

IN THE HIGH COURT FOR THE STATE OF TELANGANA
AT HYDERABAD
(Special Original Jurisdiction)

FRIDAY, THE TWENTIETH DAY OF FEBRUARY
TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY SIX

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE SRI JUSTICE NAGESH BHEEMAPAKA

WRIT PETITION NO: 35135 OF 2025

Between:

1. Sahebzada Azmath Ali Khan, S/o. Sahebzada Rasheeduddin Ali Khan, Age about 60 years, Occ: Vice President (in-charge President Deccan Arsenal Cricket Club)
2. Deccan Arsenal Cricket Club (Regd. No. 540 of 2014) Affiliated to Hyderabad Cricket Association, Rep. by its Vice President (in-charge President Deccan Arsenal Cricket Club) Sahebzada Azmath Ali Khan, Both O/o at 22-7-382/1, Purani Haveli, Hyderabad

...PETITIONER(S)

AND

1. The State of Telangana, Rep. by its Principal Secretary - Youth Services and Sports, Tank Bund, Hyderabad.
2. The Apex Council of Hyderabad Cricket Association, Rep. by Secretary Office at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Uppal, Hyderabad.
3. The Chief Executive Officer, Hyderabad Cricket Association Office at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Uppal, Hyderabad.
4. The Hyderabad Cricket Association, Rep. by its Secretary Office at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Uppal, Hyderabad.

...RESPONDENTS

Petition under Article 226 of the Constitution of India praying that in the circumstances stated in the affidavit filed therewith, the High Court may be pleased to issue writ, order or direction, more particularly in the nature of WRIT OF MANDAMUS BY COMMAND to declare the inaction of respondents No. 2 to 4 in not permitting the petitioner club to register players to participate in the B Division 2- day leagues matches knockout, play off any other match or matches conducted by HCA by replacing them with any existing players registered /

participated/ played for the petitioner club as capricious, unlawful, arbitrary, illegal, malafied violative of the rights of the Petitioner Club / General Body Member under bye- laws, Article 14 and 21 of Constitution of India and consequently direct the Respondents No. 2 to 4 to register players to participate in the B Division 2 -day leagues matches, knockouts, playoffs or any other match/matches or tournaments conducted by HCA by replacing them with any existing players registered / participated/ played for the petitioner club.

IA NO: 1 OF 2025

Petition under Section 151 CPC praying that in the circumstances stated in the affidavit filed in support of the petition, the High Court may be pleased to direct respondents No. 2 to 4 to register players to participate in the B Division 2-day leagues matches knockout, play off any other match or matches conducted by HCA by replacing them with any existing players registered / participated/ played for the petitioner club.

IA NO: 2 OF 2025

Petition under Section 151 CPC praying that in the circumstances stated in the affidavit filed in support of the petition, the High Court may be pleased to restrain the respondent No. 2 to 4, directing them not to fix / schedule 2 -Days leagues including tournament, playoffs, knockouts or any other matches for the season 2025-26 conducted by HCA without permitting the petitioner club to change/replace players.

Counsel for the Petitioners: SRI MIR OMER KHAN

Counsel for the Respondent No.1: GP FOR SPORTS

Counsel for the Respondent Nos.2 to 4: SRI V.RAJENDER RAO, SC FOR HCA

The Court made the following: ORDER

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE FOR THE STATE OF
TELANGANA
HON'BLE SRI JUSTICE NAGESH BHEEMAPAKA**

WRIT PETITION No. 35135 OF 2025

20.02.2026

Between:

Sahebzada Azmath Ali Khan & another

..... Petitioners

And

The State of Telangana,
Rep. by its Principal Secretary,
Youth Services & Sports,
Hyderabad and others

..... Respondents

ORDER:

The case of Petitioners is that Petitioner No.2 - Deccan Arsenal Cricket Club, is an affiliated member club of Respondent No.4 - Hyderabad Cricket Association. Petitioner No.2 is a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, bearing Registration No.540 of 2014. The Hyderabad Cricket Association is itself a registered association under the A.P. (Telangana Areas) Public Societies Registration Act, 1350 Fasli, bearing Registration No.207 of 1961, governed by its registered bye-laws. It is stated that the offices of Respondent Nos.2 and 3

are situated at Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Uppal, Hyderabad.

1.1. It is contended that Respondent No.2 is the Apex Council/Managing Committee of the Hyderabad Cricket Association represented by its Secretary, and Respondent No.3 is the Chief Executive Officer of Respondent No.4 Association. Petitioner No.2 is a General Body Member club of the Hyderabad Cricket Association and has been regularly participating in league matches, knockouts, Annual General Meetings, Special General Meetings and all other tournaments, affairs, meetings, functions, activities and matches conducted or organized by the Hyderabad Cricket Association.

1.2. It is pleaded that owing to repeated interference by the respondents in the internal management and affairs of member clubs, several clubs were constrained to approach this Court by filing writ petitions against Respondent Nos.2 to 4. This Court, by orders dated 28.04.2023 in WP No.12651 of 2023, dated 01.08.2022 in WP Nos.26831 of 2022, 26842 of 2022 and 26840 of 2022, granted relief to such clubs, thereby enabling them to secure their rightful opportunities. Petitioners assert that such judicial intervention demonstrates a pattern of

interference by respondents necessitating recourse to writ jurisdiction.

1.3. It is also contended, during the league season 2024-25, petitioner club itself was constrained to file WP No. 19252 of 2024, wherein interim direction as prayed for was granted, thereby permitting petitioner club to participate in two-day leagues, knockouts, Annual General Meetings or Special General Meetings, other meetings, functions, activities, matches and tournaments conducted or organized by the Hyderabad Cricket Association and the BCCI. The said order was duly complied with by respondents and the said Writ Petition was thereafter, closed.

1.4. It is contended that for the season 2025-26, petitioner club participated in league matches conducted by the Hyderabad Cricket Association from 02.07.2025 to 02.09.2025. Thereafter, no matches were conducted. Though the Hyderabad Cricket Association informed all clubs through SMS that the remaining matches would be rescheduled, such rescheduling occurred after a gap of 43 days. During the interregnum of 43 days between the first schedule and the rescheduled matches, respondents conducted matches for Under-16, Under-19,

Under-23 and Ranji categories and selected various teams to represent the State on behalf of the Hyderabad Cricket Association. Due to such selections, players who were not selected lost interest in continuing league participation, resulting in their unavailability to play or participate in further match, on behalf of petitioner club.

1.5. Petitioners stated that the Hyderabad Cricket Association issued Notification dated 26.06.2025 for B Division 2-Day League Championship 2025-26. As per Rule 3(C)(a) of the said Notification, each club is permitted to register a maximum of 18 players and a minimum of 12 players were required to be registered on or before 12.07.2024. As per Rule 3(C)(b), remaining players could be registered up to 24 hours prior to the match schedule. It is specifically contended that the above Notification, styled as a tournament structure, was neither sanctioned by the Apex Council of Respondent No.2 nor approved by the General Body of Respondent No.4 as required through an agenda and resolution. Therefore, Petitioners contend that the said Notification is arbitrary, *ultra vires*, unenforceable and un-implementable,

1.6. Petitioners submit that the following players were concerned:

(i) Player bearing Registration No.HCAS00865, Sudeep Dhali, Aadhaar No. 297814469519, was registered;

(ii) Player bearing Registration No.HCAU00046, Umar Prawez, Aadhaar No.345141167784, applied for registration, but the website reflected his status as "verification withheld";

(iii) Player bearing Registration No.HCAM00932, Mohd. Faisal Alvi, Aadhaar No.521862958019, was registered.

It is pleaded that two registered players, namely Sudeep Dhali and Mohd. Faisal Alvi, did not participate in any league matches and were unavailable after registration. The third player, Umar Prawez, was not registered and continued to show "verification withheld". It is asserted that several other players were similarly disinclined to participate in further matches, rendering petitioner club absolutely incapacitated, crippled and impaired from participating in the remaining matches of the season conducted by respondents.

1.7. Petitioners also state that Rule 1 to Rule 8 do not bar replacement of players who are not registered, whose verification is withheld, or who have not played any matches. Reliance is placed on Rule 7(c), which provides that any team

forfeiting more than two matches shall be removed from the remainder of the leagues. Respondents 2 and 3 were not permitting players to participate, hence, none player filed Writ Petition No. 29777 of 2025. By order dated 06.09.2025, this Court directed Respondents 2 to 4 to allow petitioner therein to apply for private teams as well. It is stated, petitioner club has no contractual binding or enforceable right to compel its players to participate in league or other matches. Players may be unavailable due to examinations, participation in private tournaments or lack of future selections after the present matches, thereby losing interest. In such circumstances, refusal by the Hyderabad Cricket Association to permit replacement of unwilling or unavailable players, especially when one player's verification is withheld and others have not played any matches, would defeat petitioner's right to participate.

1.8. It is pleaded that petitioner club applied for replacement of players solely to ensure availability of eleven players to participate in matches, failing which, under Rule 7, petitioner club would suffer forfeiture. However, staff, CEO and the Apex Council neither reflected the players as registered nor acted upon petitioner's request. It is contended that refusal to

allow replacement renders petitioner club crippled and incapable of participating in competitive matches due to exigencies beyond its control. Petitioners assert that they applied to register additional players only to make up the permissible maximum of 18 players and that petitioner club has an absolute right and choice to replace players to field a strong and competitive team.

1.9. It is further pleaded that respondents, by preventing petitioner club from selecting and managing its own players, were crippling its vested right to participate in competitions. Consequently, petitioner club was constrained to file Writ Petition No. 32177 of 2025 seeking directions to permit registration and replacement of players for B Division 2-Day League matches, knockouts, playoffs and other matches. By order dated 27.10.2025, interim direction was granted and recording the submission of respondents that interim order was implemented, Writ Petition was closed.

1.10. Petitioners state that notwithstanding the aforesaid orders and the respondents' statement of compliance, Notification dated 26.06.2025 governing the B Division 2-Day Championship applies uniformly to the entire season, including

league phase, knockout matches and championship phase. It is contended that respondents themselves have been applying the said common rules to all matches, including leagues, knockouts, playoffs and other tournaments conducted by the Hyderabad Cricket Association.

1.11. It is pleaded that when petitioners, pursuant to the order in Writ Petition No. 32177 of 2025 dated 17.11.2025, sought to register and replace players for upcoming matches, respondents deliberately kept the website inaccessible. When petitioners approached the staff, they were directed to contact the CEO who contended that the order in Writ Petition No. 32177 of 2025 was confined to "league" matches and would not be implemented for knockouts, playoffs or other matches. Despite the petitioner explaining that the terminology used was part of the Notification dated 26.06.2025 and applied uniformly, the CEO remained adamant and refused to comply. Even though the Joint Secretary agreed that league season encompassed league matches, knockouts and playoffs, the CEO persisted in refusing compliance. Petitioners state that if respondents continue to preclude petitioner club from replacing players, petitioner's right to participate would stand defeated.

The continued inaction in not registering players is asserted to be capricious, unlawful, arbitrary, illegal and *mala fide*.

2. Respondent No.4 filed a detailed counter as well as an additional counter affidavit opposing the Writ Petition. It is contended that the present Writ Petition is not maintainable in law, as Petitioners have an efficacious and alternate remedy under the Hyderabad Cricket Association Rules and Regulations, 2018. Reliance is placed on Rules 40 and 41 of the said Rules, which provide for adjudication of disputes by an independent Ombudsman. It is submitted that petitioner, being an affiliated club and a general body member of the Hyderabad Cricket Association, is mandatorily required to invoke the dispute resolution mechanism before the Ombudsman instead of approaching this Court under Article 226 of the Constitution.

2.1. It is further contended that as per Rule 41 of the HCA Rules, 2018, disputes relating to the staff of the Association are also required to be referred to the Ombudsman. Reliance is placed on the Minutes of the Apex Council Meeting dated 08.08.2025, which expressly record that disputes between or among the Hyderabad Cricket Association, its members, TTL franchisees and cricket players shall automatically be referred

to the Ombudsman. Since petitioner club, admittedly, is an affiliated member club which had participated in leagues, knockouts, Annual General Meetings and other tournaments, respondents assert that petitioner has a clear and adequate alternate remedy which has been deliberately bypassed.

2.2. According to respondents, petitioners have intentionally avoided the Ombudsman mechanism with the sole objective of preventing adjudication of disputed factual issues, including player eligibility, registrations, inter-club transfers and compliance with tournament regulations, all of which require factual scrutiny and verification and cannot be adjudicated in writ proceedings. Respondent No.4 issued the Notification dated 26.06.2025 governing the B-Division 2-Day League Championship for 2025-26. The said Notification lays down the rules, regulations and guidelines governing the conduct of the tournament, including player registration, transfers and eligibility. Respondents rely heavily on Clause 3(C) of the Notification, which provides general guidelines for player registration.

2.3. Respondents specifically rely upon Rule 3(C), which permits each club to register a maximum of 18 players,

mandates that a minimum of 12 players must be registered by 03.07.2025 at 5:00 PM to participate in the first round, and permits registration of remaining players up to 24 hours before a match. The rule further restricts transfers of players who have played matches, prohibits transfers between divisions or formats, and places responsibility on the Club Secretary to verify player eligibility and domicile status. It is contended that a plain reading of Rule 3(C) clearly establishes that transfer of registered players who have played matches is prohibited, transfers across divisions or formats are impermissible, and transfers between divisions are completely barred. In light of these binding Rules, respondents assert that the relief sought by petitioners seeking registration and replacement of players at the knockout stage wholly contrary to the governing regulations and violates the principle of fairness.

2.4. Respondents submit that the directions sought by petitioner would compel the Association to permit player registration without undertaking mandatory verification of documents, determination of whether players are already registered with other clubs, examination of whether players are participating in different formats or divisions, and verification of

eligibility. Such a course, according to the respondents, would undermine the regulatory framework governing the tournament.

2.5. It is further contended that petitioner club has already registered more than the permissible limit of 18 players. As per the documents appended by petitioners itself, the club has registered 19 players, which is in direct violation of Rule 3(C)(a). Despite having exceeded the permissible limit, petitioner is now seeking further replacement of players at the knockout stage. It is stated, petitioner has only produced declaration forms for two players, namely G. Mohith Raj and D. Joel Johnson, without producing any documents evidencing their eligibility under the Notification dated 26.06.2025. The records reveal that both these players were earlier registered with Universal Cricket Club and SN Group Cricket Club respectively, which are C-Division teams, thereby demonstrating an impermissible attempt to transfer players across divisions.

2.6. According to respondents, the Writ Petition is riddled with inconsistencies and self-contradictions. On the one hand, petitioner describes Respondent No.4 as a formal and unnecessary party, on the other hand, seeks substantive reliefs against the same respondent. Similarly, while challenging the

validity of the Notification dated 26.06.2025 as *ultra vires* and unenforceable, petitioner simultaneously relies upon the same notification to seek relief. It is asserted that allowing new players to be introduced mid-tournament would seriously prejudice other teams that have complied with the rules and deadlines. All the teams prepare strategies and combinations based on the originally registered squads and permitting replacements at the knockout stage would confer unfair competitive advantage, disrupt predictability and compromise the integrity of the competition.

2.7. It is further contended that registration and verification process exists to ensure age compliance, domicile authenticity and disciplinary oversight. Permitting replacements without adherence to this process would amount to backdoor entry of players, weaken administrative discipline and burden the Association by discriminating against clubs that have acted in good faith. On merits, respondents deny the allegation that the inaction complained of is arbitrary, unlawful or violative of Articles 14 or 21 of the Constitution. It is contended that unavailability of players and loss of interest on the part of

certain players cannot be attributed to the Association and is a consequence of the petitioner club's own decisions.

2.8. It is asserted that selection of players for Under-16, Under-19, Under-23 and Ranji teams was based solely on performance and cannot be construed as a cause for player disinterest. Petitioner's inability to field players is therefore, not attributable to any act or omission of the respondents. It is specifically denied that Rules permit replacement of players in the manner sought by petitioner. Respondents assert that petitioner failed to demonstrate that players sought to be registered are unregistered, withheld or have not played any matches, and the allegations in this regard are described as bald and unsubstantiated. It is denied that refusal to permit replacement defeats petitioner's right to participate. Once petitioners exercised their right to register players at the commencement of the league, they cannot subsequently seek replacement of players whom it itself selected and registered.

2.9. Respondents further deny that Writ Petition No. 32177 of 2025 supports petitioner's case. It is contended that both the interim and final prayers in the said writ petition were expressly limited to league matches and did not extend to

championship or knockout phases. Therefore, the orders passed therein cannot be relied upon to claim replacement rights for knockouts or playoffs. It is contended that the Notification dated 26.06.2025 clearly demarcates league phase, championship phase and knockout matches, and the earlier interim order cannot be interpreted to override this structure or permit fresh registration of players beyond the league phase.

3. In the additional counter-affidavit, respondents further contend that Writ Petition is liable to be dismissed for lack of *locus standi*. It is asserted that Petitioner No.1 has no valid authorization to represent Deccan Arsenal Cricket Club. According to the Association records, the club is owned by Mr. Moim Patel, and the Writ Petition filed by Mr. Sahebzada Azmath Ali Khan claiming to be acting President is without valid authorization. It is further contended that petitioner club, having registered players beyond the permitted limit, secured the last position in the B-Division league matches and is now attempting to replace a substantial number of players at the knockout stage to avoid demotion and gain unfair advantage.

3.1. Respondents allege *mala fides* in filing the present Writ Petition, pointing out that while petitioners initially sought

replacement of two players, it later sought replacement of ten players by Memo dated 16.12.2025, which would effectively amount to changing the entire team at the knockout stage. It is also asserted that certain players sought to be registered, including Ahmed Khan and Mohammed Samad, were already registered with Sunshine Cricket Club and Manchester Cricket Club respectively for the current season, rendering them ineligible under Rule 3(C) of the notification. Respondents reiterate that fresh registrations after the league stage are impermissible and that players who were not registered for the season cannot be permitted to directly participate in knockout matches. It is finally contended that petitioners, having voluntarily registered its squad in accordance with the Rules at the commencement of the season, cannot now seek indulgence from this Court to override the regulatory framework.

4. In the rejoinder filed by Petitioners, all the allegations, averments and contentions raised in the counter affidavit and additional counter affidavit filed on behalf of Respondent No.4 are categorically denied as false, baseless, concocted and misleading, save and except those expressly admitted. It is asserted that counters have been filed with an

intent to mislead this Court and to scuttle the legitimate rights of the petitioner club. Petitioners contend that bye-laws of the Hyderabad Cricket Association have statutory force, having been framed pursuant to the directions issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court through Justice R.M. Lodha Committee, comprising three former Judges of the Supreme Court, namely Justice R.M. Lodha, Justice Ashok Bhan and Justice R.V. Raveendran. The recommendations of Lodha Committee were accepted by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Civil Appeal No.4235 of 2014.

4.1. It is further pleaded that pursuant to the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court and the orders passed by the Division Bench of High Court of Telangana in PIL No.16 of 2017 dated 12.09.2018, administrators were appointed to carry out amendments to the bye-laws of the Hyderabad Cricket Association. Accordingly, the corrected bye-laws were registered on 12.12.2018 as "Registration of corrected bye-laws of HCA". It is asserted that these bye-laws, having been framed under judicial supervision, possess binding statutory character. It is asserted, as per Bye-law No.44 of the Hyderabad Cricket Association, the Association can sue or be sued only through its

Secretary. The Chief Executive Officer has no authority under the bye-laws to depose, file affidavits or represent the Association in judicial proceedings. No resolution of the General Body or the Apex Council authorizing the CEO to file the counter has been produced. Consequently, counter and additional counter filed by the CEO are asserted to be incompetent, *non est* and liable to be ignored.

4.2. With regard to the objection relating to availability of alternative remedy, Petitioners specifically rely upon Rules 40 and 41 of the bye-laws to contend that Ombudsman mechanism is intended for disputes *inter se* members or between members and the Association. It is asserted that the present grievance does not involve any inter-member dispute, but pertains to the failure of the respondents to act in accordance with statutory bye-laws and judicial orders.

4.3. Petitioners submit that the relief sought is a command to enforce compliance with bye-laws and prior judicial orders and therefore, falls squarely within the jurisdiction of this Court under Article 226 of the Constitution. It is contended that the Ombudsman mechanism is not attracted in cases involving violation of statutory bye-laws and constitutional

rights. It is contended that the order passed in Writ Petition No. 32177 of 2025 was a consent order, was implemented by the respondents and was never challenged in Appeal. Consequently, respondents are estopped from taking a contrary stand in the present Writ Petition. They assert that principles of *res judicata* under Section 11 CPC and estoppel under Section 115 of the Indian Evidence Act squarely apply.

4.4. Petitioners deny respondents' contention that the earlier Writ Petition was limited only to league matches. It is pleaded that Notification dated 26.06.2025 treats league phase, knockout phase and championship phase as part of one composite tournament structure, governed by common Rules. Therefore, the attempt to confine the earlier order to league matches alone is described as artificial, untenable and contrary to the record. It is further contended that despite applying the same notification and rules uniformly for league matches, knockouts and playoffs, respondents selectively refused to permit petitioner to implement the earlier order for knockout and playoff matches. Such selective application of rules is asserted to be arbitrary and discriminatory.