



ECHOES BY
 ASRAR CHOWDHURY

Why Do We Choke Under Pressure?

I
 The 2016 T20 World Cup Final. West Indies needed 19 runs off the last over. An unknown Carlos Brathwaite stormed his way into the history books with four consecutive sixes. West Indies won the T20 World Cup for the second time. Ben Stokes of England was bowling the last over. How could a dependable person like Stokes choke under pressure?

The 1999 Cricket World Cup Semi-Final. South Africa needed 9 runs to go to the final for the first time. Remember how Allan Donald choked and threw South Africa out of the World Cup? Why did a seasoned player like Donald choke under pressure?

If you become anxious at a crucial moment when you need to focus, you can drain out attention and working memory. You overthink. You do something silly that leads to your downfall and also that of your team. Stokes and Donald aren't the only ones in sport who have choked under pressure.

II
 Competitive sport, like any other activity, depends on skill, which can be acquired over time. Performance at crunch moments, depends on how well you lock yourself out from outside "noise" and stay cool. How many times have you found yourself blank during an exam, when you studied hard over the semester or the year? We've all been there.

The best athletes (and successful people) are the ones who have high self-confidence. They can channel anxiety in crucial moments positively, and thus choke less under pressure.



PHOTO: STAR

III
 Annika Sörenstam was a professional golfer. In her own words, "We all hit bad shots. It's just – how do you regain composure?" She goes on, "The shot you're hitting now is the most important. Ten minutes ago, is irrelevant, and who knows what's going to happen in the next ten minutes?" She calls the shot of the moment, the "now-shot".

If you're influenced by outside "noise", you rush. You think less and can tend to make a mistake at a crucial moment. You have to learn to adapt to the "now-shot". This is easier said than done. The "noise" of the moment is not the only noise that influences you. If you have choked in the past, it could make future choking more likely.

Choking under pressure can be contagious on the day

and over time. If one player in your team chokes at a crucial moment, it can spread to the rest of the team.

Including the 1999 semi-final against Australia, South Africa has reached eight semis in global cricket tournaments. They have lost all eight. Pakistan is yet to defeat India in a men's ODI World Cup encounter, although the two teams have faced each other quite a few times. Bangladesh reached two Asia Cup cricket finals only to lose.

In the 1994 FIFA World Cup Final, Brazil and Italy found themselves facing a penalty shootout. Franco Baresi (Italy) and Márcio Santos (Brazil) both missed the first shot. Daniele Massaro (Italy) missed; Dunga (Brazil) netted. The onus now laid on star striker Roberto Baggio (Italy). It was now or never. Alas! Baggio couldn't block out the "noise" from his other colleagues. A seasoned player like Baggio choked under pressure. Brazil won the World Cup after 24 years.

IV
 We'll never know beforehand how a crucial moment will pan out. What we do know, it's the mind that takes you across the line in those moments, or crushes you before you reach it. We also know, blocking out outside "noise" is probably the best way out. But then, the "now-shot" is all about having fun and not considering the outcome as the end of the world.

Source: *Under Pressure: Why Athletes Choke*. The Long Read Podcast by The Guardian, UK. March 22, 2021.

Asrar Chowdhury teaches Economics in classrooms. Outside, he watches Test cricket, plays the flute and listens to music and radio podcasts. Email: asrarul@juniu.edu or asrarul@gmail.com

HANGOUTS

Dig in to the madness of *Pagla Baburchi*

HIYA ISLAM

The week before, my friends and I wandered into the doors of "Pagla Baburchi", Madchef's latest venture, located at the heart of Banani Road 11. It was a Tuesday afternoon and the restaurant was just starting to get buzzing.

Walking in, you'd be greeted by a mini *paan* station and walls adorned with vast fictive artworks hinting at the Bengali culture. The space is not as large, however, is well-decorated amongst a theme of royal blue and grey with tables spaced amply.

The menu hosts a range of dishes and we picked several. Starting with the main course, we went for the Mad Kacchi (BDT 399), of course. Despite everything else on the menu, the *kacchi* has garnered intense attention and customers' anticipations have sky-rocketed (thanks to their amazing promotional video).

The *kacchi*, serving one, comes in a big bowl served with an *aloo* and 3 to 4 pieces of juicy, well-cooked meat. If you're not big on eating, it's safe to say it would fill two people. We paired this with a few add-ons which was certainly an interesting option to have. We added more potatoes (BDT 39 each) and a couple of *chicken tikka jaali* (BDT 59 each); you can add more meat at BDT 149 per piece. The *kacchi* is definitely delicious. It's not *biye barir kacchi*, though. Even then, it'd make a great choice for occasional binges.

The *polao*, on the other hand, tastes exquisite. It genuinely evokes feelings of warmth and home. Combined with *shonali morog musallam*, you'd be licking your fingers. This combo costs BDT 349. Although the chicken can be ordered separately, it is priced too high; the order does come

with a good amount of yummy gravy.

The "Borhoney" priced at BDT 69 is served in a big, fat glass tumbler and relishes a thick, minty, sour-sweet flavour. Unlike the typical glass, the drink does not sport the strong taste of rock salt which I personally love. Cucumber salad, pickled onion, *aloo bokhara* chutney, and roasted garlic were served complimentary.

Let's talk desserts. The Shahi Tukra (BDT 229) graced with mascarpone cheese and perfected with a cherry on top looks like a dream. While mascarpone cheese may be new to our palate, here's how it feels: velvety, sweet, almost like cream cheese but not quite. After relishing a whole load of rice and meat, the slice of bread lathered in saffron and *malai* suffices for two.

When the Fruit Yogurtini (BDT 179) arrived, we couldn't be any less disappointed with how it looked. But we judged too early and I ended up craving for more in the end. The recipe is basic: fruits and yogurt garnished with mint and a chunk of vanilla cake. The cool, sour yogurt tastes amazing in the sense that it has a strong creaminess to it and carries the simple idea to a whole new level. For those looking for a refreshing end to a hearty meal, this is perfect.

Pagla Baburchi is a great place if you are willing to splurge on a dine-out as the mentioned prices are tax-exclusive. With room for betterment, they may soon compete with the big names in Bengali cuisine.

Lastly, given the recent surge in infected cases, please stay home and order in your meals. Pagla Baburchi is available on Pathao Food and Efood.

Hiya would gladly eat the food you can't finish. Follow her foodstagram @eichaiwaiae

