

# Disbelief, and not much else

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It is not gentlemanly, it is not smart and it has traditionally never had a place in cricket. But sometimes, on some seemingly God-forsaken days, you have used up every other word in the dictionary and yet nothing manages to quite hit the spot.

On such days, no adjectives do your feelings justice and swearing really is the only thing that will do.

And for the scores of Bangladeshi fans who had turned up sporting their red and green for yesterday's crunch match against West Indies, swearing seemed to be the only way they could justify the barely believable events transpiring before their eyes on a sunny Friday afternoon.

There was nothing to foreshadow the amazing collapse; no clear sign that such a devastating wreck was impending, none whatsoever of a crash that shamed even the yo-yo stock market in Dhaka. In short, events seemed inexplicable. And when things are such, swearing, it seems, is the only way to ease the discontent souls.

"What is happening out there?" screamed a young woman, clawing at her face in utter disbelief. Her statement, a remarkable endorsement of the collective disbelief prevailing in the stands, was amazing only because of its lack of expletives. Most others were not so kind, and the match had already descended under a dark cloud before the masses started chanting 'bhua bhua' in that inimitably Bangladeshi style of expressing discontent.

The rut started with shock when Tamim Iqbal flashed wildly at a Kumar Roach delivery to depart for a three-ball duck. At that point, most of the capacity crowd had not yet warmed their seats. Some were still queuing up to get into the stands when the audibly collective groan flooded in through the

turnstiles.

A young man decked in Bangladesh colours was confused.

"Did we just lose the toss?" he hopefully asked. But reality hit him with a thud when the man three spots ahead of him checked his phone. "Tamim is out," he said. "What a bad!"

And so it began. It was a performance that started off bad, got worse in the middle, and by the end was barely even believable. A performance that left you feeling disgusted just watching it; full of ridiculous shots and terrible decision making. It got worse and worse and when you thought it couldn't get any worse it

LOWEST TOTALS IN WORLD CUP			
Team	Score	Opposition	Year
Canada	36	Sri Lanka	2003
Canada	45	England	1979
Namibia	45	Australia	2003
Bangladesh	58	West Indies	2011

sarcastic cheers rang around the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

In a convoluted way perhaps, the quick demise left people little chance to be frustrated. The match was over in considerably less time than it usually takes to complete a single innings and thus the prevailing mood was one of disbelief rather than frustration leading to anger.

It was perhaps the lowest moment in Bangladesh cricket, and Shakib Al Hasan himself confessed as much at the press conference following the game. But for the twenty-odd thousand, many of who had paid through

BANGLADESH'S LOWEST WC TOTALS			
Score	Opposition	Ground	Year
58	West Indies	Dhaka	2011
108	South Africa	Bloemfontein	2003
112	Sri Lanka	Port of Spain	2007
116	New Zealand	Chelmsford	1999

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got worse again.

By the end of a miserable Bangladesh innings that had lasted exactly 18.5 overs, the fans had already started hurling their 4 and 6 placards onto the field in a collective sign of anger.

And by the time the innings changed over for the West Indian batting, people had already started sarcastically betting on the outcome of the match.

"I say it takes West Indies five overs to knock this off," said Jawad from Dhanmondi. People pooled their bets and when Chris Gayle caressed Shafiqul Islam to the cover-point boundary,

their teeth to manage a ticket in the black market (tickets sold from between BDT 2500 to BDT 15000), this really was not good enough.

But it was Hossain, a young entrepreneur from Gulshan, who perfectly put the cap on an atrocious Bangladesh performance through an expletive-riddled statement.

"I spent much more time looking for a ticket, than I did at the game itself," he said. "And I paid 7000 taka as well. This was not worth a single penny."

Yesterday evening, not one of the 26,000 plus at the stadium would disagree.

## SRI LANKA V AUSTRALIA: COLOMBO Malinga plan drawn up

AFP, Colombo

Defending champions Australia insist they have a plan to tackle Sri Lanka's record-breaking Lasith Malinga in Saturday's mouth-watering World Cup clash.

The co-hosts are considering playing all their three spinners -- Muttiah Muralidaran, Ajantha Mendis and

Rangana Herath -- but Australia captain Ricky Ponting said his team is braced for all potential threats.

"We have played a fair bit against Malinga over the years. Obviously he had a great game against Kenya, so he was one of the main focuses in our team meetings and we talked about the right ways to tackle him," said Ponting.

The 27-year-old Malinga took a career-best 6-38, including his second World Cup hat-trick, against a Kenyan

side bamboozled by his unique sling-shot action.

"Malinga's bowling in the middle overs with the older ball was particularly good, so we have to make sure he doesn't take wickets but we still can't focus on one of their bowlers," said Ponting, whose team is chasing a fourth consecutive World Cup title.

These two sides met in the World Cup final in Bridgetown four years ago with Australia winning by 53 runs on

SRI LANKA v AUSTRALIA	
Matches:	72
Sri Lanka win:	23
Australia win:	47
No result:	2
First meeting:	June 11, 1975, The Oval -- Australia won by 52 runs
Last meeting:	Nov 7, 2010, Brisbane -- Australia won

the Duckworth-Lewis formula, a controversial end to the showpiece occasion that finished in virtual darkness.

Malinga played in that match, taking 2-49 in his eight overs.

Since then Australia have lost quality players Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden and Glenn McGrath while Sri Lanka can take heart from a one-day series win in Australia last year.

Ponting said the spin threat posed by Sri Lanka can also be dealt with on a Premadasa Stadium pitch where the ball hasn't spun much.

"The first game they had there was a really high-scoring one and didn't really favour the spinners as much as they would like," said Ponting, of Sri Lanka's 11-run defeat against Pakistan.

"Sri Lanka were one of the favourites coming into the tournament and although they lost against Pakistan, that didn't change anything about them, they are a skilled and well-drilled team.

"Everything points in the direction of a good game on Saturday," said Ponting, whose team have so far beaten Zimbabwe by 91 runs and New Zealand by seven wickets, stretching their World Cup win streak to 25 successive matches.

Australia have beaten Sri Lanka in six of their seven World Cup meetings, with their only loss coming at Lahore in the 1996 final.

Even if Sri Lanka employ a spin-trap, Ponting insisted Australia will look to their three in-form seamers, Mitchell Johnson, Brett Lee and Shaun Tait.

## Kumar prefers spin

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka captain Kumar Sangakkara said he'll back his three spinners to top Australian pace in their crucial World Cup Group A match on Saturday.

The 1996 world champions and 2007 runners-up are considering the option of playing Muttiah Muralidaran, Ajantha Mendis and Rangana Herath to cast a spin web over Ricky Ponting's men on a slow R Premadasa Stadium pitch.

"That's the possibility that we're exploring," said Sangakkara when asked about the possibility of playing three spinners.

"I think that's the best way to play Australia. We've got three main spinners and part-time spinners, so we have to make a decision."

Sangakkara hoped his bowlers, also including lethal fast bowler Lasith Malinga, will deliver.

"When you have guys like Malinga, Mathews and Murali you expect them to deliver. You look up to your star bowlers and then the responsibility falls onto the support bowlers to do their bit.

"We'll try and focus how we share that responsibility and give freedom to guys like Lasith to express them-

selves," said Sangakkara of the slinger who took a career-best 6-38, including a hat-trick, against Kenya on Tuesday.

That nine wicket win gave Sri Lanka four points from three matches, with Pakistan on top of Group A with six points from three.

Sangakkara said Australia -- who have four points after two matches -- will be tough to beat.

"The real strength of Australia is their pace attack. They've got four quality pace bowlers. They'll come at us very hard, right from ball one," said Sangakkara.

Australia, with only one frontline spinner in Jason Krejza, have Brett Lee, Shaun Tait and Mitchell Johnson as their speedsters.

"The bottom line is that they have been a very good side. But when we went to Australia on the last tour, the key change we made was in our attitude," said Sangakkara of Sri Lanka's 2-1 win in the one-day series in November.

"The way we looked at beating the Aussies and enjoying the challenges and making sure that every member of the squad was up to those challenges," said Sangakkara, whose team has only beaten Australia once in seven World Cup matches.

That win came in the final of the 1996 World Cup in Lahore.



PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lanka fast bowler Lasith Malinga bowls during practice at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday, ahead of today's match against defending champions Australia.



NIGHTMARE IN MIRPUR: A Bangladeshi fan reacts with disbelief as another home wicket falls on the way to their incredible capitulation for 58 against the West Indies at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Wasim's recipe to beat Aussies

AFP, Colombo

Pakistan great Wasim Akram, the last captain to beat Australia in a World Cup match, says teams need a plan and "fire in the belly" to end the side's long run of success at the World Cup.

Australia, who play Group A rivals Sri Lanka on Saturday, have not lost a match at the showpiece tournament since going down to Pakistan at Leeds in 1999, and have stretched their unbeaten run to 31 matches.

The have won their past 25 World Cup matches since the tied semifinal against South Africa in the tournament held in England 12 years ago.

"You need a plan in the mind and fire in the belly to beat Australia," Wasim told AFP. "Have a set plan and your body language should be like that of champions."

Wasim, who took 4-40 in the 1999 win against Australia, said Pakistan's body language was worthy of winners as they downed Steve Waugh's men by 10 runs.

"We had a successful run in the group stages and I remember we planned well for the Australia match, but sadly we lost the final when it mattered the most for the World



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## Bowler to replace Doug

AFP, Colombo

Ricky Ponting refused to rule out a World Cup call for Mike Hussey on Friday, but predicted the replacement for injured seamer Doug Bollinger would likely be another bowler.

Left-armed Bollinger injured his left ankle during the first warm-up game against India last month and was ruled out of the tournament.

Australian selectors have yet to name a replacement player, with Hussey hopeful of a return after being left at home because of a hamstring injury.

Ponting said it was important to have a replacement at the tournament soon after Saturday's match against Sri Lanka.

"I would be surprised if that announcement is not made straight after Saturday's game against Sri Lanka."