

Six weeks of world-class fun

If the 2007 World Cup was downright tragic, the 2011 showpiece was the best that this generation has seen. Apart from the drama provided by England, Ireland and Bangladesh as well as some great performances on the field, this was also a World Cup that was long enough to fit in some genuinely hilarious moments. Here's a look at some of those that stood out. Compilation by The Daily Star Sport with the help of Cricinfo and AFP

THE SPEECHES

The rickshaw entrance and aerial cricket were exceptional but so were the "grand rally" speeches at the opening ceremony on February 17. The only problem was that they were exceptionally boring and filled with errors.

If the audience at the Bangabandhu National Stadium lost its breath with the opening act, they (around 30 minutes) to cians took centre stage weapon -- the microphone.

BCB chief AHM Mustafa Kamal mixed up the budget while the year '2001' was referred to on a few occasions. Thankfully, the Prime Minister delivered a concise one, but none could save us from Sharad Pawar's futile attempts in Bangla.

THE QUESTIONS

Some press conferences were run by strict headmasters, some by meek first-timers while others were free-for-all. While the answers were robotic with the exception of Shahid Afridi, Paul Collingwood, Graeme Swann or Shakib Al Hasan, some of the questions were, let's just say, downright dim-witted.

During Canada's open session in Dhaka, one journalist asked John Davison, "What's your name?"

While this drew a scuffle, some like the "chokers or jokers" or "give us a summary" could have riled Imran Khan but in modern day cricket, the Smiths and Sangakkaras are trained as hard off the field as on it.

But the best exchange was between a female journalist and Collingwood when they conversed about their children, their weight, how many they have and whether the other male reporters would be interested in this discussion. Thankfully, the headmaster intervened and asked for everyone to get serious.

THE CELEBRATION

Shahid Afridi stands still and does the "star", Kumar Roach goes off like Usain Bolt and Brett Lee clicks his heels. There are many ways to celebrate but only one stood out and how.

Mohammad Ashraful's hugely underrated off-spin got him two wickets against Ireland, the second of which brought on the mother of all celebrations. He took off like a boxer and with bewildered teammates crowding him, he found little reason to stop.

There was cause for such revelry too; the delivery was probably the best he's bowled since the 'double-bounce' one at AB de Villiers.

THE LOYAL AKMAL

You can call him any name you want but Kamran Akmal is still Umar's hero.

After the calamitous drops against New Zealand where Kamran dropped a straight one, let one go and of course gave up on a stumping, the Pakistan camp tried to put the wicketkeeping gloves on Umar the next day at training.

As loyal as brothers can be, Umar hurt his finger and then his ankle and was accused by sections of the Pakistan media of feigning injury to save his brother's job.

It however didn't stop the Akmal jokes that ranged from nicknames, Hindi movie references and a "dropped-catch count".

SHANE 'PAUL' WARNE

Shane Warne, who retired from international cricket almost two years ago, continued to entertain through his poker stories, IPL, tweets and yes, correct predictions.

The one-time World Cup winner made two important ones. If you thought the "India champions" was a lucky call, you cannot say much about his "England-India tied game" call.

Paul, the octopus, was hardly missed.

THE NEW PAKISTAN

It has to be England. Their ride would put any roller-coaster to shame. First the chase against the Netherlands followed by the tie with India. Then came the loss to Ireland, the win against South Africa and the loss at Chittagong to the Tigers. A win against West Indies followed and then, the crash -- the 10-wicket defeat to Sri Lanka.

Pakistan themselves were mostly dull, not mercurial, despite the best efforts of Kamran Akmal.

MANJREKAR CROONS

You would have thought the opening ceremony was over on the 17th but Sanjay Manjrekar decided to hold his own an hour ahead of the opening game.

Along with a senior Indian journalist, the former India player turned TV commentator gave renditions of Tagore songs. It was enough to turn heads as the talented batsman of the 1980s had a small crowd gather around him at the press box.

SIDHU

He drew fire from the country he referred to as a pest. Navjot Singh Sidhu didn't get the sack for using the word "cockroach" on air to describe a nation. So doesn't that make him a resilient little roach?

WHEN BHAJJI CRIED

After the final, Harbhajan Singh was seen crying. Sreesanth was a mere feet away, dry-eyed. But there wasn't any slapping involved.

BISHOO SPEAKETH

Cornered by Nasser Hussain after he had taken three wickets against England, Devendra Bishoo managed to get away with as few syllables in his replies to the questions he was asked as there were numbers in his economy rate -- a fetching 3.4.

"You seemed to enjoy that?"

"I really enjoyed it."

"Is that the pace to bowl on this pitch -- slightly slower?"

"Yeah, slightly slower."

"Two hundred and forty -- a good score?"

"Yeah, it's a good score."

They don't teach you this stuff at the Chris Gayle School of Post-Match Dead-Batting.

THE FAILED EMBARGO

Before his first World Cup press conference, the ICC rep told the press not to ask the Speedy One (aka Shoaib Akhtar) any questions regarding "spot-fixing or the captaincy".

Nobody asked but who could stop Akhtar? He gave a full description of why he has continued to play and why it was important to show the world how "honourable men" play for Pakistan.

SHAKIB AL HASAN

Since his ascent as the world's No 1 all-rounder, he became a mere performer on the field. During the World Cup, Shakib became probably the most talked-about man for his quips, digs and rants.

When asked what would be his policy before the West Indies game, Shakib shot back at a TV reporter: "Does the owner of your channel tell you his policies?"

A radio guy queried during the post-match "celebratory" conference after the Ireland win, "What do you think about the batsmen's getting out like that?"

Answer: "The food at the dressing-room was fine; we felt like getting out; it was good for the team." Apart from working on his cricket, Shakib should quickly develop a sense of humour.

THE CHEER

In the Bangladesh-South Africa match, the crowd applauded loudest when Shakib Al Hasan took a single to push the team total past 58 -- the



score the side were all out for against West Indies earlier in the tournament.

THE OTHER O'BRIEN MOMENT

It was a tense phase in the Bangladesh-Ireland game when Kevin O'Brien heaved at a Shafiqul Islam delivery. The eyes went down towards the Grand Stand but the big Irish all-rounder had only managed to find the deep square-leg fielder.

A few days later when O'Brien struck England down, a lot of nervous laughs emerged inside the Tigers dressing-room.

"Thank God for that" said a senior batsman while another said, "We evaded the hurricane, but England couldn't."

THE SONG

If you thought the 1999 World Cup theme song was ordinary, the all-encompassing "De Ghuma Ke" of this year's event, that too in three languages, gave a great reason to change the channel or cringe (if you were at the ground).

Cricinfo called it the "official World Cup song, from hell" while others were simply baffled by the Bangla lyrics.

A few contenders came up during the event but no matter how people tried, they couldn't escape the official one.

THE RULE

Among the laundry list of offending items that would not be allowed into the PCA Stadium in Mohali during the India-Pakistan semifinal was: persons wearing black or black turbans.

Thus did the authorities, in one fell swoop, stop all potential miscreants and terrorists dead in their tracks.

For, as any fool knows, all self-respecting agents of terror are constitutionally obliged to wear black at all times.

TOO EARLY

Colombo organisers were a little too quick off the mark with the firework display arranged to coincide with the end of Muttiah Muralidaran's last appearance on home soil.

Thilan Samaraweera was still seeking the winning run against New Zealand when the night sky was prematurely lit up.

The umpire stopped the contest, only for another five-ball wait for the game to end.

THE INNOVATION

Andre Russell unveiled his super power in West Indies' game against England: pretending to pull out of his run-up a second before launching into his delivery stride. Yes, very classy.

THE CANCELLED EXPOSITION

And finally, Indian model Poonam Pandey was good and ready to wear her birthday suit for the good of India. And would have, had the vile cricket board not got in the way.

She was serious about it. "I am serious about it," she confirmed in a letter to the BCCI a day before the final.

It didn't happen and she went AWOL.

TALK TURKEY

"I could've stopped 'em better with my coat."

Kamran Akmal's wicketkeeping gaffes drew humour, ire and a possible beating in the dressing room. Here Geoffrey Boycott tells it like he sees it

"If his batting was as good as Don Bradman's, he couldn't score enough runs to make up for what he costs them with his keeping."

...and this is how Ian Chappell summed up Akmal's contribution

"Stop whatever you're doing and turn on the England-Ireland match!"

AB de Villiers tweets an order (twitter)

"Nice to have a day off. Seeing Goochie unwittingly soak the German sunbathers as he dived into the pool was an epic moment."

Graeme Swann gives Graham Gooch a mention

"I saw only two murders in the theatre, but ended up watching many more during the Ireland-England game."

Munaf Patel was watching a Bollywood movie but left midway to see Kevin O'Brien's ambush

"Some bookmakers had Ireland at 400-1 at one stage. I wish I'd not kept my money in pocket."

Ger O'Brien wishes he had bet on his brothers, Niall and Kevin, beating England

"Apologies for a disappointed departure, it is easy to blame the senior players but difficult to accept the truth! Curse me blame me!"

Chris Gayle was active on twitter, more so after West Indies were crushed by Pakistan (twitter)

"You may put hybrid fuel in the car but the cylinder, the engine, everything, needs to be like that."

MS Dhoni's reply as to whether India needs a fielding coach

"Sir, get me a pressure machine and I will tell you how much pressure I'm under!"

MS Dhoni says this to a Bangladeshi journalist with a wry smile

"Your English is like my English, can't understand anything. Tell in Urdu, man!"

Shahid Afridi tells a Pakistani journalist

"Thankfully, I am six foot six, and I replaced Kane Williamson who, I think, is four foot six."

Jacob Oram has a dig at his teammate while explaining his spectacular catch of Jacques Kallis at deep midwicket in the quarterfinal

"Waqar, in the pantheon of great Pakistani opening bowlers, where does Mohammad Hafeez stand?"

Comic Andy Zaltzman's tongue-in-cheek question after Pakistan's win over West Indies in Dhaka

"Our plan is to play good cricket and our goal is to play good cricket."

None other than Shakib Al Hasan

"We hope you lose tomorrow, daddy. Then you can come home."

Paul Collingwood's daughters made it pretty clear how they would have liked England's must-win game against West Indies to pan out

"I gave a warning that there should be no match-fixing. I am keeping a close watch. If any such thing happens, we are going to take action."

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WC stars climb rankings



ANI, Dubai

Sri Lanka's Tillekeratne Dilshan has risen to his career best ranking to date in the Reliance ICC Player Rankings for ODI batsman.

The 34-year-old all-rounder is occupying third position on the rankings after scoring the most runs in the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 -- a total of 500.

ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 winners Sachin Tendulkar and Gautam Gambhir have also moved up the rankings, with India's opener rising one place to ninth while Gambhir's hard-fought 97 runs against Sri Lanka in the final of the ICC Cricket World Cup on Saturday has seen the 29-year-old rise four places to occupy 10th.

Sri Lanka captain Kumar Sangakkara still occupies fourth place while India's Yuvraj Singh, the ICC Player of the Tournament for the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 remains in joint 17th place with Australia captain Ricky Ponting, the latter having risen six places.

Meanwhile, Netherlands's Ryan ten Doeschate continues to be the only Associate player in the top 20 of the batting rankings with the Dutchman sitting in 16th place.

Other batsmen moving in the right direction include England's Jonathan Trott in fifth (up by four places), South Africa's Jacques Kallis in 12th (up by three places), Ross Taylor in 19th (up by one place), Upul Tharanga

in 26 (up three places), Mahela Jayawardena in 28th (up by three places), India's Suresh Raina in 31st place (up by four places), Misbahul Haq in 36th place (up by three places) and Jesse Ryder in 42nd (up by 13 places).

South Africa's duo of Hashim Amla and AB de Villiers continue to occupy the top two positions.

In the Reliance ICC Player Rankings for ODI bowlers, Sri Lanka's Anjantha Mendis is one of the big movers with the spin bowler rising nine places to take eighth place, a position he last occupied in 2009.

Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi has climbed five places to now sit in ninth, which India's World Cup winning spinner Harbhajan Singh has risen two places to now sit 18th on the list. Pakistan's Saeed Ajmal has rocketed up nine places to now occupy 20th place, while just outside the top 20 Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga has risen three places and is now sitting in joint 25th position with South Africa's Johan Botha.

Pakistan's Mohammed Hafeez has gained 25 places to now sit in 36th position, while Yuvraj has climbed 13 places to sit 40th and his team mate Ashish Nehra occupies 48th after a rise of 10 place. Sri Lanka's Nuwan Kulasekara has slipped five places to now sit 10th while Australia's Mitchell Johnson has also dropped down the rankings to now sit 13th alongside England's Stuart Broad.