

What bothered so  
much about any other



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What more? Cricket is in our blood. We watch cricket six months in a year and talk about it for the next six Months. Have we ever bothered so much about any other sport? Have we ever given a thought to the fact that we compel a person to take interest in every bit of information on the day of match from reporting pitch conditions to the presentation? Keeping aside intellectual reasons for the time being, we will realize that so many crickets have surpassed all possibilities for reasons.

It is a mania a craze. For some people playing cricket is an obsession, it is a way of life, it is a passion. Others enjoy themselves watching cricket and the real fanatic have a passion to know cricket. Playing and watching do not seem to satisfy their quest for cricket. Knowing about players both professionally and personally charm the fans. It is the hot topic of discussion in the crowd of those aspiring to ornate the career with the achievements in cricket. Should we take liberty to call it 'mania' or is it only an interest that has captured the prime importance in the life of individuals? Whatever it may be, the fact is that cricket entertains its fans, rejuvenates them and unites them on one platform.

Cricket has grabbed the attention of its fans all over the world. Those who are really mad about cricket spare time from the busy schedule to play, watch, collect information, discuss, understand and appreciate cricket. In their words, "Cricket is a wonderfully civilized act of warfare, the greatest thing that God ever created/the craze, excitement and fun in cricket is the result of personal interests of the people. However, somewhere media has also come to play a vital role in the publicity of the game. Accordingly, there

are two prime reasons for the cricket mania: Role of Media: “ Media is the second most powerful thing in the world after God.

” — Anonymous This statement has hidden truth that can be understood and appreciated in the field of cricket. Media has taken cricket to masses.

Whether it is advertisement on television, sports columns in newspapers, movies on this subject or sports-time in the news, everywhere cricket tops the priority list. The reason is clear; ‘ cricket is in demand’. Apart from watching the players professionally, the fan club appreciates the players on television screen doing something not related to cricket.

Today the shining names in this game are in contract with one or the other company. Looking from the company’s perspective, return or investment on cricket is in the form of huge profits. Why not? The ones, who adore Mahendra Singh Dhoni using Reebok accessories, feel that using these accessories can make them strong and look like the man himself. If it is Reebok for Dhoni, it is Boost for Sachin Tendulkar. Taking Boost day and night is necessary for the fans not because the product has something to do with health benefits — it is secondary — but because Sachin Tendulkar is the man behind promotion of the product; because at 5ft 4 inch, he continues to stand tall in cricket with the largest fan club; because after sixteen years in the business, he is still the highest earning celebrity and over Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan. This fact was reconfirmed on May 6, 2006, when his management from ICONIX signed Tendulkar for a whopping Rs. 180 Crore for a three-year extendable contract. Earlier he had a contract with World Tel for RS 100 Crore.

The landmark contract with ICONIX has come despite Tendulkar's dry run with bat, injuries and age. Thus, it proves once again that he is a role model for millions of young and old Indians, and the value he commands comes from the love and respect people have for him. It is quite easy for the corporate world to increase the customer base and face the heat of competition in this way. In fact, they know the art of blending this pervasive mania in a direction that can suit their interests. Samsung India, during its falling months of business, endorsed the seven names of Indian cricket team that were in limelight. If the electronic goods brand can feel the presence of mania then where should we expect the MNC brands like Pepsi and Coca-Cola? In the year 2005, the hit advertisement 'Oye Bubbly' took Pepsi to new heights.

Crazy ones appreciated not only the players but also did not mind Amitabh Bachchan wearing the Indian Cricket Team dress. It may appear strange but it is a fact that, after the big release of Aamir Khan's Lagan, the considerable part of audience was interested in spending money and time in the cinema halls so as to get the taste of cinematic cricket. The beauty was that in more than an hour of the film, the characters entertained the audience playing cricket. May be this venture, the film Lagan, the brainchild of Aashutosh Gowariker was not written keeping in mind the craze and excitement behind cricket but it cannot be gainsaid that the part of success could be attributed to the story line-up that revolves around the game. Cricket has ruled the hearts of people all over the world. Where there is cricket, Presidents, Prime ministers and tycoons, all turn into fans. Even the newspapers and news channels can no longer remain aloof from this fact and have accepted cricket

as an integral part of the process. Early realisation of this is already paying dividends.

If in the coming days, the sports page is seen in the form of cricket columns then it will not be a surprise package because currently also 3/4th of the sports page is more or less occupied by the tit bits of cricket. Special time is allocated to the cricket news with different set of sponsors and all other games are grouped together, separately. This game has so much to talk about, so much to think about that even the news channels cannot escape its magic. The explosive batting of Mahendra Singh Dhoni in his initial matches compelled newsmen and journalists to go to his home State, Jharkhand.

Can we ever expect a new comer in any field so crazily chased by the media? Personal Interest: The second important factor is the interest of the audience in the game. Is it the simplicity of the game that it is followed so much by the people all around or is just the publicity that has made this game the king of sports? Whatever it is, the fact is that cricket has, in its tatty, the love and admiration of masses, to the extraordinary extent which no other game has. Cricket jania can be seen in all age groups and in all sections society. It is not difficult to find a child of five years who owns what a fast ball or spin ball is or for a lower middle class person who has saved some money every month to buy a ticket to watch a cricket match in stadium. Sometimes, it is really hard to believe that our national game is hockey and not cricket. We take pleasure in remembering the names of 11 players of the cricket team along with the team manager and team coach

but hardly bother to know the name of even the captain of the team of any other game.

It is not clear till date what this mania has in store for the future of the game but what we can expect is more enthusiasm, craze, zeal, excitement in the coming days. The craze and mania is intensifying day by day. In our own cricket team, the extraordinary performance of the players has not only set new international records and standards but has made cricket come closer to the hearts of common people. Of course, the fans keep track of the performance and new achievements make them even crazier. On January 29, 2006, India's left-arm pacer, Irfan Pathan earned a place in the record books of international test cricket, when he became the first bowler to take a hat-trick in the very first over of the match. After that, Master Blaster Sachin Tendulkar scored his 39th ODI century while playing in the first of the five-match India-Pakistan ODI series, in Peshawar (Pakistan) on February 6, 2006. In the process, he also became the first batsman to cross the landmark of 14, 000 runs in ODIs.

He already holds the record of maximum number of centuries in the history of ODIs (39) and Tests (35) - Recently, M. S. Dhoni topped the ICC rankings, released on April 19, 2006 as the No. 1 ODI batsman dethroning Australian skipper Ricky Ponting. These facts on one side enter the list of international records and on the other side enter into the minds of those who breathe and dream cricket. Another important aspect of this ever growing mania is that where on one side the future of other games is bleak, on the other side, cricket is the only game that holds in itself the capability to unite the two international rivals, India and Pakistan. Had there been no cricket on both

the sides of border there would have been a deadlock in the relationship of India and Pakistan. Today both the nations are working on a common platform to develop trade relations and to solve both mutual and other international problems.

Cricket mania in India can be seen in the form of popularity and appreciation which the budding stars get. The success of the Indian team rests on the bedrock of highly energetic performance put up by the young blood that has helped Team India rise to new standards. The Indian ' Young Brigade' is daring, dashing and willing to do the best. Be it Yuraj Singh, Irfan Pathan, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, R. P Singh, Suresh Raina or S. Sreesanth, all are displaying the ability and courage to take the challenge and dictate their own terms to their rivals, with superb perfection.

Recently, an added name to the list of players which has attracted the herd of fans is Munaf Patel. Let us hope to see more crickets and more mania from this rising champ in the coming days. Cricket mania has thus overwhelmed all. Professionals are still trying to find out the dimensions to this. Is it cricket mania really when we stand in synchronization with the ball that is shot in air, eyes still at ball as if trying to ask the ball itself if it is pleased to into the fielder's hands or to hit the ground?