

# Women's Premier league



## WEEKLY LEARNINGS 2023

Weekly Learnings 9 / 2023

It was good to see the women's premier league – WPL start this week. This is an idea whose time has come, and this will be big in the coming years. I was involved with IPL in some capacity or the other for the first decade and I am pulling learnings from that experience as I see WPL.

1. When IPL started in 2008, no one was sure that it would work the way it has. A lot of credit must be given to Lalit Modi for convincing owners to invest in the franchises. This was his dream, and it went from strength to strength. He spent a lot of time getting the right sponsors at the start since he didn't want the league to be devalued because of second tier sponsors.
2. IPL was like a 4-hour movie – it had action, drama, and film stars in attendance. We had three film stars at their marches – Shah Rukh Khan, Preity Zinta and Shilpa Shetty. IPL attracted a lot of women for this very reason. In some matches we saw 40% women in attendance. The 4 pm matches were tough on spectators but the 8 pm matches were a sellout.
3. The initial IPL had Shane Warne and Adam Gilchrist as international captains, this WPL has three international women leading their sides. This will change in a few years, and it will soon be all Indians leading the teams.
4. Most owners think they know the game and are actively and minutely involved with team decisions. I am not sure this is true or needed. I hope WPL will be different.
5. The IPL eco system evolved over the years, coaches, media, support staff etc. The same will happen with WPL. Success will happen when local language feed attracts viewers. It was good to see to see an all-women's broadcast team with Harsha and Shastri providing literally the back up. It clearly showed that the women broadcast talent is there.
6. The EPL (Football) started in 1992 as a breakaway group and women's PL started in 2010- 18 years later. In the case of cricket, it has started 15 years after IPL.
7. Each of these teams has the standard TV commercials etc. urging the fans and the team. I remember an insightful comment Shah Rukh Khan made at the unveiling of the 'Karbo jeetbo Ladbo' song for KKR. He said that women's theme songs or women led songs don't work in sports and he was so right. Both Preity and Shilpa did their songs /war cries, but they never registered.

8. The IPL initially had a lot of non-cricket activity like after game party etc. which attracted a lot of unwarranted crowd and comment. Luckily that has been done away with and that's not a feature of WPL.
9. The WPL stars will be role models very soon. This will spur grassroots women's cricket. The WPL stars' hairstyles, tattoos and dressing style will be copied and will become big.
10. Athleticism will improve with the WPL. Fast bowlers will come in as this is an obvious gap. The strokes and the big hits are already there in the first match.
11. WPL will be a big event at a social level in India when people see women playing cricket on a large stage and millions following them. I think this will be a significant moment in the empowerment of women in India. This will be a game changer.
12. In the first match, I didn't see more women in the stadium, I don't know if this will change, or we will continue to see men coming for the live matches. This is something the organizers and teams should try and do differently.

Every game has players who are characters for people to flock the stadium and WPL will be no different. Attitude will come in. Fans will crystalize after a few months or years. Fans love their team to win. The first winner of WPL will get a strong fan base in two months. It is early to say which teams will have the best following.

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06 March 2023