

# ITV buys IPL cricket rights

Broadcaster to air 59 live matches on ITV4 from mid-March

- [Mark Sweney](#)
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Indian Premier League: Balachandra Akhil of Royal Challengers. Photograph: Luigi Bennett/Sports Inc/PA Photos

Cricket is to return to [ITV](#) for the first time in more than 30 years after the broadcaster acquired rights to this year's Indian Premier League competition.

The deal will see the broadcaster air 59 of 60 live matches on ITV4. The [IPL](#) starts on 12 March and runs for 45 days.

Coverage will be presented by Matt Smith with Bollywood actress and presenter Mandira Bedi who hosted Cricket World Cup coverage in India.

The IPL will also have a specialist section on the [ITV.com](http://ITV.com) website and has the right to webcast matches. The tournament will be supported by a prominent marketing campaign on ITV. In the UK, the rights were previously held by pay-TV service Setanta, which collapsed last year.

The missing match is likely to be the second of two on Sunday 4 April, Delhi Daredevils vs Bangalore Royal Challengers in Delhi. This clashes with British Touring Car racing from Thruxton, which ITV4 had already committed to show.

In January, YouTube struck a deal to [webcast live IPL matches globally](#).

The IPL, which is an eight-team tournament of Twenty20 cricket, includes players such as Sachin Tendulkar, Shane Warne, Jacques Kallis and Chris Gayle. English players participating in this season's tournament include Kevin Pietersen, Eoin Morgan, Ravi Bopara and Owais Shah.

"In only two years, the Indian Premier League has already established itself as one of the world's most high-profile and exciting sports events which attracts some of the very best cricketers from around the globe," said the ITV director of digital channels and acquisitions, Zai Bennett. "It is an exciting acquisition for one of the UK's fastest growing digital channels and we're delighted to be able to offer the whole tournament free-to-air to our viewers."

The chairman and commissioner of the IPL, Lalit Modi, said he was delighted the IPL tournament will be broadcast on a free-to-air channel.