

ICC making progress on tests for suspect bowling

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(AP)—The International Cricket Council is a step closer to introducing biomechanical testing for bowlers with suspect delivery actions in match conditions.

The ICC and the Marylebone Cricket Club, the traditional custodian of the game, are working with an Australian scientific consortium to develop technology which can be worn during matches by bowlers who have been reported for suspect bowling actions.

[Biochemist](#) Marc Portus, who is leading the project, told Australian media the technology—similar to that used in [IPads](#) and [car crash](#) impact detection systems—could be ready for use in first-class matches within two years.

Bowlers who competed in the under-19 World Cup have tested the technology at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. It uses sensors on either side of the elbow joint to measure the degree of elbow flexion, with details transmitted wirelessly to scientists in the stadium or practice facilities.

"Testing in a lab does bring some limitations, and one of them is that it's very hard to recreate the environment of elite match play," Portus told the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper. "With words exchanged between players, a batter getting on top of a bowler, when it's hot on day five of a test match and you need two wickets to win, it's almost impossible to recreate that in a lab environment.

"So this is a way to bridge that gap."

Portus said using the technology would help identify problems at a junior level so a bowling action can be corrected before a player gets anywhere close to international cricket.

The ICC said the second stage of the three-phase project will conclude late next year and is concerned with the technology's measurement methods and precision against current laboratory conditions. The last phase will start in 2014 and focus on making the technology more comfortable for players as well as maximizing [wireless data transmission](#)

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"The ICC is keen to see this technology implemented in elite cricket and believes it will be a significant stride forward in detecting illegal bowling actions in match conditions," ICC chief executive David Richardson said.

Illegal bowling actions, relating to bending and straightening the arm beyond defined limits and often referred to as 'throwing' or 'chucking,' have long caused controversies and involved some of the biggest names in the game.

Muttiah Muralitharan, who retired with a world record 800 test wickets, underwent extensive testing as debate swirled about his unusual delivery action.

In 2004, he went to Perth, Australia, for extensive tests under laboratory conditions to determine if his action was legal. The eventual report contained meticulous analysis of the movement of his wrist, forearm, elbow and shoulder as he bowled.

The conclusion was that because of a congenital deformity of the elbow

and Muralitharan's unusually quick arm speed, what looked like a throw, was in fact an optical illusion.

In calls which almost curtailed his career, Muralitharan was twice no-balled in Australia for throwing—once in a test and once in a one-day international—during Sri Lanka's 1995-96 tour. His bowling action was cleared again by the ICC in 1999, after he had been no-balled on the 1998-99 tour of Australia. His doosra—a delivery that turns the other way—was also questioned in 2004.

Muralitharan said his career nearly ended after the 1995-96 controversy and that he even considered switching to legspin bowling.

But when he retired, he said that he had replied to all his critics through technology and testing, saying it was unfair to judge the legality of a bowler's action using the naked eye.

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