



SPORTSWATCH Ashes to Ashes

By Quazi Zulquarnain Islam

WHEN I set out to write this week's article for SportsWatch, I considered making it an Ashes special. After all, it was perhaps the most hailed series of all time and turned out to be one, which not only met all expectations but exceeded them by a distance. Things like this rarely happens in a series of this magnitude, what with so much at stake. This is THE ASHES after all, the oldest rivalry in cricket and the animosity of sorts between the team runs deep. Neither like losing to the other but poor old England had made it a habit almost over the past decade or so. However this time armed with a team miles better than most of their counterparts England set out to regain the Ashes from the men from Down Under. The stage was set. Who would it be that stepped up to the plate?

And so it happened, that almost eighteen years after a Mike Gatting captained England side took the Ashes, this new one inspired by Andrew Flintoff and co. and led by Michael Vaughan snatched the holy grail from the Australians. There was no doubt about the intensity of the cricket on display. What amazed most were the quality and the competitiveness of both teams. Australia, usually head and shoulders above the rest, found themselves calling upon all their experience and guile to bail them out of situations that they had rarely found themselves in before. While the English led from the front by all rounder Flintoff and Pietreson bludgeoned the Australian attack, the Aussies were strangely subdued and found it tough going against the pace trio of Harmison, Jones and Hoggard. Of course, Australia had their stars as well.

And many would still argue that had Glenn McGrath not been out of two of the five Test's the result of the series might yet have been much different. But to take nothing away from England who played out of their skins. Brett Lee showed his class and stepped up when it mattered most terrorizing the English with his fast bowling. Shaun Tait was a bright spot in an otherwise disappointing tour for the pacers as he proved himself to be a long term successor. However, the real accolades should go to Shane Warne- the ultimate consummate professional. With his private life in tatters, Warne produced a performance to rival his best haunting the English with his variety and experience. He may be in the twilight of his career now but there is a reason he was named among the top five Wisden cricketers of the century.

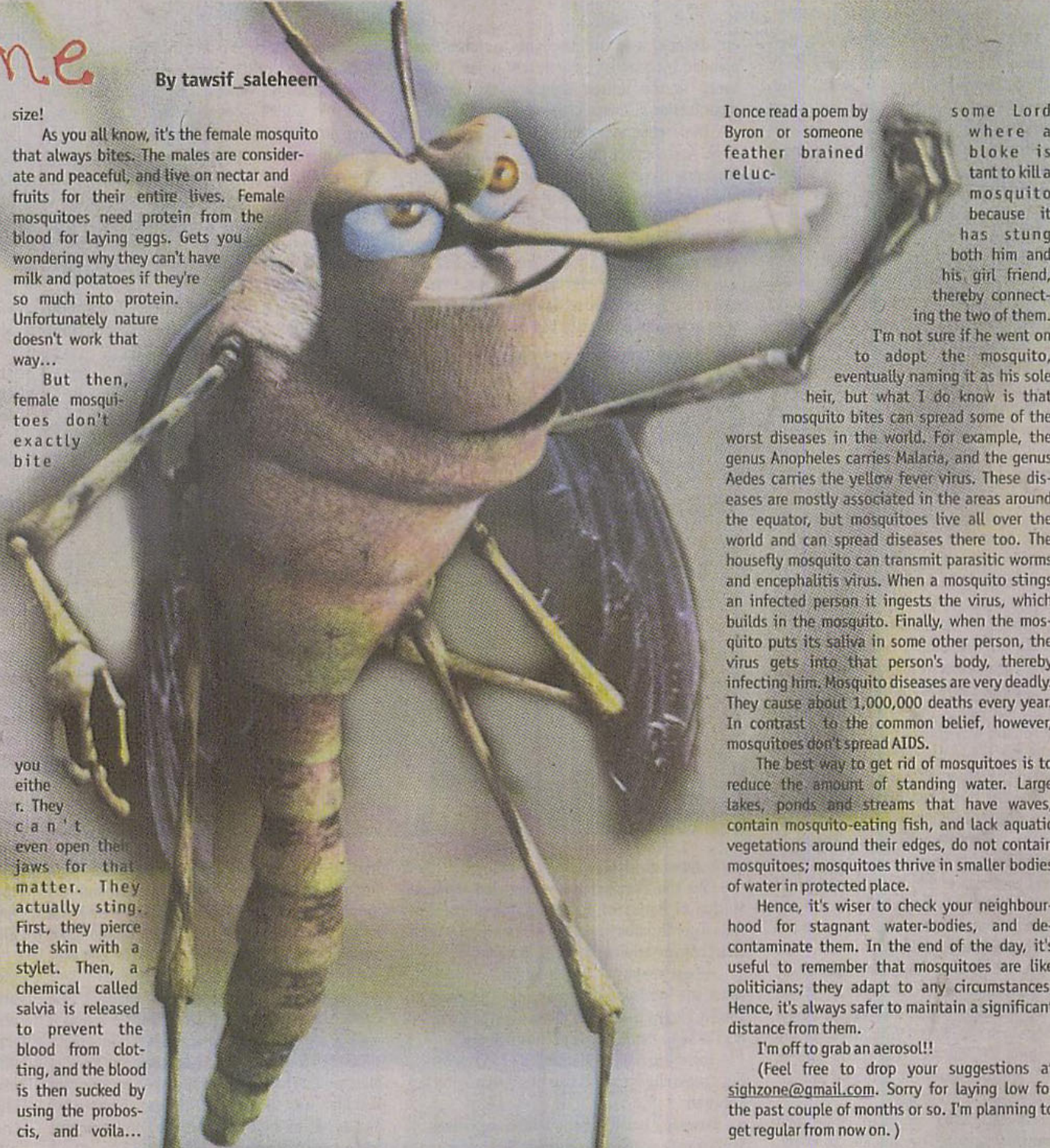
Strangely what led the Aussies down was their much vaunted batting which did not click until the last Test. Martyn, Hayden and most importantly Glichrist all failed to produce and the toll fell on Ricky Ponting. He responded well, just not well enough. Many feel now that the Australian team has passed their prime, further evidence of which will be available in the recent super series of cricket. In the end however Geoffery Boycott summed the Ashes up in a single sentence. He may have exaggerated a bit but there was no doubt as to where is feelings lay when he said. "Australia came to England as the number one team in the world. They left as number two." I see it turned out to be an Ashes special after all! (Direct your mails to zulquarnain.islam@gmail.com)

Sci Zone

By tawsif_saleheen

I feel like Braveheart every time I kill a mosquito. No kidding. The sacred art of killing a mosquito has indeed all the trace elements of a perfect revenge plot. Imagine yourself prancing around the Hawaii with all the Hollywood hotties drooling over you. Suddenly, Jessica Alba jumps out from nowhere and bites your toe! You wake up with a start, only to realize that your toe is indeed swollen and itching, and Jessica Alba has somehow turned into a big fat mosquito!! Suddenly, it all becomes clear to you. You were having the best dream of your life, and that darn mosquito has ruined it all. Anger ripples through your body, and your eyes glisten with revenge. You place your hand in a 'pre-clap' position (a lethal kata they don't usually teach at the martial arts), and dash at the unsuspecting mosquito with all your strength. Blood for blood, as they say. In that particular moment the only difference between you and Braveheart is that he wears a skirt and you don't! Sorry folks! I know Sci Zone is back after quite a while, and I should find a decent topic if not exactly an intellectual one. It's just that mosquitoes have been bothering me a lot lately. My dad is at the verge of going bankrupt buying mosquito coils and aerosols, and even those don't help. For some weird reason, they've introduced jasmine flavour in the mosquito-coils. Now every time I light one, mosquitoes think I'm inviting them for an aromatherapy session. More flock in. Talking of mosquito repellants, I've come to hear that the repellants don't exactly repel the mosquitoes, let alone kill them. The repellants basically hide you from the sensor of a mosquito. So the wee vampire don't even realize that you're there, thus leaving you alone. According to biologists, mosquitoes used to be much bigger in size millions of years ago. In fact it used to be three times as large as it is today, which makes one hell of a mosquito. I don't know about you, but I myself wouldn't fancy a bite from one of those! However, the proboscis (i.e. the straw a mosquito uses to suck blood from its prey) was three times smaller than the proboscis today, which posed a fair bit of a problem. So, over the years the mosquitoes evolved in a way so that they fit better bit in their environment, not to mention their food habits. Hence, they shrank three times smaller and their proboscis tripled in

size! As you all know, it's the female mosquito that always bites. The males are considerate and peaceful, and live on nectar and fruits for their entire lives. Female mosquitoes need protein from the blood for laying eggs. Gets you wondering why they can't have milk and potatoes if they're so much into protein. Unfortunately nature doesn't work that way... But then, female mosquitoes don't exactly bite you either. They can't even open their jaws for that matter. They actually sting. First, they pierce the skin with a stylet. Then, a chemical called salvia is released to prevent the blood from clotting, and the blood is then sucked by using the proboscis, and voila...



Once read a poem by Byron or someone feather brained reluctant some Lord where a bloke is tant to kill a mosquito because it has stung both him and his girl friend, thereby connecting the two of them. I'm not sure if he went on to adopt the mosquito, eventually naming it as his sole heir, but what I do know is that mosquito bites can spread some of the worst diseases in the world. For example, the genus Anopheles carries Malaria, and the genus Aedes carries the yellow fever virus. These diseases are mostly associated in the areas around the equator, but mosquitoes live all over the world and can spread diseases there too. The housefly mosquito can transmit parasitic worms and encephalitis virus. When a mosquito stings an infected person it ingests the virus, which builds in the mosquito. Finally, when the mosquito puts its saliva in some other person, the virus gets into that person's body, thereby infecting him. Mosquito diseases are very deadly. They cause about 1,000,000 deaths every year. In contrast to the common belief, however, mosquitoes don't spread AIDS. The best way to get rid of mosquitoes is to reduce the amount of standing water. Large lakes, ponds and streams that have waves, contain mosquito-eating fish, and lack aquatic vegetations around their edges, do not contain mosquitoes; mosquitoes thrive in smaller bodies of water in protected place. Hence, it's wiser to check your neighbourhood for stagnant water-bodies, and decontaminate them. In the end of the day, it's useful to remember that mosquitoes are like politicians; they adapt to any circumstances. Hence, it's always safer to maintain a significant distance from them. I'm off to grab an aerosol!! (Feel free to drop your suggestions at sighzone@gmail.com. Sorry for laying low for the past couple of months or so. I'm planning to get regular from now on.)