
ICC Regulations on the Sanctioning of Events – WCA Overview

Updated 8 April 2026

WCA has consistently advocated for cricket's global regulatory frameworks to be updated to reflect the new transnational reality and to protect the game and people in it.

The main instrument for regulating both scheduling and player movement within global cricket is the current [ICC Regulations on Sanctioning of Events and Player Release](#) (ICC Regulations). They purport to provide an “objective, transparent and equitable match/ event sanctioning system” that “produces clear and coherent fixture calendars that protect and advance” certain “fundamental imperatives”.

However, it is clear the existing Regulations do not achieve these aims, and that cricket's existing global regulatory frameworks are not fit for purpose for modern cricket. They have also never been agreed with the DT20 leagues and franchises, or players impacted by them, and therefore do not protect them or their rights in a manner consistent with international norms.

The below sets out the problems with the current system and recommended solutions. We suggest the below is read in conjunction with the leadership section from the [WCA Global Game Structure Report](#), which points out the obvious flaw – the ICC create the regulations, they are governed predominantly by the Full Members, who run the major DT20 Leagues, and therefore the main purpose of the regulations appears to be protecting their own interests by restricting competitors and controlling player movement.

PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT ICC REGULATIONS

PROBLEM 1: CRICKET'S GLOBAL REGULATIONS ARE OUTDATED AND NOT FIT FOR THE CURRENT TRANSNATIONAL ERA

Cricket is a multi-employer system, and both international cricket and DT20 leagues are important to the future of the game. The ICC Regulations provide unfounded primacy to “international cricket” over “domestic events”, rather than establishing a system based on establishing an appropriate balance between the two. This “fundamental imperative” is used to justify several improper regulatory tools which give rise to key issues of concern for the game and players, particularly in the following areas.

PROBLEM 2: SANCTIONING OF MATCHES AND EVENTS

The ICC Regulations rightly identify that cricket follows the general “pyramid regulatory structure” prevalent in international sport. However, matches and events are not “sanctioned” in accordance with international sporting norms, for example:

- “International Matches” (i.e. matches between national teams), the ICC Regulations unusually recognise the authority of National Cricket Federations to sanction such matches organised between themselves. Applying international sporting norms, the sanctioning of international matches would

usually be a competence of the international sports federation, considering the cross-border nature of the match or event

- “Special Domestic T20 Events” the ICC unusually retains authority to sanction such events to protect the primacy of international cricket. This also has the impact of reducing the autonomy of national cricket federations to govern cricket within their own territory and has the potential to impact on the earning capacity and rights of professional cricketers

The conditions required for the ICC to sanction a “Special Domestic T20 Event” contain some significant issues of concern that are likely to restrict the global game from growth:

- the “minimum event staging standards” refer broadly to sports integrity matters and provide limited coverage on minimum standards for professional cricketers, yet not all events implement robust contracting, health, safety, and workplace standards
- a global foreign player limit of four (4) players per team who participate in a match in the event. This limitation clearly restricts earning opportunities for professional cricketers, potentially weakens the commercial value of such events, and is likely susceptible to legal challenge in multiple jurisdictions
- a “solidarity fee” is payable by the national cricket federation which organises the event on every foreign professional cricketer that participates. The fee places a hindrance on player participation in that it hinders the possibility that they will be engaged to participate unless they willingly give up some their earnings
- whilst national cricket federations are obliged to enforce employment contracts, this does not happen in practice, and there are no adequate protection and enforcement mechanisms for foreign professional cricketers including on widespread non payment issues, unlike other international team sports. There are also no global disciplinary enforcement mechanisms

PROBLEM 3: PLAYER RELEASE & ‘NOCS’

The ICC Regulations provide a mechanism whereby professional cricketers must be “released” to participate in “international cricket”, irrespective of their contractual status. In this respect, they unusually do not treat all international cricket equally as it is compulsory for professional cricketers affiliated to a “full member” to be “released” whereas, it is only compulsory for a professional cricketer affiliated to an “associate member” to be “released” to participate for a national team for certain ICC events and certain international matches against “full member” national teams.

The most concerning element of the ICC Regulations is the “No-Objection Certificate” (NOC) required for a professional cricketer to participate in a “domestic match” played on the territory of a national cricket federation to which they are not affiliated. A national cricket federation can refuse to issue an NOC for any reason.

This tool is open to be exploited by administrators where there is a power imbalance between themselves and players, and clearly and significantly may restrict earning opportunities for professional cricketers, potentially weakens the commercial value and growth of professional cricket, and is very likely susceptible to legal challenge in multiple jurisdictions.

PROBLEM 4: DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The ICC Regulations fall significantly short in providing proper safeguards to parties seeking to challenge any decisions deriving from them. Any challenge to the legality of the ICC Regulations or decision made by the ICC under the ICC Regulations must be made by naming the ICC as a respondent before an arbitration body convened by the ICC (the “ICC Disputes Resolution Committee”).

Similarly, any challenge to a decision made by a national cricket federation under the ICC Regulations (e.g. to not issue an NOC) must be made in accordance with the dispute resolution provisions in that same national cricket federation’s rules. Without questioning the integrity of the members of the relevant panels which would decide such disputes, it is simple to understand how a party might think they would not receive a fair and impartial review of their grievance in such circumstances.

SOLUTIONS

Recommended solutions include a ‘fit for purpose’ global regulatory framework governing professional cricket that includes three distinct categories:

RECOMMENDED SOLUTION 1: GLOBAL CALENDAR – EVENT SANCTIONING

In addition to addressing the issues highlighted in this report, a global calendar needs to balance the interests of the ICC, national cricket federations, DT20 leagues and club owners, and professional cricketers. Any event sanctioning regulations that control the global calendar should also reflect international sporting norms.

The policy matters that should be incorporated into a ‘fit for purpose’ regulatory framework governing event sanctioning include:

- all cricket matches or events which occur within the territory of a national cricket federation falls within the sanctioning authority of that body
- all international cricket or cricket matches or events with cross-border implications fall within the sanctioning authority of the ICC, requiring approvals from all impacted national cricket federations – the mechanism by which a coherent global calendar and any windows can be governed
- minimum standards for event sanctioning should include professional cricket safeguards and sports integrity measures
- different tiers of international cricket shall require different levels of approval and/or information

It should not include:

- an arbitrary global rule with respect to the number of foreign players in DT20 leagues – any such restriction should be decided upon by relevant leagues in their own jurisdiction and in line with the objectives of that league
- a solidarity mechanism tagged to player movement or salary. Any such mechanism should be de-linked from player movement or salary

RECOMMENDED SOLUTION 2: GLOBAL CALENDAR – PLAYER MOVEMENT

Some form of tracking and regulation of player movement and release within a global calendar is essential to ensuring a 'fit for purpose' regulatory model. Collective negotiation would be the best method to achieve this, and some of the key areas of that framework should include:

- a compulsory player release mechanism between national cricket federations and domestic cricket teams (and vice-versa), which provides for a validity period for requesting release. This mechanism should align to protected Core International Cricket windows only, and operate in combination with minimum pay levels, for example
- clarity on the scenarios where release may be refused (e.g. illness or injury)
- clear rules on player payment, travel costs, insurance costs, and other ancillary costs (including references to collective bargaining agreements, where applicable)
- built-in safeguards for player welfare: rest periods, maximum number of matches during specific windows, travel across international time zones
- enforcement mechanisms if a player is not released by a national cricket federation or if a player does not return to their releasing cricket organisation or returns late

RECOMMENDED SOLUTION 3: GLOBAL PROFESSIONAL CRICKET STANDARDS

The implementation of a modernised global cricket calendar and 'fit for purpose' event sanctioning rules would necessitate the need to introduce a regulatory framework governing a range of matters relevant to professional cricket. Collective negotiation would be the best method to achieve this, and some of the key areas include:

- minimum professional contract standards and/or standard contract template
- noting the short-term nature of professional cricket contracts, a global 'registration / tracking' system for the international movement of players between different franchise teams / clubs. Whilst the principle of freedom of movement / contracting should be respected and protected, in addition to the mechanics of registration, this may include:
 - rules considering the number of entities that a player may be registered with at the same time in overlapping competitions to protect competition integrity
 - global enforcement of outstanding disciplinary sanctions where a player moves between franchise teams / clubs affiliated to different national cricket federations
- specific rules for the maintenance of contractual stability (e.g. termination rights, consequences for inappropriate termination, maternity and pregnancy protections)
- a dispute resolution mechanism protecting foreign professional cricketers (and other foreign employees), which provides equal representation and fair proceedings e.g. on non payment issues
- a disciplinary enforcement system to complement the dispute resolution mechanism protections for the international movement of minors rules governing the licensing, practice, and obligations of player agents