

# The IPL-Bollywood Connect

By: Roshni Mulchandani

It was a battle of IPL versus IPL this year—that's the Indian Political League vs. the Indian Premiere League. Last year India played host to the cricket league that literally took over the nation though unfortunately that was not meant to be this season. After much debate within the government regarding safety for politicians, cricketers and spectators over overlapping dates for both leagues, it was decided that the IPL for 2009 had to be outsourced. And move it did, all the way to South Africa! The move caused mayhem in organizer Lalit Modi's camp, who, to his credit put on a spectacular show and showcased his killer event management skills.



The show started with a big bang as Capetown welcomed the cricketers and their owners with a sparkling parade. The likes of Shah Rukh Khan, owner of the Kolkata Knight Riders, Preity Zinta, owner of King XI Punjab, and Shilpa Shetty, owner of the Rajasthan Royals, collectively added much *masala* to the already spicy lineup of cricket that was to follow. In fact, individually the Bollywood stars all indulged a bit of hoopla during the 45 day duration. To begin with, Shah Rukh Khan had to deal with a mysterious blogger within his team who was leaking controversial information regarding team management. The mole delivered quite a few googlys which caused the team to scratch their heads but create quite the fan frenzy. And that wasn't all. The confusion about the team's captain also caused the team to stay in the news. While Dada Saurav Ganguly was initially declared captain to team KKR, upon reaching Capetown, the tables turned and reins were handed over to New Zealand's wicket-keeper Brendon McCullum. Back in India, KKR fans burned Shah Rukh Khan effigies and sent hate mail by the dozens in protest to the decision. Adding to the chaos, team players complained of the Bollywood superstar attending team meets only to come up with a separate agenda concerning him and not related to the team. When the actor headed back home to vote only to decide he wouldn't return, sources claim the team breathed a sigh of relief. By the end of IPL 2009, KKR had lost credibility on and off the field.

Pretty Preity Zinta was under immense speculation even before the IPL kicked off. Her relationship with Bombay Dyeing heir Ness Wadia was in hot water and the duo confirmed their split when they decided to stay at completely different hotels during their stay in South Africa. Additionally, while Wadia preferred to sit in the stalls, get drunk and pick fights, Zinta chose to park herself in the dugout with her team. Her close relationship and hugging sessions with the players after the games raised a few eyebrows—especially about her close proximity to the popular Yuvraj Singh. Shilpa Shetty took a quick strike at her propinquity with her team claiming that she would never, “run around a ground and hug her team.” To which zippy Zinta quickly re-

sponded to a leading film publication, “What I can do, no one else can. The way I do things is different and have always been different from everybody else. My team is like my family.” With that a media created cold war began between the actresses.

Shetty attended the IPL with her entourage intact: boyfriend and co-owner Raj Kundra, Sister Shamita Shetty and her parents. While the actress was constantly kept in the media as her boyfriend pampered her with jewels, cars and superstitious ways— she attended a few matches adorning two watches for good luck, her team failed to make it to the finals and retain their title as the IPL champions.

However the cricketing front was definitely more exciting. Bang, Bang, Bang, the favorites were all eliminated and ultimately, the underdogs, Deccan Chargers and the Bangalore Royal Challengers came head to head in the final. A battle of the Southern teams for sure, which resulted in a much deserved fairytale win for the Chargers. For over a month, South Africa played host to teams that were tested and audiences that were entertained. The closing ceremony ended with a rather unrehearsed performance by Katrina Kaif preceded by the popular R&B superstar Akon who kept the crowds screaming for more. Consensus conclusively agreed that South Africa did play perfect host to the IPL this season. However, unlike last season, where the popular film stars came out to support their respective teams, many chose to stay away this year finding destination South Africa too far to travel. Fans back home missed the live stadium action and no doubt, IPL 2010 will be back home in India equipped with all its pomp and glory.