

'Windies' facing relegation

The West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) has vowed to fight any attempt by the International Cricket Council (ICC) to reduce their team to that of a second tier test match nation.

This, after the ICC indicated that it may create a two tier system which it says would increase the competitiveness of test cricket.

This would see the top seven nations cut off from the bottom three with a system of promotion and relegation between the two groups.

Under the current rankings, the West Indies would be in the bottom division alongside Zimbabwe and Bangladesh.

WICB president Julian Hunte said the board will not allow the ICC to relegate their team to a second division.

Mr Hunte said in a statement that said in most of the cricket playing countries of the world, the West Indies was the team that cricket fans like most after their national team.

Jamaican Sports Broadcaster Simon Croskill agrees.

He told BBC Caribbean that the international appeal of the West Indies team should ensure it remains playing against the better performing teams like Australia, New Zealand and India.

"Based on their pulling power still, as a test-playing nation, there's a great aura around West Indies teams. They are still an attraction because of the way they play their cricket.

"I still think the West Indies are a force enough because their drawing ability is still a factor when playing against the top ranked teams," he said.

The 'Windies' have declined dramatically since the likes of Gary Sobers, Clive Lloyd, Viv Richards, Michael Holding, Malcolm Marshall and Curtly Ambrose helped make them Test cricket's leading team from the 1970's to the start of the 1990's.

Former West Indies wicket keeper Jeffrey Dujon told BBC Caribbean that the decline of some teams including the West Indies, has led to the ICC's decision.

"I'm not surprised that the West Indies will be relegated."

But BBC Caribbean reporter and sports commentator in Antigua, Colin James thinks the ICC has not been consistent enough with its policy on the development of cricket.

He doesn't think that introducing a two tier system is the answer to improving the game.

"I think the ICC can do a lot more that they have been doing for the countries in the Caribbean that spent a lot of money to put infrastructure in place for Cricket World Cup 2007 and got very little from it."

The WICB will be meeting with ICC officials at their headquarters in Dubai the week of March 17 to discuss the matter.

Source: BBC Caribbean