

## BEYOND THE BOUNDARY

Cricket  
Conundrum

SHAKIL KASEM

The big screen at the Dhaka Club lounge was watched intently by 3 waiters, and two members, among them yours truly. Pakistan in a bit of a bother with 3 wickets down and not many on the board. But one was reasonably certain even at that stage that the Kenyans, keen as they were, would eventually crack under the diverse means of harassment from the Pakistani middle order. The mind consequently began to wander. Several issues, as Henry Miller described it so eloquently, were like spears of query hurtling from the depths of heavens, demanding to be caught on the shield of the mind... Well almost.

Unabashed traditionalist as I am, I have no shame really in admitting that I have yet not reconciled myself to watching cricket the way it is being played now. Not for me the pansy pyjamas, the lights, the circles and the coloured balls, soon to be pink, I also hear. Good heavens, Mulligan! How did we get to where we are? Granted, it is somewhat of a fait accompli, ever since Kerry Packer introduced this concept like a cricketing cocaine that reduced the cricket world, players and administrators alike into a drug induced daze. Their resistance to this concept historically was but feeble. Sunil Gavaskar, wittingly or otherwise, struck a blow for the purists when he laboured all of sixty overs in the 1975 World Cup to score 36 of the most painful runs scored this side of the cricket canyon. By 1983 India had won the World Cup. By 1987, Gavaskar was well and truly a split cricketing personality, scoring his only one day hundred off only 87 balls. Pyjamas were here to stay.

Incorrigible romantic I may be, but unfocused I am most assuredly not. Quick click of the mental mouse and the mind immediately switched on to dwell on the prospects of Bangladesh versus Ireland. For good measure what of Netherlands against Bangladesh? Until today, the biggies had been pounding the Tiny Tims. But as every Tom, Dick and Abdul would vouch, the real business at hand would be when the contenders and the wannabes come head to head. The long dormant cricket brain struggled to place these two matches in their proper slots. Is Bangladesh in the same bracket as those on view so far, the Englands, the Australias, the Pakistans, the Sri Lankas? The Indias, the South Africas? Okay, the West Indies are struggling a bit these days, but still. The brain switched off with the reminder that it was more likely to be somewhat above Karwan Bazar and marginally lower than Agora.

Enter another cricket aficionado in distress, in the form of Kaiser Rahman. My partner in crime in local cricket many moons ago, but now gainfully engaged as hustler in the snooker room. Like all the rest of us he too is an armchair expert and critic, giving more credence to Mike Brearley's somewhat of an oxymoron; that of, cricket is a game which we learn to play when we are no longer able to. Kaiser and I took a leisurely, and somewhat depressing walk down memory lane that twisted and turned and crossed more than a few humped bridges over our muddy stream of cricket consciousness. Where did we end up, those flannelled fools with those green stains on our starched creams? The billowing full sleeved shirts buttoned at the wrists, the collar open and the neckline ensconced in a rakish scarf? When we never

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Bangladesh wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim addresses a press conference at the GP-BCB Academy Ground yesterday.

PHOTO:  
STAR

## 'We want revenge'

MOHAMMAD ISAM



There are two types of results a cricketer remembers for a long time. The first, of course, is when they slay a big fish, the tournament favourites. Nobody expects your team to win but you pull it off, making heroes out of players. But they also find it difficult to forget losing to smaller, lower-ranked teams. Mushfiqur Rahim, despite his quality as a batsman and wicketkeeping pluck, embodies every cricketer in that respect.

As much as Mushfiqur savours the India victory in the 2007 World Cup, he hardly forgot that Ireland defeat in the Super Eights. Six Tigers from the current World Cup squad were involved in that game which they lost by a whopping 74 runs in Barbados. Two years later, the same side beat the Tigers in the Twenty20 World Championships in England by six wickets and last year, the two sides drew a two-match series 1-1. The Tigers don't have to go too far to find inspiration against Ireland and Mushfiqur is doing exactly that, adding the 'R' word for effect.

"In the match against India (on Saturday) we looked back to 2007 to take inspiration. It is the same thing in our mind with the Ireland game. We had to draw 1-1 last year and we lost to them in the 2007 and 2009 World Cups so yes, we want to beat them and take revenge," said Mushfiqur when he talked to the media yesterday.

"Ireland are a good team but we will try to spoil their party and make sure that it is not the other way around," added a steely Mushfiqur.

The Barbados game was the first encounter between the two sides, the Tigers having one of those really bad days (Syed Rasel injured before the game, Mohammad Ashrafur hurt during the game). While the Twenty20 loss was blamed on then captain Ashrafur, the 7-wicket loss last year was mainly due to William Porterfield's brilliance.

But what the Tigers are banking on is the advantage of home conditions and the memory of having crushed Ireland 3-0 in 2008 and Mushfiqur thinks the Tigers have enough fire for retribution. "Ireland will be geared to perform here because they have come here after crossing a lot of hurdles to play the World Cup. But no matter how much they practice here, they will find it hard to cope with our world-class spinners," he said.

"We are expected to win against Zimbabwe so it is the same against Ireland. We will try to win and people will expect us to win. The pressure is the challenge to prove ourselves in big tournaments," added Mushfiqur, who made 25 off 30 balls against India in the World Cup opener.

"We have team goals and my personal goal is to play a long innings, if I get the chance. I want to be the highest contributor in the innings," he said, adding that he feels comfortable at two-drop. In six innings at No 4, Mushfiqur has a solitary fifty and averages 25-plus.

"I have played at No 4 a few times and done well. In this year's Premier League I have also batted at four and performed. I am confident and I want to score big," he said.

## Strauss sees positives

AFP, Nagpur



England captain Andrew Strauss hopes his side's unconvincing start to the World Cup will lull co-hosts India into a false sense of security for the blockbuster clash on Sunday.

The reigning World Twenty20 champions had just eight balls to spare in defeating the Netherlands by six wickets on Tuesday after a ragged bowling and fielding display that helped the Dutch notch 292 for six.

Essex all-rounder Ryan ten Doeschate cashed in with a career-best 119 before England, led by Strauss, who scored 88, managed to avert a major upset to match their

defeat at the hands of the Dutch at the 2009 World Twenty20.

"Hopefully India will take us lightly after this performance," Strauss told reporters at the VCA Ground in Nagpur.

"We generally raise our games against better sides. We are very excited about playing India in Bangalore.

"There will be a great atmosphere and we will back ourselves to beat them," he insisted. India crushed co-hosts Bangladesh in their opener on Saturday.

But Strauss, who shared a century stand with new opening partner Kevin Pietersen, readily conceded England would have to improve their fielding display after a "she-mozzle" against the Netherlands.

Asked if England's performance had been acceptable for the opening match of a World Cup, Strauss replied: "Certainly not. The first 50 overs was a very poor performance, and certainly the last 10 overs was exceptionally poor."

One of England's most inept moments was a reprieve for ten Doeschate on 47 when James Anderson and Pietersen let an outfield catch drop between.

There was also a no-ball called after England had too few men inside the circle, allowing Dutch captain Peter Borren to be recalled after being bowled by Stuart Broad.

"We were a little bit shell-shocked by what happened in those last 10 overs," Strauss said. "You can't afford to drop that many

catches and we were pretty untidy on the ground as well.

"That meant Holland probably got 30 or 40 more than they should have done. We were way off where we want to be in the field.

"We came in very determined to start the tournament well. But it was one of those days in the field where everything seemed to go wrong."

As for the Borren blunder, Strauss said: "It was just a miscommunication.

"I said to Stuart Broad 'do you want a man out there?' and Paul Collingwood thought I said 'go out there'.

Strauss added that ten Doeschate, who also took two wickets, deserved acclaim for his innings regardless of England's ineptitude.

## Smith names Kallis 'pillar'

AFP, New Delhi

South Africa captain Graeme Smith on Wednesday hailed veteran all-rounder Jacques Kallis as a pillar of strength who has constantly held the team together throughout his career.

"Jacques has been a talisman for us," said Smith, ahead of South Africa's opening World Cup clash against West Indies on Thursday.

"He's held South African cricket together for 15 years. He's been a pillar in the way that we have built teams around him and he's been very successful for us.

"I think he in particular wants to have a really good World Cup which is exciting."

Kallis is the number one all-rounder in one-day cricket with 11,002 runs and 259 wickets from 307 matches.

## Uruguay set European dates

AFP, Montevideo

World Cup semifinalists Uruguay will play Estonia and the Republic of Ireland on March 25 and 29 respectively, the Uruguayan football federation (AUF) announced on Tuesday.

Uruguay - who had their best World Cup since 1970 last year eventually finishing fourth after losing 3-2 to Germany in the third place final - will play Estonia in Tallinn and then the Irish in Dublin four days later.

Uruguay will also have a rematch with the Germans in Sinsheim, Germany, on May 29 as they prepare for the Copa America, which runs from July 1 to 24 in Argentina.

Uruguay have won the Copa 14 times, though, the last time was in 1995.

TV INCIDENT

## Ponting faces charges

AFP, New Delhi

Australia skipper Ricky Ponting on Wednesday faced a charge by the International Cricket Council (ICC) after he damaged a dressing room television set.

Ponting smashed the TV in a fit of fury after being run out in the match against Zimbabwe in Ahmedabad, a local official said Tuesday.

ICC spokesman James Fitzgerald told AFP in Nagpur on Wednesday that Ponting would be charged but added: "That's all we are saying at the moment.

"The Australians are travelling today [Wednesday] and we don't want to say anything about the details of the charge until we've been in contact with them."

The ICC had been contacted by the Indian cricket board following a complaint lodged by the Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA) relating to the incident in the defending champions' World Cup opener on Monday, a Press Trust of India report said.

## Swann wants to take it to Indian crowd

AFP, Nagpur



Graeme Swann wants to silence the passionate home crowd when England face World Cup co-hosts India in Bangalore on Sunday.

The Ashes-winning off-spinner returned to international action for the first time since the birth of his son with an impressive two for 35 during England's tournament-opening six-wicket win over the Netherlands on Tuesday.

But the 31-year-old's bowling was one of the few highlights in a lacklustre display in the field littered with dropped catches and wayward fast bowling on a good batting pitch.

India launched their campaign with an 87-run victory away to fellow co-hosts Bangladesh in Dhaka and are strongly fancied to add a second title to their 1983 World Cup trophy in front of their adoring fans.

"The fact it's against India in India is going to make it a huge game," said Swann after England saw off the Dutch with eight balls to spare.

"We had a very poor time of things in the one-day series here a couple of years ago, so that's certainly something we want to turn around because there is nothing better than silencing an Indian crowd.

"You don't want them to be screaming all day because its ear-shattering. Come Bangalore it will be a huge game and one we will need to raise our standards for, particularly in the field because, let's face it, we were like a bunch of schoolboys [against the Netherlands]."

The worst moment was when Dutch all-rounder Ryan ten Doeschate, who went on to make a century, skied Swann on 47 only for James Anderson at long-on and Kevin Pietersen at long-off to leave the chance to each other as the ball fell safely between them.

"They both got the glare," Swann said. "When it goes 80 yards in the air and two of your best fielders stand and watch it land between them, it's never great as a bowler but I can't really complain because I dropped that high swirler near the end. Everything evens itself out."

Swann was England's lone spinner in a match where the frontline quicks, especially Anderson, whose 10 wicketless overs cost 72 runs, proved expensive.

England do have another slow bowler in left-armer Michael Yardy who, like Swann, performed well in the team that won the World Twenty20 in the Caribbean last year.

Swann though warned it was a mistake to think Indian pitches offered excessive help to spinners.

"I think it is hit or miss in India with spin. People always say that spin plays a massive part and wickets turn square over here. They don't and there was a little bit of spin [against the Netherlands] but it wasn't huge."



Bangladesh batsman Mohammad Ashrafur goes over the top during a training session at the GP-BCB Academy Ground yesterday. Ashrafur could be used as a pinch-hitter during powerplays in Bangladesh's next game against Ireland.

PHOTO:  
STAR