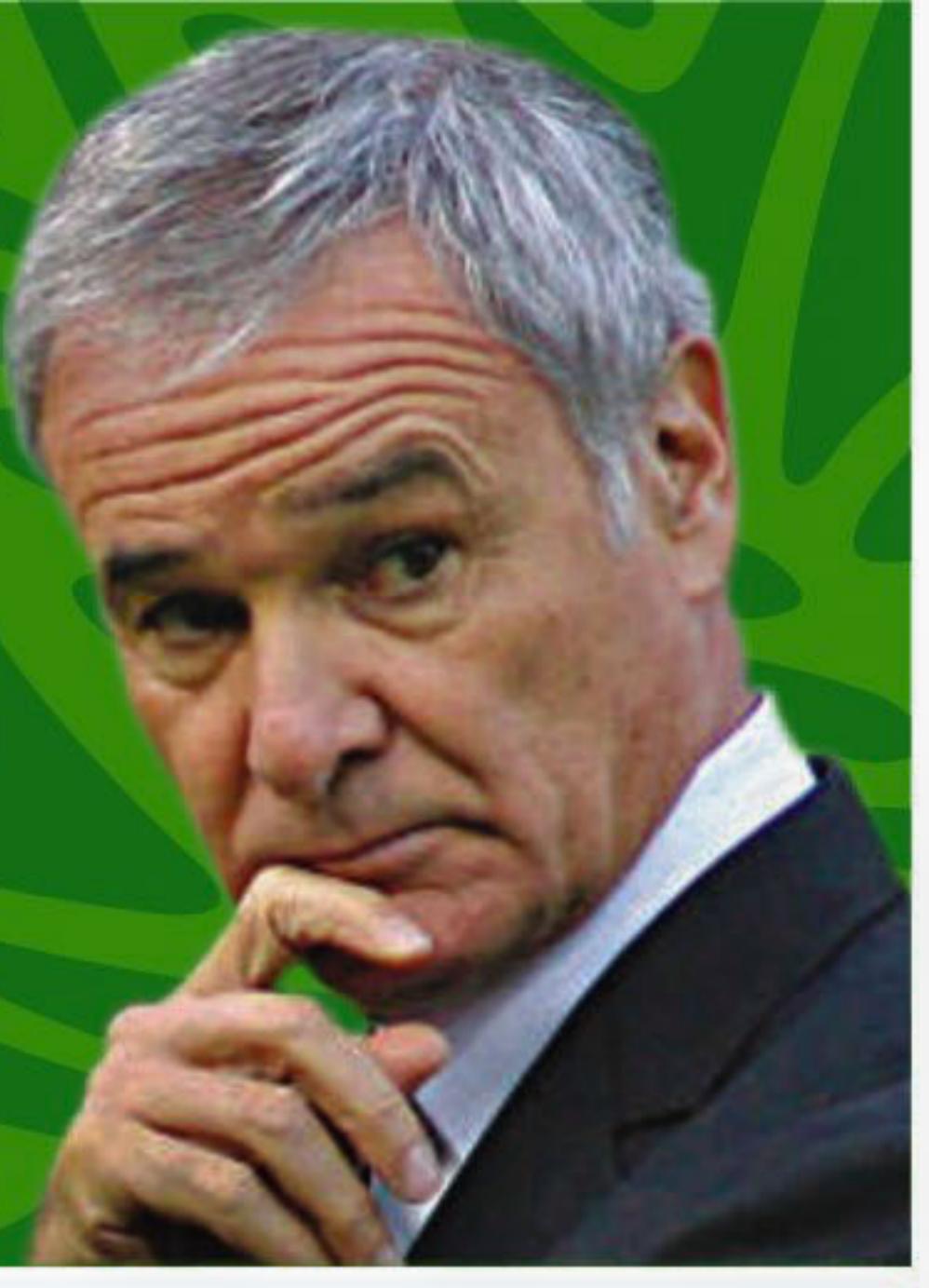


Ranieri slams
Italian hell

Former Roma boss Claudio Ranieri has launched a stinging attack on football in his homeland and his ex players. "In football there is heaven and hell. You can decide where you want to stand between the two but compared to England, it's hell here," he told Rai TV. "I still want to coach. England fascinates me but I also like the Italian league. "This year at Roma I became the only scapegoat but now there's them, the players, who must show everything."



AS STRAIGHT AS IT CAN GET: India's batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar takes the aerial route during his 115-ball 120 against England in their World Cup Group B match in Bangalore on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

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Masterful Sachin

SAKEB SUBHAN

Writing about Sachin Tendulkar is fast becoming an exercise in pointlessness. Is anything left unsaid? Is there anything left for him and his countless, maniacal supporters to prove? Every superlative is a cliché. But the man just won't let the scribes rest.

Yesterday he notched up his fifth World Cup hundred in the match against England in Bangalore, as faultless an innings as you could hope to see.

In an effort to find something original to say about the man who is in his 22nd year of creating magic at the crease, one or two persistent writers have recently unearthed some things, which though not original, are not as regularly expounded on. One is his insatiable hunger for the game, and another is his ability to score quick runs without seeming to take any risks. Both those attributes were on display in his 115-ball knock of 120 yesterday.

The T20-bred openers of today rely upon the Powerplay overs to get off to a flier and elevate their strike rates. With games built around giving the ball as hard a whack as possible when the field is up, these players usually retreat into their shells after the field spreads out, concentrating on picking the

singles and putting the bad balls away. The better ones have the games to tide them over till the batting Powerplay and the slog overs, when they up the ante once more. The geniuses have the versatility to pick off boundaries even when the bowling is good and the field spread.

In Bangalore, Tendulkar was on 24 off 43 balls with two 4s to his name when the bowling Powerplay ended at the end of the fifteenth over. He then picked his moment to blaze away, scoring his last 96 runs off 72 balls with eight 4s and five 6s. During that phase of play, not once was a false shot played or Tendulkar beaten.

The prevailing opinion now seems to be that he has mellowed since his nakedly aggressive heyday of the 90s. That may be true as far as his modus operandi is concerned, but the results are much the same. He is still scoring as fast as he ever did, and hitting hundreds as frequently. Also, from the evidence of his double-hundred against South Africa a little over a year ago -- the first in the one-day format -- he has gotten better at that very basic skill of batmanship; not getting out.

His hunger for the game also forms part of the reason for his high strike rate, which is paradoxically coupled with a low-risk game. Tendulkar is one of the best judges of the single, and there comes a stage in his innings when keeping him tied up is next to impossible, so keen is his eye for the stolen run.

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Aussies come here Apr 4

SPORTS REPORTER

Australia are all set to tour Bangladesh right after the World Cup as they are due in the capital on April 4 to play three one-day games. But the home side could be without their backroom staff.

The four-time world champions will play a practice match on April 7 at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium before they play all three ODIs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on April 9, 11, and 13.

With the tour so soon after the World Cup and with the contracts of most of the Tigers' coaching staff expiring at the end of March, the onus will be on the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to settle the issue. Julien Fountain (fielding coach), Ian Pont (bowling coach), Grant Luden (trainer) and Michael Henry (physio) are all contracted till March 31. When asked of the board's decision, media committee chairman Jalal Younus said that the discussions would begin in a few days.

"Since Australia are arriving on March 4, we will negotiate with them for a long-term contract and it will be done very soon. This was proposed by the technical

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Debris from the Tri-nation Big Show lay littered on the football pitch and the athletics track three days after the cultural event was held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Big Show bruises BNS

SPORTS REPORTER

The athletics turf at the Bangabandhu National Stadium received another round of mauling when the cultural event, the Destiny Group Tri-Nation Big Show was staged there on February 24. The event also left the football pitch grassless ahead of Bangladesh's pre-Olympic qualifying match against Kuwait on March 9.

The athletics track at the premier sporting venue of the country, which hosts national and international sport-

ing events, saw chunks of the turf at seven different points along the 100-metre sprint lane being dug out. The football pitch has also been damaged due to setting chairs for the audience inside the playing area.

However, it was not the first time that the Tk 10-crore turf has come under the shovel to make room for different events. The opening ceremony of the South Asian Games in 2010 saw the turf badly damaged which was later repaired by the company who installed the turf in 2005.

The more recent international event, i.e. the opening ceremony of the ICC Cricket World Cup though evaded any such harm as the whole turf was covered with mats for that event. But this time though, any such precautionary measures were not taken for hosting the Tri-Nation Big Show, a cultural event that was sold to event-management organisation ATN Records by the Bangladesh Cricket Board.

During the visit to the BNS yesterday, this correspondent and fellow

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Reader's analysis of the day!

West Indies - Netherland
Raihan Chowdhury Biplob

West Indies have not had a great start in the tournament in more ways than one. They lost the duo of Adrian Barath and Carlton Baugh even before the first game of the tournament and in the South Africa game, the all-rounder Dwayne Bravo pulled up with a twisted knee and had to return back to Trinidad and Tobago. Netherland, on the other hand, will depend on Ryan ten Doeschate. The good news from their perspective was the fact that he was supported well by the likes of Tom de Groot and Peter Borren -- something that will be crucial in the rest of the games. Pieter Seelar bowler rather well and against West Indies there is a good chance that the side will look to go for an extra spinner.

Send your analysis (in 100 words) on Sri Lanka Vs Kenya match to analysis11@ovi.com. The best analysis will be published tomorrow.