



No Lee-way for Morgan
After a one-sided war of words on Twitter where British talk-show host Piers Morgan challenged former Australia pacer Brett Lee, the two finally faced off in the MCG nets. Lee was sufficiently fired up -- of the six balls bowled Morgan was struck on the body off four, missed one and was clean bowled by the other. But he survived and that was good enough.

TIMES THEY ARE *a-changin'*

SAKEB SUBHAN

2013 has been a year of significant change in cricket. There is upheaval now in the hierarchy of cricket's top teams. Established methods have been torn apart, while older ones have been proven to have currency. Perhaps closer to fans' hearts, some iconic and era-defining careers have been put to rest with the luminaries walking off into a mellow sunset in the glow of feverish adulation. As old stars have departed new pretenders have emerged and much is promised over the years to come, not least the rise of new legends.

Shifting landscapes
Over the last three or four years England seemed the team to beat and their philosophy -- painstaking attention to detail and extensive coaching staff -- the one to be replicated if teams were to enjoy prolonged success. 2013 gave the lie to that. Yes, they did win the home Ashes 3-0 against an Australia who were reeling from an eleventh-hour replacement of head coach Mickey Arthur. But the series was much closer than the scoreline suggested and as captain Michael Clarke and new coach Darren Lehmann insisted ahead of the series in England, they were looking at it as a reconnaissance mission ahead of the return series in Australia at the end of the year. And it turned out to be a hugely successful one. With a Test left to play, the hapless English are staring down the barrel of a 5-0 whitewash, which has been achieved only twice in cricket history. England's tried and trusted method of each player having a role and performing it clinically was turned on its head in the face of sustained bril-

liance and aggression from the Australians. Special mention should be made of Mitchell Johnson, who transformed from a misfiring tearaway into a battering ram of metronomic ferocity that has terrorised England batsmen's helmets as much as their stumps. Australia have countered Andy Flower's extensive backroom staff with Darren Lehmann's insistence that Australia aggressively enjoy their cricket, and in the process they have reprised a brand of cricket they were known for in their heyday.

Elsewhere, India continue to be the envy of the world as far as their batting riches are concerned, despite departing legends, but more on that later. Sri Lanka however face an uncertain future as the newer generation are struggling to match the class of the likes of Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene or Tillakaratne Dilshan. Their bowling is yet to recover from the retirements of Muttiah Muralidaran and Chaminda Vaas, and also Lasith Malinga's exit from the Test scene.

Pakistan, as ever, continue to confound. They managed to lose a Test to Zimbabwe this year -- one of the rare upsets in the longest format that spoke as much of Pakistan's inconsistency as it did of Zimbabwe's bravery. Then Pakistan won ODI series at 'home' in the UAE and abroad against the world's best team South Africa, and also a series at home, again in UAE, against Sri Lanka.

Talking of South Africa, they are by far the best Test team on paper. But they do not inspire confidence as a long-term No.1. This is mostly down to their defensive mindset and their long-held desire to reinvent the

wheel. While the first Test against India has been feted as one of the great draws, it may well be remembered for South Africa's timidity in refusing to pursue a world record chase that came down to 16 runs off 15 balls with three wickets in hand. The great teams of the past -- West Indies and Australia -- were built on the intent to drive home superiority, an attribute missing in the South Africa outfit.

Legends bid adieu
59,095 international runs and 161 international centuries departed the scene in 2013. Sachin Tendulkar and Jacques Kallis -- both iconic personas without peer in their respective countries -- called time on their careers.

Kallis has never been hyped but he is one of the two greatest all-rounders of all time, the other being the legendary Sir Garfield Sobers. His batting and bowling -- one of the few to be able to reach high speeds even at the age of 38 -- have been grounded in practicality and an insistence on shying away from the flashy. He called time when many will ask why he did not play for a couple more years. The century in his last Test, the Boxing Day encounter against India, only serves to underline that point. But in leaving now, he ensures his legacy as one of the best cricketers to have ever played the game.

Tendulkar, on the other hand, was the magnet for all hype and perhaps one of his greatest achievements was that he managed to live up to it. Reams and reams have been written about his batting and contribution to Indian cricket. But one statistic should be borne in mind -- 24 years at the top of world cricket, all but the last two of them spent among the top batsmen in

the world. Few would counter that he perhaps stayed on too long, and victory in the 2011 World Cup was probably the ideal time to retire. But when he played his last innings -- a crisp 74 against the West Indies -- there was no doubt that here was a man who loved the game, lived and breathed it. His love for the game probably outstripped his desire to leave the ideal legacy. Regardless, both legends and consummate cricketing gentlemen will be sorely missed, and not just by their countries.

Carrying the torch
As greats depart, so others strive to take their place. International batting's torch is being brilliantly carried by the four horsemen of modern batsmanship -- South Africa's Hashim Amla and AB de Villiers, Australia's Michael Clarke and England's Kevin Pietersen.

The new generation is led mostly by Indians. The trio of Virat Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara and Rohit Sharma may, over the next three or four years, start filling the huge boots of the likes of Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman.

On the bowling front South Africa's Vernon Philander has passed the modern fast bowling gold standard, Dale Steyn, in becoming the joint sixth-fastest to get to 100 Test wickets.

Looking ahead
An exciting year awaits, with the World Twenty20 in Bangladesh promising to be a showcase of the pyrotechnics that constitute cricket's newest format. As appetising, however, is Australia's tour of South Africa -- although South Africa are superior on paper, Australia's superior tactics and intent will make for an interesting dynamic.



Sachin Tendulkar bids goodbye to his adoring fans after ending a glittering 24-year career at the end of the second Test against the West Indies in Mumbai on November 16.

PHOTO: FILE

A year of broken promises



Devastated Bangladesh national footballers hang their heads in disappointment after their exit from the SAFF Championship in September in Nepal, losing their last game against Pakistan 2-1.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

ANISUR RAHMAN

Apart from cricket, which had quite a remarkable year in 2013 in terms of records and achievements, there is precious little to mention when it comes to bringing success for Bangladesh in the international arena. There were some individual success stories of course, but the team games provided more reason to frustrate than to celebrate.

Football and hockey -- two of the more popular sports of the country -- followed an uncannily similar path of success and derailment in the past year. Both sports enjoyed a bit of success early on in the year, hyped up the expectations among the fans and organisers, only to disappoint in the end.

The national football team fared considerably well in the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers in March by becoming runners-up in their group, but missed the flight for the tournament proper through sheer stroke of misfortune. The good performance nevertheless gave the organisers enough encouragement to beef up preparations for the SAFF Championship by dint of appointing a high-profile Dutch coaching staff.

But all the effort and preparation failed to yield any results as Bangladesh finished seventh in the eight-group competition with a single point. The debacle prompted a lot of soul-searching and investigation, though little tangible came out of that.

Hockey, too, had its moment of brilliance. That was in February, in Delhi, when Bangladesh put up a scintillating performance in the World Hockey League (Round-2), beating mighty China and three other sides while giving India and Ireland a run for their money. A foreign coach was appointed to garner further success. But it all went downhill since as in the next assignment

in Asia Cup, the same team played quite haplessly and finished seventh out of eight teams.

Conspiracy theories were formed and given credence by the investigation committee. Unlike football, the administrators in hockey came down hard on the players, dishing out various terms of suspension to some of them.

However, the administrators and organisers could be blamed partially for the debacle as they failed to fix the club-versus-club and club-versus-federation power plays, which kept domestic hockey away from the turf throughout the year.

There were no such issues in football as most of the scheduled events -- the Bangladesh Premier League, Bangladesh Championship League, pioneer football league, first and second division football leagues and most of the district leagues -- ran fairly smoothly. The rise of Sheikh Russel KC as treble-winners in top-tier football gave further proof that the duopoly of Abahani and Mohammedan is a thing of the past. The star value of one Sony Norde made sure that despite the fading of the two giants, crowds did not desert the galleries altogether.

While success eluded the senior national teams, there was some success for the juniors as the national U-19 football team beat Qatar in the Qualifiers of the AFC U-19 Championship to finish as group runners-up while the national U-16 hockey team became runners-up in the U-16 Asia Cup to qualify for the 2014 Youth Olympics.

There were a few success stories in individual sports. Golfer Siddikur Rahman's second Asian Tour title, ten-year old Fahad Rahman becoming a FIDE Master, a first-ever medal (silver) haul from the Islamic Solidarity Games by archer Emdadul Haque Milon were a few mentionable ones.

SIDDIKUR MAKES IT BIG

2013 was a year of turn-around for golfer Siddikur Rahman. After a somewhat disappointing 2012, Siddikur unleashed some of his best golf in 2013 as he won his long-cherished second Asian Tour title, finished third in the Asian Tour Order of Merit, and best of all, took himself to the World Cup to play alongside some of the best of modern golf. The good form was highlighted by eight top-ten finishes and only four cut misses out of 21 events. The good work paid monetary dividends too as the 29-year old golfer got richer by around 500k USD.



THE YEAR IN STATS

TOURNAMENT	POSITION	EARNINGS (\$)	TOURNAMENT	POSITION	EARNINGS (\$)
Zaykabar Myanmar Open	39	1,687	Yeangder TPC	41	2,728
SAIL-SBI Open	3	18,900	Asia-Pacific Panasonic Open	27	10,200
Avantha Masters	48	9,778	Mercuries Taiwan Masters	3	36,000
Maybank Malaysian Open	70	4,790	CJ Invitational	91	0
Chiangmai Golf Classic	5	22,305	Venetian Macau Open	7	21,200
Panasonic Open India	10	5,280	CIMB Classic	25	53,433
Ballantine's Championship	26	26,603	Hero Indian Open	1	225,000
CIMB Niaga Indonesian Masters	90	0	ISPS Handa World Cup of Golf	155	24,500
Queen's Cup	8	7,038	Indonesia Open	4	37,500
Worldwide Selangor Masters	26	3,329	Hong Kong Open	97	0
Omega European Masters	135	0	TOTAL:		510,271

* The stats include prizemoney from the World Cup, which is not an Asian Tour sanctioned event

