

Cricket



by Roshni Mulchandani

Hitting a Googly

*Indian cricketers in the past have done the country proud. Kapil Dev took team India through to the World Cup final back in 1983 which of course, they won; Sachin Tendulkar went on to become the world's greatest player and India is now regarded as the best One Day team in the world. But amidst all the glory and pomp, there have been moments of shame and dishonor; instances that the Indian cricket world would rather not remember. Interestingly some of the greatest and most talented cricketers in Indian cricket have actually chosen to take the high road to success only to realize, perhaps too late, that while it brings in monetary happiness, it did eventually did cost them their reputation, success and their position in Indian cricket. **CityMasala** takes a look at some of the best Indian cricketers who chose to hit a six only to fall short and get caught at mid-wicket.*

Mohammad Azharuddin was the Indian captain for most of the nineties and broke many world records: 22 centuries in Test Cricket, a century in his first three Tests, 156 catches in One Day International cricket and so on. With everything going in the right direction for the cricketer, he chose to indulge in heavy amounts of match-fixing which gave birth to the downfall in *Azhar's* life. The entire issue was bought to the forefront when the late South African player, *Hansie Cronje* confessed, after also being caught for the same, that it was the Indian Captain who had introduced him to a number of bookies. The case went to trial, immense proof collected and finally *Azhar* was convicted of match-fixing. And if that wasn't enough to tarnish his name, evidence also pointed out that he was appointed by the Indian underworld to fix matches on their behalf. He eventually admitted to fixing three One Day International matches and *Azhar* was then banned for life from cricket. But that wasn't the end of his ordeal. As a rebuttal, the cricketer came out to claim that he was in fact being "targeted" because he was from a minority community. This bought about enormous amounts of negative criticism from all over the country which caused the now ex-cricketer to publically apologize and withdraw his statement. The cricketer is now a Member of the Indian Parliament.

Azhar not only pulled himself into a web of mess but also brought with him ace Indian fielder *Ajay Jadeja*. The cricketer was known for being one of the more aggressive and entertaining cricketers in Indian cricket—hitting 45 off 25 balls and taking 3 wickets for 3 runs, to cite a few examples. His saga, however, ended when he too was caught befriending bookies and providing them with core information

during vital matches. *Jadeja* is also believed to have exchanged monies with bookies for match-fixing services. While he was punished with a five-year ban from the sport, this was later lifted. *Jadeja* now heads the Rajasthan team and is a television cricket commentator.

Ajay Sharma was one cricketer who gained a reputation of being a "big time punter" and thus his career will be marked as one of the biggest disappointments in Indian Cricket history. An all-rounder who excelled in both batting and bowling arenas, it was his case which really put Indian Cricket into a complete frenzy. *Sharma* is said to be the man who introduced *Azhar* and *Jadeja*, both to a number of bookies for which he received much money. Such is the case for *Manoj Prabhakar*; well-known bowler, who too was caught taking money from bookies. In fact, the ex-cricketer was paid more for introducing foreign players to the bookies. Similarly, he too was sentenced a life ban from cricket. *Prabhakar* attempted to join Indian politics only to lose out very early in his campaign.

All the above mentioned ex-cricketers were involved in a single case which ultimately brought the reputation of Indian cricket to an all time low. It did take time for the cricket world to regain its credibility especially since the cricketers were all well-known established reputable men in the field. Cricket is a religion in the sub-continent and by definition is a "gentleman's game." And while the above mentioned have not lived up to the status of the sport, one can certainly hope that the current and future players of Cricket will not flaw the sport and instead play it laurels intact.