

Cricket

By: Javid Lateef

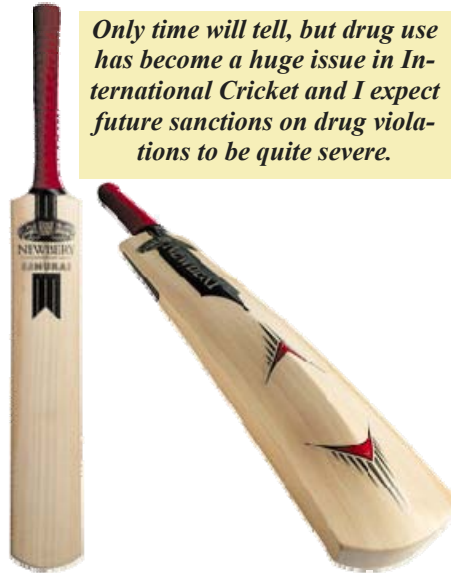
Mahendra's Men and a Little Bit of Contraband

Well ... after all the hoopla of the 20/20 IPL tournament, we are back into the regularly scheduled cricket period. The Aussies are visiting the West Indies, New Zealand is in England and India just finished a tri-series with Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The Indian selectors have decided to field a very young team for the tri-series tournament as well as the Asia Cup. A brave and bold move which I believe will pay dividends in the future. We lost the final to Pakistan by 25 runs. Chasing a 300+ total, most of the top order got good starts but couldn't capitalize, and the old adage of when you have a big score to chase, one batsman has to make a good score and anchor one side, was evident here.

There are some outstanding talents in this new team, both with bat and ball. *Praveen Kumar* has been a revelation with the new ball and *Yusuf Pathan* has impressed all with his all round skills.

What has impressed me the most is the fielding. This Indian team is dynamite on the field with acrobatic stops, quick pick up and throws, they have really come along well in this department. The big question now is, apart from *Sachin Tendulkar*, who amongst the experienced players will ever get a chance with these young Turks taking over? Interesting dilemma for the selectors indeed.



Only time will tell, but drug use has become a huge issue in International Cricket and I expect future sanctions on drug violations to be quite severe.

On to another topic; the Pakistan seamer, *Mohammed Asif*, has been in an airport detention cell for close to 2 weeks now. He was caught with a small amount of narcotics in his possession and was immediately detained. Further toxicology reports indicated that there were remnants of the same drug in his system. There have been all kinds of cover up stories. *Asif* claims he was at a party and was drugged. He then claimed he was too drunk to know what was going on. The latest news is that he is going to be deported from the UAE, and my assumption is that talks were made at a ministerial level to

avoid more (and lengthier) jail time for *Asif*. What is really sad is that this is his second offence. He and *Shoaib Akhtar* were suspended for using anabolic steroids in the past.

There will be more sanctions leveled against him by the PCB and the other anti-drug agencies. *Asif* had a bright future ahead of him. A brilliant bowler capable of producing devastating spells of swing bowling, his fate is in his own hands, as he has to face all these sanctions and get back to cricket. Only time will

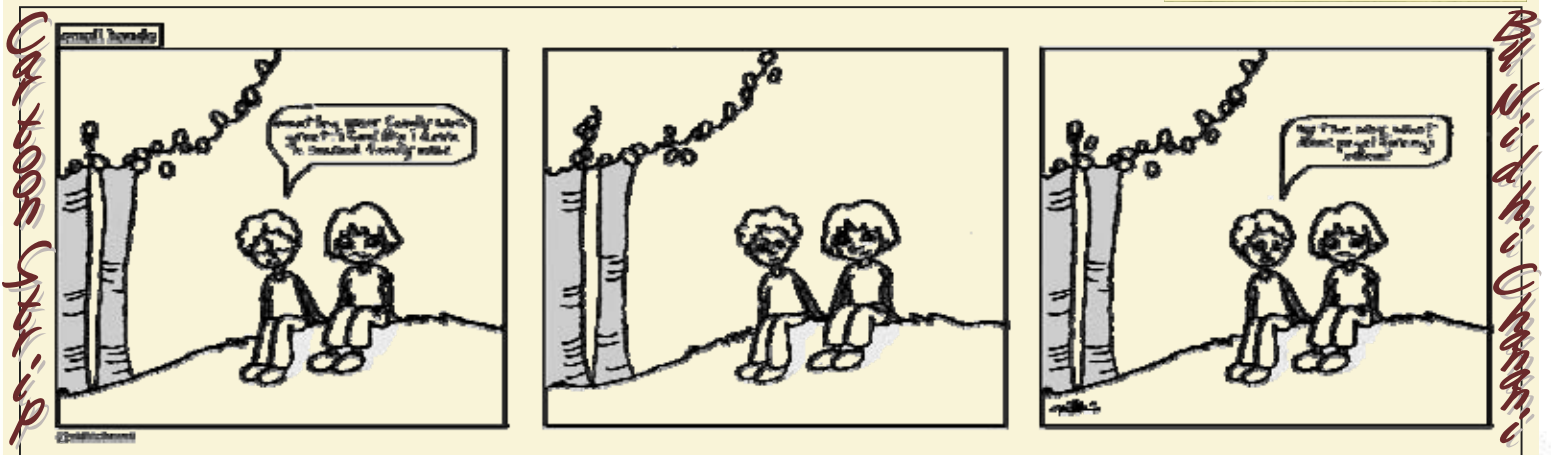
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The Asia Cup starts on the 24th and there is controversy even before the start. The Sri Lankan cricket board is \$7.5 Million in arrears and is struggling to even pay their own players. A new, young Indian squad and a Pakistan Team that has found some self-belief after an email from a senior board member chastising them, was made public, start off as favorites.

Signing off for now. Happy Watching!



Mohammed Asif
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