-day version of the game, it will have to have women’s cricket in its cricketing structure. (ICC’s criteria for test status can be found here.) One un-named “leading figure involved in Afghan cricket” told The Independent in 2014 that the Afghan Cricket Board “wanted a women’s department just as a symbolic thing to show to the ICC.”

**Reporting on the game**

For those not brought up with cricket, this dispatch may have been a tricky read. Cricket is a game full of specialist vocabulary: runs, innings, overs, wickets, leg spinner, silly mid-on, silly mid-off, googlies, being in and being out. For Afghan sports reporters trying to report on the game, there has also been a linguistic challenge: how to commentate on matches, especially to radio listeners new to the game. In other South Asian nations, people have grown up using the English terms (which do not have obvious meanings even for native speakers), but that hardly helps newcomers to the game. BBC journalist Emal Pasarly has described how his team decided to translate terms (he speaks about Pashto only), where they could. Some were relatively easy:

*Runs became 'manda', which means 'running'. Batsman became 'jorawuankay' - the run maker. Umpire was 'lobsar' - the overseer. 'Top-achawunkay' - literally the person who is throwing a ball – replaced bowler.*

However, some things, they found, could not be translated:

“For gulley,” said Pasarly, “I used to say in our commentary ‘45 degrees from the batsman’… so I had to describe the position on the field’… It was the same for positions like mid-off or mid-on.”

Some terms proved impenetrable, resistant to both translation and paraphrase. ‘LBW’, for example, is short for ‘leg before wicket’ when the ball would, in the umpire’s judgment, have hit the wicket if the batsman’s leg had not been in the way. If LBW is called by the umpire, the batsman or woman is ‘out’, his time with the bat over. Pasarly said they just decided to keep LBW in English.

The Afghan Cricket Board has officially adopted the wording developed by the BBC team, as have other media, after they started to cover the sport in around 2010.

**Towards Test Match status?**
Based on the performance of its men’s team and the thriving domestic cricket scene, Afghanistan is starting to mirror most of South Asia where youngsters, using makeshift cricket gears, turn patches of rough, empty land into cricket grounds. Across the country, local teams are also playing matches, and even in remote towns, a carpet thrown over a twenty-two yard patch on the ground serves as a pitch on which to bat. Kabul and Jalalabad are leading the way: both cities host matches that attract huge crowds. Most exciting is the promise young cricketers are showing. The Afghan Under 19 team finished 7th in the Under 19 World Cup in 2014, beating cricketing powerhouse Australia during the tournament.

Afghanistan is now working to achieve Test Match status from the ICC. For many cricket fans, especially the more orthodox, test cricket is still the one true standard to judge a team’s calibre by. In test cricket, national teams play a series of three or five matches, each one lasting five days. The name of this version of the game stems from its long, gruelling nature; it is a test of the relative strengths of the two sides and requires endurance, consistency, tactics and a well-balanced team to win.

Afghanistan’s application for Test status may well hit a wall, however, because of its failure to develop women’s cricket. For now, and unless the situation for women improves, or the ICC changes its guidelines, Afghan cricket fans will have to make do with the short version of the game. They do not have to wait long for this season’s excitement to start, though: the 2017 season of the Indian Premier League ‘kicks off’ in just over a week, on April 5, when defending champions, Sunrisers Hyderabad, the team of Nabi and Rashid, play their first match. Many Afghans will be watching their star players closely.

Appendix: What is cricket?

Cricket is played between teams of eleven people, with each team taking it in turn to bat. Three sticks are pushed into the ground, with two shorter pieces of wood positioned on top of them: this is the ‘wicket’. 22 yards away (about 20 metres) at the other end of the ‘pitch’, another wicket is positioned. There are always two batsmen or women playing, each standing at either end of the pitch. A bowler bowls the ball to one of them who is trying to defend his wicket, and hit the ball to make ‘runs’ (the equivalent of points).

If the bowler hits the wicket with the ball, the batsman is ‘out’; his turn with the bat is over and he is replaced by another member of his team (who is ‘in’). If the batsman hits the ball and it is caught by a member of the opposing team, he is also out.

Meanwhile, the batsman or woman is trying to hit the ball. If s/he hits it right to the edge of the field, ‘the boundary’, s/he scores six runs if the ball does not hit the ground, and four runs if it does. The other way of scoring is for the two batsmen / women to run to each other’s wicket, while the other side is retrieving the ball. Each time they run to the other wicket, they score a run. If, however, the attacking team hits one of the wickets with the ball while the batsman is
away from it, s/he is out.

All of the eleven members of the team get a chance, in turn, to bat. When ten of them are ‘out’, the whole team is out and the other team get their chance to bat (they are ‘in’).

In T20 games, each team is bowled twenty ‘overs’. An over consists of six valid deliveries of the ball by the bowler. In One Day Internationals, fifty overs are played. In Test matches, there is no such limitation on the number of overs. Rather, teams play until all the members are out (this is known as an ‘innings’). Each side play at least two innings over three, or five days. If the game is not completed within the allotted time (ie some players have not been bowled out), then it is considered drawn, regardless of who has scored the most runs.

(1) The Indian Premier League (IPL) is a professional Twenty20 cricket league in India contested during April and May of every year by eight teams representing Indian cities. The Board of Control of India founded the league in 2007. A team can acquire players through five ways: the annual auction, signing domestic players, signing uncapped players, trading players, and signing replacements. In the trading window, a player can only be traded with his consent, with the team paying the difference if any, between the old and new contract. If the new contract is worth more than the older one, the difference is shared between the player and the team selling the player. The annual auction is used as a window for signing new players who are not part of any existing team. This is usually the entry window for foreign players into the IPL.

(2) The world cricket governing body the International Cricket Council grades international teams as Affiliate, the lowest rank, Associate and Full Members of the ICC. Currently, ten teams have Full Membership which makes them eligible to play Test cricket. 39 teams are Associate members, six of whom also have One Day International status, which brings them into competition with Full members in major tournaments. These six teams, along with two others, can play in T20 International competitions. There are 56 teams with Affiliate status.

**Affiliate members** are countries where the ICC recognises that cricket is played according to the rules of cricket, the ICC regulations. An affiliate member must maintain a national governing body with particular administration requirements and follow these criteria

In order for an Affiliate member to be become an Associate member, the national governing body must demonstrate that it has met the criteria for Associate Membership and have met the following playing standards during the previous three years:

- Competed in all relevant Global or Regional ICC international cricket competition for the previous three years
- Be ranked the first, second of third Affiliate team in the region.

It must also have achieve done of the following:
Two wins against any associate nation in 50-over matches
Twice been “highly competitive” against one of the top 20 associate nations in 50-over matches
Once beaten an Associate Member and once been competitive against one of the top 20 associates in 50-over matches
Won three times against any Associate nation in 20-over matches
Been “highly competitive” in three matches against one of the top 20 associate nations in 20-over matches
Twice beaten an Associate Member and once been “highly competitive” against one of the top 20 associates in 20-over matches
Once beaten an Associate Member and twice been “highly competitive” against one of the top 20 associates in 20-over matches
Achieved three results in ICC global or regional events that include any mix of wins against Associate Members and/or highly competitive results against one of the top 20 Associate Members from 50 over and/or 20 over matches

**Associate Members** are countries where cricket is firmly established and organised but do not qualify for Full Membership.

All Associates are eligible to play in the ICC World Cricket League, a series of international one-day cricket tournaments administered by the ICC. There is also an ICC World T20 Qualifier that works as a qualification process for ICC World Twenty20 that occurs every two years. The qualified teams are awarded T20 International status.

An Associate member must maintain the following additional criteria along with other administration requirements of the national governing body:

- Have a minimum of 16 senior teams and 16 junior teams playing in a structured competition or competitions;
- Must have access to at least eight cricket grounds, four of which must have a permanent pitch.

**Full Members** may be countries or geographical areas (for example, the West Indies which covers more than 20 countries and territories from the Caribbean and the English team which represents both England and Wales). There are ten Full Members and all have the right to send one representative team to play official Test matches. All Full Member nations automatically qualify for One Day Internationals and Twenty20 Internationals (that Associate and Affiliate members have to qualify for).

(3) Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), called by many the home of cricket, is a club in London, England and was founded in 1787. It is based at the famous Lord's Cricket Ground. The MCC was formerly the governing body of cricket both in England and Wales and worldwide. In 1993, many of its global governing functions were transferred to the International Cricket Council and its English governance was passed to the Test and County Cricket Board at the same time. The
MCC issued the Laws of Cricket in 1788, continues to reissue them (from time to time), and remains the copyright holder of those laws.

(4) The World Cricket League has five global divisions, where fifth is the lowest division. Teams that do not have Test status play tournaments in the different divisions with, in each division, two teams promoted, two relegated and two remaining for the next tournament, two years later. The six teams that manage to rise through the divisions to division one get One Day International status, while the top four qualify to play in the Cricket World Cup.

(5) The strike rate is the number of runs a batsman scores per 100 balls. For a bowler, it is the number of deliveries he makes to take his wickets over his career.