We lost only to 'die another day'!


Asrar Chowdhury

"THE day the music died" in Cricket for me was when the Prince of the Caribbean, Brian Charles Lara, said goodbye. And with him I said "Goodbye Miss [Cricket] Pie"! I have not watched a Bangladeshi cricket match for a long time. Watching two in a row was never on the cards. Watching Bangladesh make its way into the Finals of the Tri-Nation Cricket Series, evoked the romanticism of Cricket in my heart like it did in 1990 when one Brian Charles Lara said that he had arrived with 44 runs, before the spin wizard Abdul Qadir put an end to his debut Test innings!

After the Zimbabwe debacle, it was almost obvious that Bangladesh was entering into another phase of its so-familiar hibernation at the beginning of 2009. Surprisingly, that was not to be. The way Bangladesh performed in their group match against Sri Lanka made one believe that this team may have finally come of age. Then reading between the lines, one sees a familiar picture- the bowlers and the fielders were responsible for the victory more than the top-order batsmen.

There has never been question about the talent of our batsmen. The question has always been about their temperament. We are used to throwing wickets in the process of flashing our bats outside the off stump at crucial stages of an innings or just when a partnership is about to be set. Our bowlers and fielders are the ones who bail us out, but then they are only as good as the duration our batsman can keep their bails on their wickets.

In the final match Bangladesh once again found herself in familiar waters. The mirage of victory in the previous match against the same opponent quickly evaporated. The top-order failed to make an impression. Rokibul and Mahmudullah brought some respectability by dragging the innings close to the 50th over. In the end, 152 runs were all we could muster.

Such a paltry target would never be enough against a different Sri Lanka team in the final. Then sun shone on Bangladesh from the word go as Sakib sent Jayasuriya back to the pavilion with a brilliant run out on the very first ball of the innings. Bangladesh created a world record by sending the first five opponent batsmen back to the pavilion with only 6 runs on the board. It was difficult to predict if it was a mirage. Again it was the bowlers and the fielders who did the damage.

The test was not if we could win. Rather how well we could defend only 152 runs. And we did it very well. It was not until Sakib removed Sangakara and Kulasekara in his penultimate over that a victory was really on the cards. Many may blame Ashraful for what followed next. But then in hindsight Ashraful made the right move. He had to gamble. Rubel Hossain had cleared the same Lankan tail in his second spell in the previous match. This time however Lady Luck did not smile at Rubel. The best of the best bowlers have met the fate Rubel did on that day. It just was not our day.

For once we can celebrate a Bangladesh loss in cricket. It is not everyday that we see Bangladesh play like Tigers for two matches on the trot. And play consistently against the odds. The aspiration of each individual to do well showed in the body language of the Team. This is welcoming. Then again the consistently inconsistent performance of our top-order batsmen is one aspect the Team has to address. We cannot always depend on our lower order batsmen and our bowlers to bail us out.

Good performance is as contagious as bad performance. One can only hope the Team spirit we saw grows bolder and bolder as 2009 unfolds. If it does, the elusive victories will come. It will only be a matter of time. Our greatest asset is the exuberance of youth. Hopefully 2009 will be a big year for Bangladesh Cricket. For the time being let's celebrate a good overall performance of the Bangladesh Cricket Team. In the end we lost only to 'die another day'!

(Writer is a university academic)

Funny Cricket Quotes

"Cricket civilizes people and creates good gentlemen I want everyone to play cricket in Zimbabwe; I want ours to be a nation of gentlemen"
- Robert Mugabe

"Baseball has the great advantage over cricket of being ended sooner." - George Bernard Shaw

If the Poms bat first, let's tell the taxi to wait.
- Australian fans' banner (1995)

That ball went so high it could have got an air hostess down with it. - Sidhu

The gap between bat and pad is so wide you could have driven a car through. - Sidhu

Anybody can pilot a ship when the sea is calm. - Sidhu

Statistics are like miniskirts, they reveal more than what they hide. - Sidhu

The pitch is as dead as a dodo. - Sidhu

One, who doesn't throw the dice, can never expect to score a six. - Sidhu

Wickets are like wives - you never know which way they will turn! - Sidhu