

KHALID A-H ANSARI

Edited by Clayton Murzello



INTRODUCTION BY
**SACHIN
TENDULKAR**



SECONDEDITION

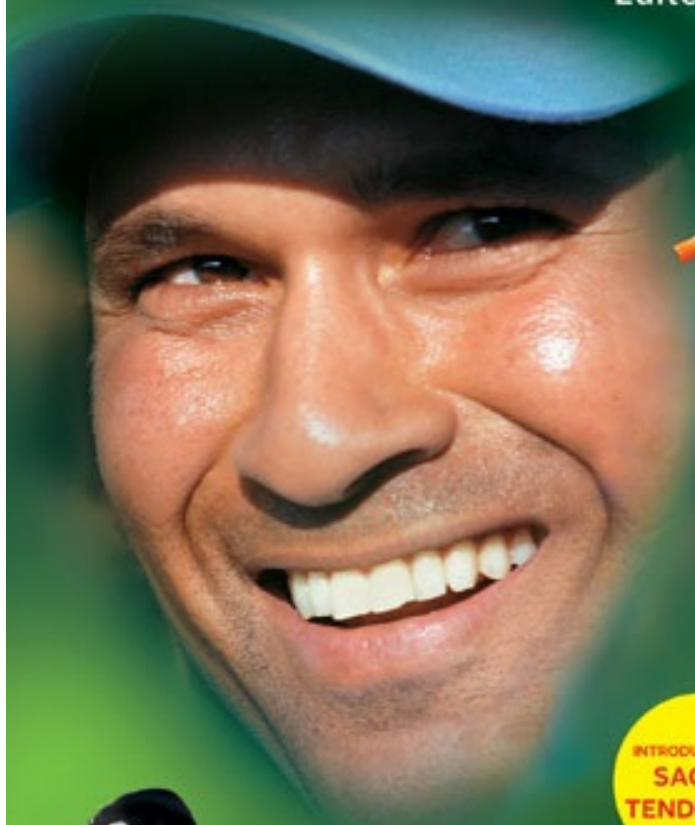
SACHIN BORN TO BAT

The Journey of Cricket's Ultimate Centurion

JAICO

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In memory of Field Marshal S.H.F.J. 'Sam' Manekshaw Proud son of India,
gallant soldier, my President on the All India Council of Sport, respected friend,
philosopher and guide

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BORN TO BAT
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Front: Sachin Tendulkar portrait by Atul Kamble; kid Sachin courtesy The Making of a Cricketer by Ajit Tendulkar.
Acknowledging the cheers from the Wankhede Stadium crowd during his final Test on November 15, 2013 by Atul Kamble
Back: Touching the Wankhede Stadium pitch in respect after his final Test on November 16, 2013 by Atul Kamble

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About the Author

Padma Shri Khalid A-H Ansari has a Bachelor's degree in Law (LLB), Master's degree (MA) in Political Science from Bombay University and Master's degree (MA) in Journalism and Mass Communication from Stanford University, USA.

Recently retired, he was chairman of Mid Day Multimedia Ltd. and Mid Day Infomedia Ltd., which he started in 1976 which publishes Asia's leading afternoon newspaper, *MiD DAY*, in two languages from Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Pune and the nationalist *Inquilab*, Urdu Daily.

Khalid A-H Ansari was also chairman of M. C. Media Ltd, whose activities include FM radio broadcasting (a joint venture with BBC, London) in various Indian cities.

His biggest contribution to Indian sports, in the opinion of many, was his crusading magazine *Sportsweek*, which he started in 1968 and published until 1989, when he took up an assignment abroad.

Some highlights of his professional career:

- Was member of the official Indian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, '89.
- Started *Earth Times* at UN headquarters in New York and published the *Earth Summit Times*, official UN newspaper for the Earth Summit, in Brazil '94.
- Was Managing Director and Executive Editor of *Khaleej Times*, Dubai and editor of *Asiad Chronicle*, official publication of the New Delhi Asian Games '82.
- Is author of '*Reliance World Cup*', '*Champions of One-Day Cricket*' and

'Cricket at Fever Pitch'.

- Was a member of All India Council of Sports under Gen. K. Kumaramangalam and Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw.
- Covered the Kargil war in 1999, the Fiji coup in 2000, the NAM conference in Harare and CHOGM summit in the Bahamas.
- Covered foreign visits of Presidents A.P.J. Kalam, Zail Singh and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, and Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi and Atal Behari Vajpayee.
- Is Chairman Emeritus of the Squash Racquets Association of Maharashtra. Resigned as member of the Organising Committee of the New Delhi Commonwealth Games, '10.
- Was president, Bombay Gymkhana and Rotary Club of Bombay Mid-Town, member of various government advisory committees and is associated with numerous charitable, social, cultural and sports organisations.
- The Abdul Hamid Ansari Charitable Trust, started by him in memory of his father, arranges free study classes, eye camps, computer classes, and sponsors vocational education for up to 500 girls every year from underprivileged sections of Mumbai.
- He is also trustee of the CHAMPS Foundation, started by Sunil Gavaskar, which provides financial assistance to retired international (Indian) sportspersons in need.
- Son of renowned freedom fighter Abdul Hamid Ansari, he was voted Gentleman of the Year by *Gentleman* magazine in 1988, given the Alumnus Achiever's award by Mumbai's Government Law College and St. Xavier's College and granted honorary life membership of the Cricket Club of India (CCI) in 2004.

Author's Acknowledgments

My grateful thanks to Clayton Murzello, ardent sports lover and workaholic if ever there was one, for his painstaking sourcing and assembling of text and photographs from the archives of MiD DAY Infomedia Ltd., picture agencies and freelance photographers, despite his health issues and onerous work load as Sports Editor of MiD DAY. Without him this exhilarating undertaking concerning Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar, sportsman par excellence and exemplary human being for whom I have the highest respect, would not have been possible.

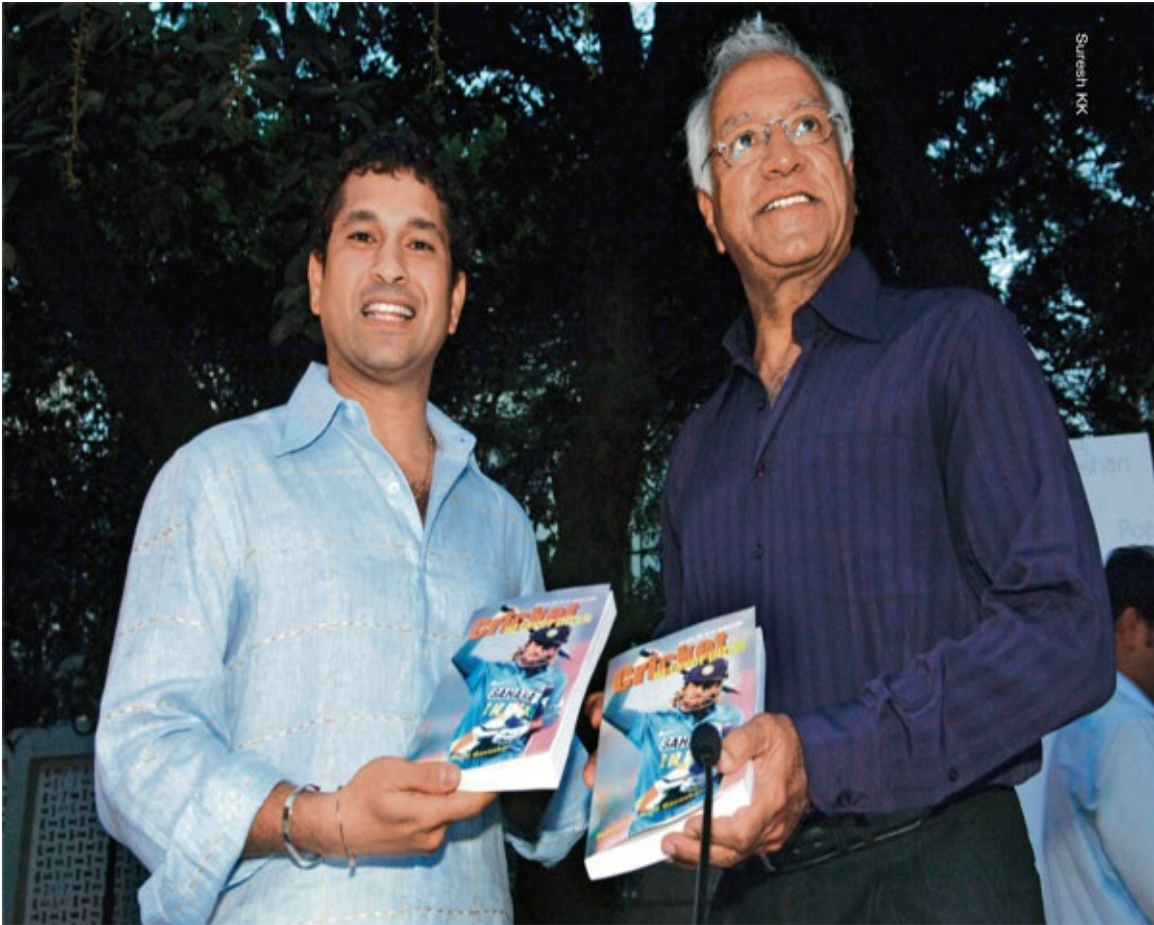
I also thank MiD DAY contributors, past and present, for permission to use their published articles as also former Test captains, cricketers, coaches, teammates and friends of Sachin for their percipient comments on the legend, which appear in the PERCEPTIONS section of this book, in an attempt to shed light on the essential elements that make him, arguably, the greatest cricketer born.

In this endeavour I have relied with gratitude on source material from Gulu Ezekiel's excellent book *Sachin — The Story of the World's Greatest Batsman*.

I'm also indebted to the gracious, perspicacious and indefatigable Zeyna Ansari for her invaluable suggestions and constructive criticism on various aspects of this book, and to Sydney cricket "tragic" Darshak Mehta, Chota Chudasama of New York and Harsha Subba Rao for their valuable advice.

My sincere thanks also to Shirley Fernandes, my executive assistant, for her patience and perseverance in following up on my request to those who have very kindly contributed their perceptions of Sachin.

Khalid A-H Ansari
Sydney



Sachin Tendulkar releasing Cricket at Fever Pitch by Khalid A-H Ansari (right) at the Cricket Club of India in 2006.

Editor's Acknowledgments

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Shirley Fernandes, who dealt with some big cricketing personalities for the Perceptions section with aplomb.

And not the least, Sachin Tendulkar, for putting up with my numerous requests over the years. Never did he throw a tantrum, not even when I woke him up early one morning for a reaction on Sir Don Bradman's death. His kind words in the Introduction reflect his generous spirit.

I am also grateful to the following for their assistance: Ajit Sawant, Akram Khan, Anwar Nabi, Dharmesh Thakkar, Govind Gaikwad, M Kumaresan, Philo Lokare, Rashid Ansari, Ravi Kalbate, Selwyn Vaz, Uday Devrukhkar, Ulhas

Abraham, Vishwaraj Gopale and Yogesh Padte.

Clayton Murzello
Mumbai

Sachincredible

Khalid A-H Ansari

C'mon Sachin, hit a six," the then eight-year old seated in the VIP box yelled his guts out, as spectators in Chandigarh's packed Mohali stadium and millions of cricket *deewane* glued to television sets all over the country waited with bated breath.

Sachin Tendulkar, their pride and joy, the repository of their fond hopes and aspirations, the epitome of their pride and self-belief — their 'god' — was batting on 97 as Pakistani fast bowler Umar Gul began his menacing run-up.

"C'mon Sachin, hit a six," Arjun Tendulkar, now perched at the edge of his seat, shouted again in his squeaky childish voice, whispering to me conspiratorially: "I always tell him to hit a six when he's 94."

Meanwhile, Anjali, his mother, seated between him and his sister, Sara, smiled indulgently. Two runs later, Tendulkar perished for 99 — caught behind by Kamran Akmal off Umar Gul.

The stadium let out a collective gasp. The entire nation was plunged in grief. Their hero had fallen. The cricketing 'enemy' went on to win the one-dayer by four wickets. Oh, what a shame!

This incident is just one among many when Sachin, the biggest, most respected and, arguably, (including among luminaries in the fields of science, medicine, humanities, the arts etc.) most admired Indian icon for his qualities as a human being, had been dismissed in the 90's. As though he's a one-man army — a Rambo — to demolish all-comers!

Record books show that in 1997 alone Sachin Tendulkar was out in the 90's on as many as seven occasions. Until press deadline for this book he has been dismissed in the 90's on 27 occasions.

Sachin Tendulkar has manfully taken these setbacks, some the result of atrocious umpiring errors, on his chin, without demur.

The epitome of good sportsmanship and civilised behaviour, the unflappable 'Mr Cool' has been extremely patient in his dealings with the media, even when it has been unfair from his standpoint during his many injuries and forgettable phase between 2002 and 2006, when many critics unkindly spelt 'finis' to his illustrious career.

In an age when the Biblical commandment 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you' has been distorted to 'Do unto others before they do to you,' Sachin is a refreshing exception.

Booed by a section of the crowd at the Wankhede Stadium, his home ground, when he was out for 1 off 21 deliveries against England in the 2005-06 series, a newspaper, echoing the chorus of the doomsayers, unkindly headlined its report 'Endulkar'.

Through all this, there wasn't the faintest murmur from the Little Master, named after Sachin Dev Burman, his Marathi novelist-professor father's favourite music director.

The only remonstrance from him or his family that I know of until then came from wife, Anjali, who phoned me in London from Mumbai, saying that a journalist had got his facts wrong when reporting Sachin's arrival at Mumbai airport and his allegedly being accorded special treatment in contravention of security regulations. (The record was subsequently set straight.)

Posterity will record Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar's awesome comeback, which has been embellished by records galore — an unprecedented, unbeaten ODI double century on February 24, 2010, against South Africa at Gwalior, 15,000 Test runs, and international recognition, the most prestigious being 2010's ICC Garfield Sobers Cricketer of the Year award and inclusion in Cricinfo's All Time World XI, making him the only Indian to figure in the star-studded team.

But something seems to have suddenly snapped inside the psyche of the living legend. To my knowledge, for the first time in his many-splendoured career, the phenomenon (arguably the best batsman ever, greater even than Don Bradman, considering his exploits in all three forms of the game — Bradman played only Test cricket) lost his patience at a press conference in 2010 when a reporter asked him if he 'felt nervous' in the 90's, as his 25 dismissals (17 in ODIs and 8 in Tests) then seemed to indicate.

Sachin — or Tendlya (a derivative from the Marathi 'tendli', a small native vegetable) as his friends affectionately address him — reacted in a manner that fell just short of being offensive. He asked the shell-shocked scribe to check his facts and compare his total dismissals in the 90's to the number of centuries he has scored in Tests and ODIs. Viewed dispassionately, the reaction seemed explosive, certainly by Tendulkar's hitherto lofty standards of propriety.

Then there was the almost-vicious swipe at the media at the end of the fourth day of the drawn second Test against New Zealand in November 2010, when Sachin reacted sharply to a loaded question from television commentator and former India captain Ravi Shastri, at Hyderabad, snapping: "The press can write whatever it writes. I don't read newspapers when I'm playing. My security staff will tell you I don't even bother to pick up my copy outside my door."

Should one attach any significance to this atypical outburst? Was it an aberration brought on, perhaps, by jetlag after his recent hectic travel schedule and promotional events in Delhi and Mumbai and/or only natural human tension on the eve of the Ahmedabad Test against New Zealand, to be followed by the tour of South Africa and the World Cup in February?

Be that as it may, the incident has rekindled in me, a curiosity about Sachin, the very private man, about his mental make-up, his innermost thought processes and feelings, his genetic background, his childhood and early upbringing, his religious beliefs, his environment including parental influence, his siblings (brothers Ajit and Nitin and sister Savita), his friends, acquaintances and most importantly, his nuclear family consisting of paediatrician wife Anjali, daughter Sara and son Arjun.

While ascending to a hitherto uncharted stratosphere in the game, Sachin scaled the Everest of 200 unbeaten runs in the Gwalior ODI against South Africa in 2011 and Test aggregate of 15,000 runs, which won him the coveted ICC Cricketer of the Year Award for 2009-10, eight years after he last won it. This was the ninth time he had topped the ratings in his career, the first coming in November 1994.

Earlier in 2002, 12 years into his career, Wisden had ranked him the second greatest player of all time (behind the legendary Don Bradman) and the second greatest player in one-day internationals after Isaac Vivian Alexander Richards, the West Indian great.

With all due respect to the integrity of the gentlemen in white coats on the ICC elite panel of umpires, Sachin's aggregate of hundreds in Tests and ODIs

would have been even more awesome but for some extraordinarily curious decisions. According to respected late cricket writer Peter Roebuck, some 30 of Sachin's dismissals have been 'dubious'.

Add to this the number of matches the Little Champion, (described by the redoubtable Shane Warne as the 'greatest player he has played against') has missed because of injuries, and the number of times he has fallen in the 90's in his international career — 27 at last count, thrice at 99 — the centuries against his name would have been jaw-dropping. But then, that's a matter of 'if my aunt had been a man...'

Are champions like the incomparable Don Bradman, albeit in a vastly different era, and is Sachin Tendulkar, indisputably India's only contemporary icon in any sphere of life, 'wired' differently from us mere mortals?

Is the equilibrium between the left and right sides of the brain unique in their cases? Is there something super human in their physical attributes? Are their hand-eye co-ordination and the coaction between brain and the five senses as well as the rest of the body special as compared with that in children of a lesser god, in a manner of speaking?

In Tendulkar's particular case, is his diminutive 5 feet. 5 in. frame — ideally suited to a batsman — and therefore, his body balance, sense of timing and ability to play late, the only determinant factor?

Or do his uncluttered bent of mind (the result of his cricket-interrupted education, a blessing in disguise cricket-wise!), his modest middle-class Rajapur Saraswat background and God-fearing upbringing in an academic family environment (both his parents were teachers who emphasised discipline and values, above all else) make for a formidable physical, emotional, mental and spiritual crucible in the cricketing context?

A few days after receiving the Outstanding Achievement in Sport and the People's Choice award in London October '10 and on becoming the only present day player to be named in ESPN Cricinfo's all-time World XI, the unassuming Sachin said: "It feels unreal and extraordinary to be placed alongside legends such as Don Bradman."

While eulogising coach Gary Kirsten for his role in mentoring him, Sachin said: "Gary has been instrumental in this. Together we've worked hard in the last couple of years to improve my batting," in the same lavish way that he had praised former Indian coach and ex-New Zealand captain John Wright.

Wright is on record as saying: "I wish a lot of lesser players could learn from Sachin's thoughtfulness and the respect he showed, not just for me as the coach but for his cricket."

Given his single-minded devotion at the altar of raising the bar, coupled with his unparalleled, child-like enjoyment of the game even after 22 continuous years of match play, training sessions and travel that has taken a heavy toll on considerably younger players, 200 Test appearances are within his grasp, injuries permitting.

At the London Asian Awards ceremony, the then 38 year old emphasised the value of dreaming.

"Life would be flat without dreams. I think it's really important to dream and then to chase those dreams..." Upon being conferred the Indian Air Force's honorary rank of group captain in September 2010, he urged the youth to "dream, because dreams do come true."

Cross dominant Sachin (he bats, bowls and throws with his right hand but writes with the left) described the year 2010 as his "sweetest" but admitted his form "subsided" a few years ago.

"There was a little dip for me, around 2005 and 2006. But I had a lot of injuries then. I had finger and elbow injuries and then a back injury. All these upper body injuries may have altered my back swing a little. But fortunately all that is behind me now and I've been able to put in the hours of practice needed," he said.

Members of Mumbai's Willingdon Sports Club, arguably India's most prestigious, recall Sachin being asked during his formal interview for his wife's membership by a member of the Balloting and Disciplinary Committee, whether he would turn out for the Club's friendly fixtures. The genial genius replied with a smile: "If I'm selected."

Ever a soft-spoken, mild mannered gentleman who respects his elders, the sensitive, family man has scrupulously refrained from touching upon his deep hurt at the harsh words heaped upon him by his hitherto fanatical fans at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium, who ungratefully booed him during his off-form phase.

In an example of constant evolution towards the ideal of perfection, Sachin had altered his earlier stance, in which he would lean overmuch on his weighty 3lb 40z (1.51kg), thick-edged and heavily bowed bat with head insufficiently in

line with his toes. Moreover, his back-lift was pronounced, a failing which opponents were quick to spot in an age of ubiquitous video scrutiny.

Former Test opener Aakash Chopra, who had the good fortune of watching the Master Blaster bat from the other end, wrote in the *India Today Collector's Edition* in September 2010: "The world may consider Sachin Tendulkar the God of cricket, but for him cricket has always been God and he a devout worshipper."

Tendulkar's social conscience — as evidenced by his contributions to humankind through unsung philanthropy and discreet involvement with humane causes, including the Make A Wish Foundation and Mumbai-based NGO Apnalaya, (through which he sponsors 200 underprivileged girls) — is equally impressive. Recently he joined Nana Patekar, scientist Jayant Narlikar and Planning Commission member Narendra Jadhav in a *Noise Free Diwali* campaign.

In an erudite article in *The Times of India*, CP Surendran wrote that the English language "fails Tendulkar", in the sense that all words and phrases of praise — *prodigy, master, master-blaster, genius, super, perfect, terrific, consummate, fantastic, incomparable, saviour, phenomenon, historic, legendary, maximum-man, titanic, humungous, tremendous, incomparable and immortal* — have been found wanting in describing him.

Perhaps the most defining moment in Sachin's illustrious career, one that illustrates his parents' influence on him, was his unbeaten 140 in the 1999 World Cup in England, during which his father passed away on May 18, the night before India's match against Zimbabwe.

Upon returning home for the funeral, Sachin was reportedly chided by his mother: "You were playing for the country. Who asked you to come back?" In his book *Sachin — The Story of the World's Greatest Batsman*, Gulu Ezekiel writes: "The last rites over, Sachin rushed back to England for the crucial match against Kenya to score 140 not out in an unbroken stand of 237 with Rahul Dravid in 27 overs."

Sachin dedicated his century to his father saying he had been motivated to answer his country's call by his mother who said that his father would have wanted him to stay back.

However, this is not to suggest that the Little Master, (of whom the great Shane Warne jokingly admitted having nightmares and Matthew Hayden said, in all seriousness: "I have seen God. He bats at No. 4 in India in Tests,") is white as driven snow either as person or cricketer.

In the course of his distinguished 22-year career, Sachin, who was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian award and the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, India's highest sporting honour, is venerated as a deity in his country.

But he has also shown that he is a mere mortal with feet of clay — witness his run-ins with authority, cricketing and civil.

There was the unsavoury brouhaha over his request for import duty exemption for the Ferrari F360 Modena car presented to him by Michael Schumacher at Silverstone on behalf of Fiat, owners of Ferrari, when he equalled Don Bradman's record of 29 Test centuries at Port of Spain on April 19, 2002.

The Union Ministry of Finance (Jaswant Singh was the minister then) initially granted Sachin exemption from payment of 120 per cent excise duty amounting to Rs.11.3 million on the car's value of Rs.7.5 million. A PIL (Public Interest Litigation) was lodged in the Delhi High Court and there was a national outcry over the waiver. Tendulkar then agreed to pay the duty but Fiat stepped in belatedly and agreed to pick up the tab.

Sachin, then wet behind his ears, especially in financial matters, was obviously wrongly advised, as was indeed the case during his widely-publicised spat with his chartered accountant. Fortunately wiser counsel prevailed even as the media smelt the genesis of a juicy scandal. Fortunately the matter was settled expeditiously without much damage to the reputation of either side.

During the 1999 home series against New Zealand following his comeback after back surgery, there was his inexplicable decision in the third Test at Ahmedabad to refuse to enforce a follow-on after India were ahead by 275 runs, which enabled the Kiwis to draw the match amid huge controversy and uncharitable allegations.

The CBI exonerated skipper Tendulkar (he had been awarded the Arjuna Award by the Government of India in 1994 in recognition of his outstanding achievements) and coach Kapil Dev following an investigation for match fixing and corruption.

The 2001-02 tour of South Africa saw Tendulkar and five other Indian players hauled over the coals by match referee Mike Denness and fined for what he considered "excessive and intimidatory appealing" and "showing dissent" at the umpires' decisions.

The charge against Tendulkar, in particular, was that he had tampered with the

ball while bowling, thereby "bringing the game into disrepute". As charges of racism against Denness, a former England captain of Scottish descent, flew thick and fast, the maestro was fined 75 per cent of his match fees and a one-Test ban was slapped on him, suspending him until December 2001.

Sachin said later, in India, that he did not intend to go against the rules and spirit of the game and was merely cleaning the ball.

Following a nationwide uproar, then BCCI head honcho Jagmohan Dalmiya demanded that Denness be sacked for the remainder of the series. South Africa's Dennis Lindsay replaced Denness for the third match, which was termed 'unofficial'. Denness was not allowed to enter the St. George's Park ground at Port Elizabeth until the ban on Sachin was lifted.

The true test of Sachin's steely resolve came when he struck a lean patch in 2004 which prompted many critics, including former Australian captain Ian Chappell to write the maestro off.

In his signed column in *MiD DAY*, Ian Chappell called upon Sachin to retire after scores of 7 (against Bangladesh), 57 (versus Bermuda) and 0 (against Sri Lanka) in the 2007 World Cup.

Looking back at this phase of his career after becoming the most-capped player in Test cricket (169) in the third and final Test against Sri Lanka at the P. Sara Oval, Sachin reminisced: "The journey has gone by quickly. Time flies, you just need to enjoy. There have been rough patches sometimes, but I have followed a simple formula — whenever I have gone through these phases, I have worked harder."

The disappointing run, which continued in New Zealand and the early part of the 2003-04 tour of Australia, was exacerbated by some shocking umpiring decisions but the champion silenced his detractors, scoring 241 not out in 613 minutes against Australia at Sydney in January 2004, his longest innings, which was notable for his fortitude and Spartan discipline in totally eschewing the cover drive in response to the off-side bait set by Steve Waugh.

Steve Waugh has pointed out in *India Today*: "It was after the Sydney Test that we saw a new, cautious, more accumulative batsman take over from his earlier free-flowing avatar."

It has been a road well travelled for Sachin from his international debut on November 15, 1989 at the age of 16 on the tour of Pakistan in which he scored a ferocious 53 off 18 balls, inclusive of 28 off one over (6,4,0,6,6,6) from

Pakistani great spin bowler Abdul Qadir in an exhibition match at Peshawar, after he had been dealt grievous body blows on debut by the fiery Pakistan pace attack.

In the final Test at Sialkot, the *wunderkind* demonstrated raw courage when declining medical attention despite being struck on the nose by a bouncer, which caused blood to gush. The Pakistan attack then included the awesome threesome of Imran Khan, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis.

Another sterling knock was his unbeaten 194 against Pakistan at Multan in 2004, the match in which captain Rahul Dravid ostensibly (but, Sourav Ganguly, according to some people) declared the inning closed with Sachin just six short of his double century. The incident caused some bad blood among senior team members but the issue was quickly resolved.

Of Sachin's many memorable innings in his magnificent career, three in particular stand out.

One was the match against South Africa in the Hero Cup at Kolkata's Eden Gardens in 1993. As mentioned by former India captain Ajit Wadekar in his appreciation of the Little Master, it had been decided at the team meeting that, in the event of the match going into the last over, India's greatest all-rounder Kapil Dev would be entrusted the arduous task.

Wadekar writes: (Page 39) "So when South Africa needed six to win before the start of the final over, as decided, I signalled that Kapil should bowl it. I could see captain Azharuddin, Kapil and Sachin in a huddle. But somehow, Kapil was hesitant and seeing this, Sachin offered to bowl it. He did a fine job by restricting the South African batsmen and India went on to win the match and later the tournament."

Wadekar also reminisces about the tour of New Zealand a few months later for the one-day series. During the 1993-94 ODI series at Auckland, opening batsman Navjot Singh Sidhu pulled out due to a stiff neck. While Azharuddin, Kapil and Wadekar debated the team composition, Sachin stepped up saying: "Sir, is it okay if I open?" The cricket manager emphasised that it was important for the team to win the game to which Sachin replied: "Don't worry," and went on to play a fine innings of 82 off 49 balls to enable India to win.

My dear friend and colleague Dicky Rutnagur, settled in London, remembers well Sachin's 1990 "epic effort" which, according to him, "saved India from a defeat, which seemed inevitable when the scoreboard read 127 for 5 against England."

"The boy," Rutnagur writes, "stood on the burning deck for four hours to remain undefeated with 119, a remarkable performance from one who had not yet put a razor to his face."

Mention must also be made of the unseemly spat with then coach Greg Chappell during the team's preparation for the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean when the coach criticised Sachin for his 'attitude' and suggested he bat lower down the order in the interest of the team. Sachin stood his ground but the team was booted out of the tournament in the very first round along with Pakistan to the financial detriment of the World Cup.

Further proof of Sachin's tenacity was provided on the 1991-92 tour of Australia when he scored an unbeaten 148 in Sydney and a century on the notoriously fast and bouncy WACA wicket at Perth, prompting the puckish Merv Hughes to remark to the illustrious Allan Border: "This little prick's going to get more runs than you, AB."

Then there was the memorable 'sandstorm' (*shamaal*) century on the dirt track of Sharjah in 1998 against the then all-conquering Australians. On his 25th birthday, he hit another century against Australia which won the trophy for India.

The year 1999 saw Tendulkar return to England after attending his father's funeral in Mumbai to score 140 off 101 balls in the very next match against Kenya in Bristol.

And who can forget Sachin's unbeaten 241, followed by 60 not out in the 2003-04 drawn series against Australia at Sydney? Struggling to regain his form, the master batsman stoically cut out all shots to the off, despite ongoing blandishments offered by skipper Steve Waugh.

Perhaps the litmus test of Tendulkar's character was the eventful 2007-08 'Monkeygate' tour of Australia, which came precariously close to being called off and triggering a diplomatic stand-off. Following allegations of racist behaviour during the Sydney Test, the volatile Harbhajan Singh, asininely refused to learn that his quixotic notion of 'aggression' was not only counter-productive but utterly unsporting and in rank bad taste.

Banned for the remainder of the tournament by the governing council of the lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) for his intemperate run-in with S. Sreesanth, his India teammate, the irrepressible Sardar seemed suitably chastised as exemplified by the dramatic improvement in his batting in the 2010 Test series against New Zealand, in which he scored back-to-back centuries at

Ahmedabad and Hyderabad. (Rahul Dravid joked about 'Bhajji' being the 'new Sobers'.) Ironically, Harbhajan and Sreesanth, who made up subsequently, broke the record for the 10th wicket (in India vs NZ Tests) in the Hyderabad Test with a partnership of 105.

Initially charged under Level 3 of the ICC Code of Conduct by match referee Mike Procter on the 'Monkeygate' tour, the 'Turbanator' was let off by Justice John Hansen, who conducted a subsequent inquiry, following evidence from Tendulkar. However, to this day, the Australian players and media are unconvinced that Tendulkar, Bhajji's close friend — an improbable friendship considering their disparate personalities — did not hear Harbhajan's alleged "racist slur", as claimed, even though he was palpably within earshot.

The incident led to a furore back home, with the media shouting itself hoarse in a mass hysteria of self-righteous and chauvinistic (bordering on jingoistic) support for Harbhajan. The spinner's Test ban was lifted but he was fined 50 per cent of his match fees.

Although the icon's image of integrity has been somewhat sullied Down Under, as also in knowledgeable circles in India and elsewhere, the faith of most fanatical Indian devotees in Sachin, remains unshaken. He is habitually the first to board and occupy a front seat while listening to music on his iPod.

For all his cricketing savvy, Sachin Tendulkar was never a brilliant captain, as evidenced by the team's success (or rather, failure) rate under his stewardship against Australia and South Africa. His expectations of his team were often as demanding as the ones he has always had of himself, but, according to insiders, he was often prone to placing friendship above team interest.

Moreover, Sachin's assertion to the media on September 3, 2010, that "No Indian cricketer has ever been approached by a bookie" in his 22 years of international cricket, is incredulous.

On the flip side, insiders know well that during the 1999-2000 tour of Australia, then captain Tendulkar was greatly upset when the Indian selectors decided to fly out Nayan Mongia, who was allegedly involved in the match-fixing scandal (along with Mohammed Azharuddin, Ajay Jadeja, Manoj Prabhakar and Ajay Sharma), as replacement for injured wicketkeeper MSK Prasad.

It's no secret that Tendulkar was so incensed over reports that the tainted Azharuddin too, would be flown over, that he carried his letter of resignation in his pocket.

On the other hand, further evidence of the self-effacing Tendulkar's deference to the high moral ground came when, in a reference to the News of the World revelations of 'spot-fixing' by three Pakistani players during the series against England in England last year, he said unequivocally: "ICC should make a thorough probe in the scandal and take appropriate action if the players are found guilty. If the allegations are true they will certainly bring disrepute to the game."

Former Australian captain Ian Chappell, for one, has faulted Sachin for his reluctance to take a leadership role in matters concerning the game.

"If there's any criticism of Tendulkar's career, it's his lack of influence on the game off the field. He has steadfastly refused to become involved with contentious issues affecting the game," Chappell wrote.

Chappell, however, went on to say that he understands Sachin's reasons when he says: "In his defence, when you have to wear a disguise and get your driving kicks at 2:00 am to avoid detection, it would be self-defeating to make headline-grabbing statements."

To assert that the religious, fast-car loving, exemplary family man and son-in-law of industrialist Anand Mehta and social worker Annabel, has brought unalloyed joy to cricket lovers the world over, is to state the obvious.

More significantly, he has boosted the sense of national pride and self-esteem of fanatical cricket aficionados in a nation of a billion-plus people, often helping their spirits soar celestially in an otherwise mundane existence.

Of Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar, posterity could well record, in the words of William Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar*:

*"His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him,
That Nature would stand up
And say to all the world,
"THIS WAS A MAN!"*

Introduction by Sachin Tendulkar

It gives me both pride and joy to know that a book encompassing my career has been put together for cricket fans. It contains articles which appeared in MiD DAY from 1986 to 2012; it covers a long stretch of time and must have taken a big effort to put this together.

The book has material covering even my formative years, as memorable a period for me as the years of international cricket. I will never forget Dilip Vengsarkar leaving his Times Shield match to visit the Cricket Club of India, to see me bat for my school, Shardashram Vidyamandir. It drove me to push myself to do bigger things. If I got a double hundred in schools cricket, I was driven to follow it up with a triple.

In the 1980s, all this was well reported by the Mumbai press. It's something that gave me a big thrill as a schoolboy. Looking back through this book on those early years, even now I appreciate what it did for me back then.

As I began to go through the book, I noticed an article by Sunil Warriar, who probably was the first journalist I 'spoke' to. That interview, my first ever, was conducted at an Irani restaurant near Shivaji Park. Of course, my brother Ajit was present there.

In many ways, MiD DAY to me has been a paper for Mumbai and its cricket. I remember how surprised I was when they decided to bring out an entire edition on me, to mark my turning 30 in 2003.

Through this book, it is as if I have lived through the many moments in my life, in words and pictures. They belong to journalists and photographers I have known, including some pictures from the personal collections of friends, which brought back a lot of good memories.

It has been a pleasure to know Khalid Ansari, a veteran journalist, whom I first met in the West Indies in 1997. His contribution to Indian sports journalism has been significant and special. *Sportsweek* magazine, his brainchild, was a publication we would look forward to as kids.

Clayton has been reporting on my cricket right from my school days. We have spoken many times and while writing this introduction, I tried to remember the several places those interviews were held: at home, in airports, on tours and even in my car after one of my tours.

Cricketers and journalists have a curious relationship through the ups and downs. Clayton and I have enjoyed each other's trust and understood the pressures of both our professions.

I wish *Sachin: Born to Bat* by Khalid A-H Ansari and edited by Clayton Murzello every success.

Sachin Tendulkar

Perceptions

Bishan Singh Bedi

Spin great and former cricket manager

I always give credit to Sachin's mother for giving us such a great jewel. He was a born genius. He was born to bat and that is what he has been doing to the best of his ability for more than 20 years.

Richie Benaud

The biggest voice in the game

He has defined cricket in his fabulous, impeccable manner. He is to batting what Shane Warne is to bowling. Courtesy: MSN

Dhiru Bhatia

Sachin's senior teammate at CCI

When Sachin Tendulkar was roped in as a playing member of the Cricket Club of India, he was asked to meet me on his first day at the club. He approached me with the words, "I have come to play cricket here." The words summed up his intentions in a very simplistic yet direct way.

Harsha Bhogle

Television commentator and columnist

Sachin's contribution to Indian cricket has as much to do with his exploits on the field as his demeanour off it. He earned, even demanded, respect and the system that produced him earned some as well. He could be

brutal on the field and generous off it; demanding on it and considerate off it; master of the game on it, a loyal servant off it. Sachin had something that nature bestows on few: a great passion to perform and a fantastic work ethic to go with his ambition.

Ian Chappell

Australia captain turned commentator

One of the things that have impressed me about Sachin Tendulkar is his preparedness to work hard to enhance his wonderful natural skill. Tendulkar has been smart enough to realise that talent alone isn't enough to be a champion.

Malcolm Conn

Chief cricket writer of the News Ltd. Group (Australia)

The most remarkable aspect of Sachin Tendulkar's remarkable career is the gentle human qualities he portrays for such a brutal batsman.

Tendulkar was and is a welcome, complex contrast to the brash sports star. A soulful character who thinks deeply and speaks quietly. He is an example for the ages.

Nari Contractor

Former India captain

Sachin Tendulkar is a great cricketer, who gives a good name to the gentleman's game. Yes, despite all the controversies, cricket can still be called a gentleman's game thanks to men like Tendulkar.

In many ways, he is the epitome of humility and politeness. Just like his batting, he flows naturally with these qualities.

Mike Coward

Doyen of Australian cricket writers

That Sachin Tendulkar is so unremarkable away from the middle makes him the most remarkable soul. His strength lies in self-awareness, innate humility and a capacity to simplify a complicated life in the public gaze. Few great men speak so openly of their love of family and their mother's food and of faith in God and guru.

Kapil Dev

India's 1983 World Cup-winning captain and coach from 1999 to 2000

Sachin Tendulkar is one of the greatest sportsmen produced by this country and he is truly a legend. He is a great ambassador for his country as well as for his sport.

However, I have not heard him talk of what he thinks about sports in our country. I want to hear his views on the current state of affairs and how we can improve as a sporting nation.

Sameer Dighe

Former Mumbai teammate and friend

Sachin Tendulkar the person makes Sachin Tendulkar the cricketer that he is and Sachin Tendulkar the cricketer makes Sachin Tendulkar the person that he is.

Farokh Engineer

Former India wicketkeeper

Brian Lara was also a genius but our Sachin kept going and is still going strong, match after match, with the same enthusiasm that has endeared him not only as the darling and the jewel of us fellow Indians, but to all cricket lovers the world over.

Andy Flower

Former Zimbabwe captain

There are two kinds of batsmen in the world. One — Sachin Tendulkar. Two — all the others. Courtesy: MSN

Anshuman Gaekwad

Former India batsman and coach

What can you say of a batsman, who scores one of the finest, if not the finest one-day innings of all time, and tells his coach at the end of the match that he would like to discuss something about his batting that he was not happy about deep into the night?

That's exactly what Sachin Tendulkar did on the night he scored that whirlwind hundred against Australia at Sharjah in 1998, that went down

in history as the 'Sandstorm ton'.

Hemant Kenkre

Sachin's captain at CCI

Having known Sachin Tendulkar since 1986, if there is one aspect that has remained with him — apart from his insatiable appetite for runs — it is his humility and concern for the environment around him. When I asked him, many years ago, what he would like to be remembered as, his prompt reply was: "A good human being. That's what my father always told me."

Gary Kirsten

Former India coach

I spent many hours watching Sachin bat from my fielding position at mid-on and mid-off when I played cricket against him. My lasting memory was that of his unique ability on slow wickets to effortlessly get the ball back past the bowler and to the boundary. This appeared to me to be a simple enough technique with little fuss and movement, yet exceptionally difficult for anyone else to execute. When I was given the humbling and privileged honour of coaching the Indian cricket team, I would be given the unique opportunity to get to know Sachin the person and really understand what makes him tick. And I was not disappointed.

Peter Lalor

Chief cricket writer of The Australian

It was 2004. Sunil Gavaskar was at the nets as a new generation of greats trained. VVS was probably there. Dravid and Sehwag too.

The shattering sound, however, was for none of them. It was, of course, for Sachin, who was nearby chatting quietly. He'd had his back to the stand but for a moment he had turned toward them. He had smiled and waved and they had responded with that roar and it was then that you got some inkling of the incredible power he has. It is a force he doesn't bother to understand or, more importantly to exploit, for he is a humble man. A humble man, who walks quietly but carries a very big blade.

Brian Lara

West Indian batting great

Sachin is a genius. I'm a mere mortal. Courtesy: MSN

Sanjay Manjrekar

India batsman-turned-commentator

Sachin Tendulkar was fortunate that he was born in the family that he was. The Tendulkars are very shy, soft spoken, introverted people, with great respect for fellow human beings. Sachin is no different. That all the unprecedented fame, that came his way at a very tender age, did not change him is something I find as unbelievable as his continued success in the 22nd year of his cricketing career.

Christopher Martin-Jenkins

Cricket writer and former MCC president

My first sighting of Sachin Tendulkar was at Lord's in 1990. The mastery of his technique for someone who was so inexperienced in Test cricket is what stood out for me. He was full of composure. My best Tendulkar moment would have to be the brilliant hundred in the 1990 Old Trafford Test, and that great catch he took to dismiss Allan Lamb down at the sight screen at Lord's in the same series was memorable.

Atul Ranade

Close friend Devacha mulga (God's child) is what I called Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar in private after his ODI 200 against South Africa in 2010. These words came out while watching him dish out that innings to billions of his followers. It was also a *thappad* (slap) aimed at some 'pundits' of the game who have not done anything great for the country.

Ashis Ray

Cricket writer, UK

When I invited Sachin Tendulkar to attend the launch of my book *One-Day Cricket: The Indian Challenge* at the Cricket Club of India, Mumbai in 2007, he was unable to accept because of a prior commitment. He, however, suggested that he would be happy to pose with the book to publicise it. He need not have done this. Yet, he went out of his way to assist. Sachin is a rare amalgam of goodness as a man and greatness as a

cricketer.

Peter Roebuck

The late cricket writer

Sachin Tendulkar is the most complete of batsmen. His strength lies in his ability to combine the pragmatic and the ideal. Moreover he does so without undue strain. Mozart strove to exalt but did not forget to entertain. Nature prevents Tendulkar from producing an ugly stroke.

Dicky Rutnagur

Cricket writer, UK

It may be hyperbolic, but the urge to look upon Sachin Tendulkar as cricket's Mozart is irresistible. If the Austrian genius was only six years old when he put his signature to his maiden composition, a set of six minuets, this boy from Bandra, who was to play Test cricket for 20 years and more and blossom into the most prolific scorer in its history, was only 12 when he scored two centuries in an under-19 competition.

An abundance of natural talent was not the only gift Providence had set Sachin off with in life. He was placed in a family bound by love and high principles, which is why success, fame, universal adulation and wealth notwithstanding, his feet have remained firmly planted on the ground.

The first to recognise Sachin's potential and take on the role of his mentor was his brother, Ajit, 11 years his elder. Ajit was to the young cricketing genius what father Leopold was to the child Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Jatin Paranjape

Sachin's Ranji Trophy teammate

I have known Sachin for the past 29 years. There was only one thing he was focused on then, and there is only one thing he is focused on now — cricket. Even at that time, there was no doubt in my untrained but instinctive mind, that Sachin was destined to be the greatest batsman in the world.

Vasu Paranjape

Former National coach

Sachin was selected in the under-15 coaching camp organised by the Board of Control for Cricket in India, in Indore. One night, I was woken up by the watchman of the Nehru Stadium complaining that there was a sound of bat hitting ball emerging from one of the rooms and the sound was disturbing everyone in the hostel.

I was enraged on being woken up and knew the boy who must be making the noise. He was right. It was then that I admonished the watchman, saying, "don't complain to me. Go and join him."

Rahul Sagar

Sachin's teammate on the 1988 Star Cricket Club tour to UK

In 1988, Kailash Gattani took an under-19 team to tour the UK. Even though we played about 20 games in 30 days from Brighton in the South to Aberdeen in Scotland, you could never get enough of watching him bat. Sachin was 15 years old at the time.

In Huddersfield, Yorkshire, we played against a team of experienced Pakistani first-class players. He played an innings of 80 and won the match for us in very difficult conditions. They were so excited and impressed with him that the sponsor of their team invited our entire team to their lovely restaurant for dinner.

Rajesh Sanghi

Businessman and under-15 teammate

I first met Sachin in 1985 on our Mumbai under-15 tour. He was a kid brimming with passion, energy, fun and mischief. Although he was obsessive about cricket and seemed at peace with himself only when he hit the ball dead perfect, it was quite a sight to watch him perfecting his "drive" on the gaming machines pursuing his other passion, of fast cars.

Rajdeep Sardesai

Television personality

I was privileged to watch Sachin Tendulkar's first first-class hundred. I was in The Times of India in 1988. Print journalism in the days before the madness of 24-hour TV set in offered one the luxury of taking the afternoon off to watch a game of cricket. Such was Sachin's reputation as

a schoolboy cricketer, that a group of us felt almost obliged to be there at what we saw as the dawn of a new era in Indian cricket. True to form, Sachin did not disappoint. In that debut game against Gujarat, he lit up the Wankhede Stadium with an array of powerful shots that had us on our feet. At an age when teenagers are hoping to find a girl to date, Sachin was ready to keep his date with history. In the 24 years since that sunny afternoon in Mumbai, Sachin has written a new chapter in cricketing history, achieving the quite remarkable record of a 100 international hundreds.

But Sachin's real genius lies not just in his ability to keep his eyes on the ball, but his feet on the ground.

Ravi Shastri

Former teammate closest to Tendulkar

Sachin Tendulkar's longevity, sheer consistency and the weight of his performances over the years make him the champion cricketer that he is.

I was fortunate to see him taking his first steps in international cricket on that Pakistan tour of 1989-90. What struck me first was his genius and tons of natural ability. But, equally important, was the ability to make batting look easy.

There was a stage in 2007 when things were not smooth. He had a few injuries and was not in the best of form. I was manager on the tour of Bangladesh that followed the World Cup and I remember making it very clear to the media not to mess around with him because he can slap you in the face. What followed was one of the most successful phases in his cricketing career.

S Venkataraghavan

Spin great and international umpire

What I admire about Sachin Tendulkar is his humility. He has his head on his shoulders and has not allowed anything to go to his head after achieving so much on the world stage. Sachin always showed that he is willing to learn and loves to have conversations with people. Basically, he knows how to live in the presence of his elders.

Ajit Wadekar

Former India captain, who was manager of the team from 1992 to 1996

Two incidents during my time as manager of the Indian team bring to the fore Sachin Tendulkar's qualities as a cricketer — the last over against South Africa in the 1993 Hero Cup at Kolkata and the one-day international against New Zealand in Auckland, 1994.

First the Hero Cup semi-final: It was decided at the team meeting that if the match went into the last over, Kapil Dev would bowl it. So when South Africa needed six to win before the start of the final over, as decided, I signalled that Kapil should bowl it. I could see captain Azharuddin, Kapil and Sachin in a huddle. But somehow, Kapil was hesitant and seeing this, Sachin offered to bowl it. He did a fine job by restricting the South African batsmen and India went on to win the match and later the tournament.

A few months later, we travelled to New Zealand for a one-day series. I remember being at the ground before the start of the Auckland one-dayer and getting a message that our regular opener Sidhu would not be playing as he had a stiff neck. While Azhar, Kapil and I pondered who should open, Sachin said, "Sir, is it okay if I open?" I looked at Azhar and Kapil and they didn't say anything. "Go ahead," I said, before stressing that we needed to win this game. "Don't worry," he said, before going on to play a fine innings of 82 off 49 balls. And yes, we won.

John Wright

India coach (2001 to 2005)

Sachin Tendulkar has a genuine love, passion and respect for the game. He also understands that he is playing for his country. The reason why he's so loved is because people know once Sachin walks to the wicket or walks to the field, he is playing not only for himself, but for the people he represents. And in this modern day, that's very special. It could have been so easy for Sachin to take the foot off and go into a comfort zone, but I don't think he ever thinks about a comfort zone. His work bears testimony to this. Father Time will catch up with him one day. It always does, but it hasn't yet!



Sachin's B.R.E.T.T. Factor

Sunil Gavaskar

From one batting legend to another. India's original Little Master pulls out his praise brush to pay tribute to Sachin Tendulkar who, in the opinion of many, is the greatest Indian alive.

The one thing that strikes you about Sachin Tendulkar is his **B**alance. As a batsman it is so crucial to have the balance that enables him to go forward or back with equal felicity. Even when a bowler bowls a great delivery, Sachin may be beaten or may get out but he never looks off balance. The balance on the field is helped by balance off the field. Despite being in the public eye and one of the most recognised faces on planet earth he is still the same kid who first came into the spotlight with his exploits with the bat while still in school. Yes, he is a confident young man now but there is no air or attitude about him.

The second thing that strikes you is his **R**espect for the game. He knows that the game is what has made him and he has never shown anything but the greatest respect for the game. His **E**nthusiasm for the game remains undiminished and he is still like a schoolboy when it comes to playing the game.

Then there is **T**alent of course and the world knows that God took some special time out when he was creating Sachin. Talent however is nothing without **T**emperament and his temperament is such that the biggest of crises does not faze him. He thus has the **BRETT** factor and one is not referring to his adversary Brett Lee here. India may have lost the Kohinoor, but they still have Sachin.



Sachin Tendulkar with Sunil Gavaskar and friend Vinod Kambli at a felicitation function in 1987.

Pic courtesy: The Making of a Cricketer by Ajit Tendulkar


Archives




Doing a perfect salute after receiving the honorary rank of Group Captain of Indian Air Force in New Delhi on September 3, 2010.

Sachin — A New Star on the Horizon

Sunil Warriier



This piece is a result of Sachin Tendulkar's first ever interview. It was conducted at an Irani restaurant near Shivaji Park with Sachin's brother Ajit in attendance. As you will discover in the piece, he fancied limited overs cricket rather than the longer version.



Shardashram, be it the English or the Marathi medium school, has always been in the news because of the cricketing abilities it produces. It has always managed to win a major inter-school title every year. This year Shardashram (English) has been in the news. The players annexed both, the Giles as well as the Harris Shield.

In the Harris Shield, they retained the title when they beat their sister schoolmates, from Shardashram (Marathi) and in the Giles, they defeated Don Bosco, Matunga to record a grand double. And the boy who made it possible was Sachin Tendulkar.

This pint-sized boy has been in such prolific form this season that he was selected for the Bombay under-15 team and also for the West Zone under-15 team. Sachin, who is 13 years old and studies in Std VII, took up playing cricket at his brother's insistence. Ajit Tendulkar is the only other member of the family who plays cricket. He plays in the 'A' division in the local league matches. Although his father, who is a professor in Kirti College, did not know much about cricket, Sachin was always encouraged by him. Nowadays, Sachin plays so much that he is hardly at home and does not even get time to study. But he does intend to obtain his graduation degree.



With Ramakant Achrekar, his coach.

Pic courtesy: The Making of a Cricketer by Ajit Tendulkar

Sachin was coached by Ramakant Achrekar, the school coach, Vasu Paranjape, Das Shivalkar and also by Milind Rege. He also used to attend camps conducted by Balwinder Singh Sandhu at the Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers venue where the latter and Sandeep Patil advised him to bowl leg-spin, but eventually changed tactic as Sachin wanted to be an attacking bowler. Sachin does not like to plod on while batting. He always prefers to attack. His only ambition is to score centuries.



A close up shot in the 1988-89 season.

This season in the Harris Shield (under-17) he scored 276 against BPM High School, Khar in one day. He came in to bat when his side was tottering at 26 for 2 and went on to score a double century. In the second round against St Xavier's, he scored 123 and also captured eight wickets for a paltry 29 runs. Although Sachin did not have a good score in the semi-final against St Mary's, he rattled up 42 and 150 runs, and captured two wickets for 48 in the first innings and two for 57 in the second against Shardashram (Marathi) in the final. In the Giles (under-15) tourney, in the first round against Balmohan Vidyamandir, Sachin had an unbeaten knock of 159 against his name. In the next round against Barfiwala he scored another century — 156. He also captured 4 wickets for 29 runs in the second innings. Against St Mary's in the semi-final, Sachin missed a double ton by a whisker, falling three short. He again captured five wickets conceding 75 runs in the second innings. In the final against Don Bosco, he scored two half centuries and also captured a wicket.

After all his good showing it was no wonder that he was selected for the Bombay and West Zone team for the Vijay Merchant Trophy. And in that trophy, Sachin scored another ton — 123 against Maharashtra. Playing for West Zone he scored 74 runs and also captured a wicket against the South Zone team. He also captained the under-15 Giles Shield team and was the vice-captain for the Harris Shield team. The square-cut and the off-drive are his favourite strokes, while Vivian Richards and Sunil Gavaskar are his favourite batsmen. Sachin does not miss an opportunity to see them in action, either on video or in the cricketing arena. He loves to play one-day cricket more than a four-day match. His natural instincts are to attack from the word go.

Sachin devotes so much time to cricket that he does not have time to take interest in any other game. But he loves to watch tennis. After the memorable

Borg-McEnroe clash in 1980, Sachin let his hair grow — Borg style. Since then it has always been cricket and more cricket.

In the few free hours that he gets, he listens to western music. Why western music, when his father is a poet? Most of his friends are from Bombay Scottish, as he lives in Shivaji Park, and they all love western songs. He thrives on Michael Jackson's songs. Sachin is also a good singer.

Seems to be another Sandeep Patil in the making!

December 1986



With Vinod Kambli (left) and Ricky Couto during their school days.



At home, aged three.

Pic courtesy: The Making of a Cricketer by Ajit Tendulkar

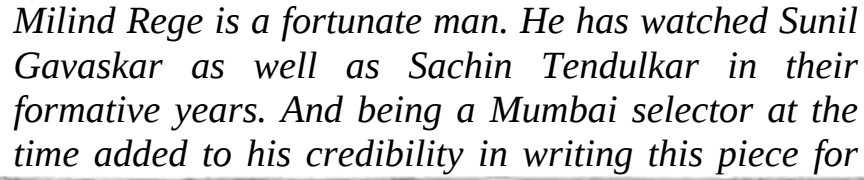


Playing around in the Sahitya Sahawas colony in Bandra.

Pics courtesy: The Making of a Cricketer by Ajit Tendulkar

The Start of It All...

Milind Rege



Milind Rege is a fortunate man. He has watched Sunil Gavaskar as well as Sachin Tendulkar in their formative years. And being a Mumbai selector at the time added to his credibility in writing this piece for Sportsweek magazine.

Many years ago, in the late 50s when Sunil Gavaskar and I were tiny tots, we used to dream of meeting the great Rohan Kanhai in person.

Sport and Pastime, the only authentic sports magazine in those days, had given a centrespread of Kanhai's stance, full sleeved and as usual without a cap.

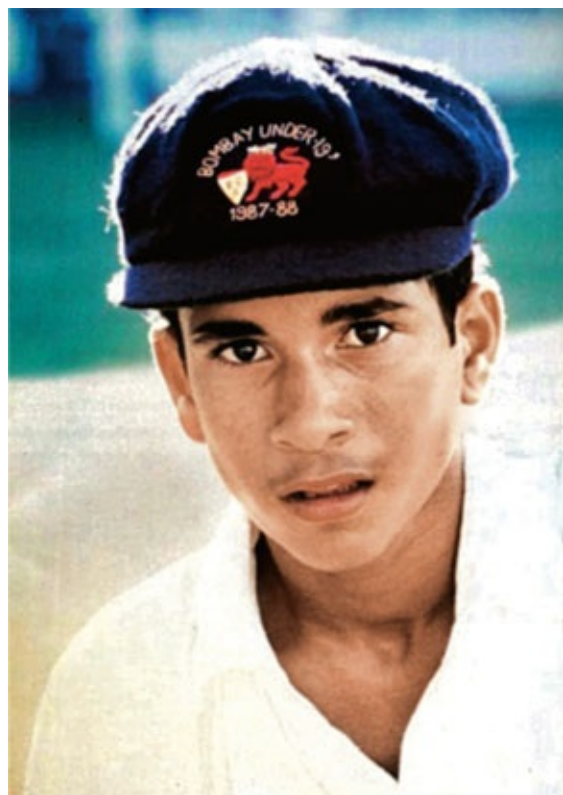
What was noticeable about his stance was his grip. Both his hands were closed together and placed right at the bottom of the handle. You could clearly see the top of the red-rubbered handle.

In many ways, Bombay's young sensation Sachin Tendulkar has a similar grip. But there ends all similarity. Before making any comparisons with players of the past, let me request all of Sachin's well-wishers not to indulge in this exercise, for such indulgence can be excessively damaging to the young man's future.

Australia, as we have seen, had too many boy Bradmans. Just as in our country, there are many mini Gavaskars, from the South, and the West, *etc.*

As a former member of the Bombay junior selection committee, I have seen Sachin blossom. Every spare minute that Sachin had, I have seen him with a bat. In fact, when I was in Pune three years ago, he was batting in the corridor of the hotel.

Sachin has a natural flair for hitting brilliant strokes. In fact, he is endowed with tremendous talent. Bombay has quite a few talented young batsmen. But the most famous is the Tendulkar-Kambli combination.



Adorning the Mumbai under-19 cap with pride.

When Sachin was inducted among the reserves of the Bombay team last year, many an expert felt that he was being rushed into big cricket. I personally felt the same last year. How wrong the so-called 'pundits' of the game can be! We at the Cricket Club of India (CCI), decided to give this boy a feel of 'big company'. We did away with tradition by allowing a 15 year old to use the club's dressing room. Truly, the CCI is in many ways responsible for putting Sachin on the right track, as indeed it did to Sandeep Patil. Given the difficult conditions of the Kanga league, Sachin played like a grown-up man. On a drying track, Sachin was right on top of the ball. Even the seniors in the team fell by way of class.

We decided to induct Sachin straightaway in the Ranji Trophy XI and proposed that he would bat at number four. Every member in the team was delighted with the way Sachin batted. In fact, he was the only one to drive on the front-foot to Pradeep Kasliwal, Anirudh Kher and Anup Sabnis, who work no indecent pace as the Wankhede practice wickets are fairly nippy.

The reason why I say this is because everybody these days tends to go on the back-foot to a medium pacer.

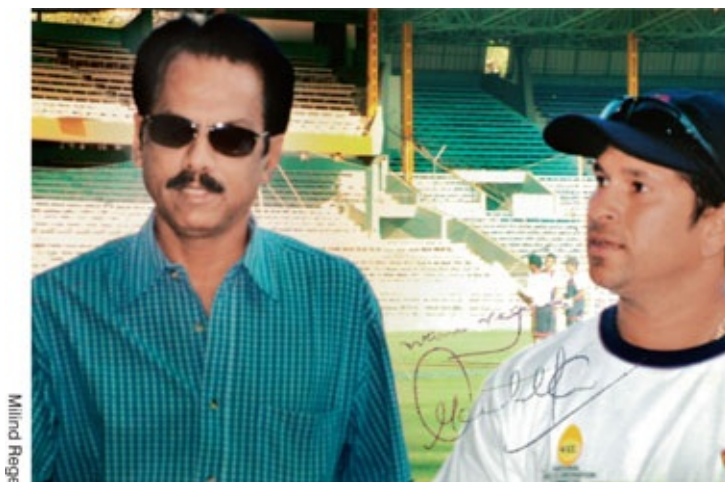
Sunil Gavaskar, who I understand did not watch cricket on a continuous basis,

even during his Test playing days, made it a point to come and see Sachin bat. The crowd that came was there only to see him. And at one point in time, a Gujarat fielder, on not attempting a lofted drive to catch Lalchand Rajput was booed all the way, not that this is anything new at the Wankhede Stadium. All of us watching were fairly keyed to see how a child prodigy played his first big innings. We were all hoping he would do well. Honestly, I personally wanted to see how the lad would thrash the bowling. He walked in and was hemmed in by close-in fielders. Till now it was always the under-15, 17 and 19. His first ball was defended on the front-foot. But the next was beautifully placed at mid-wicket. A-la Dilip Vengsarkar for four, the next was defended. Then once again Sachin stepped out and placed the ball between mid-off and extra-cover for another sizzling boundary.

What I like about Sachin is that he is absolutely comfortable in big company. There are many players in the present team who are still not at ease while playing this level of cricket. Sachin got this baptism by the new ball. As if out to prove the folly of selecting this young lad to play among the big guys, the Gujarat bowlers were at Sachin's throat. Sunil Gavaskar, Eknath Solkar, Ramakant Desai, Sudhir Naik, Vasu Paranjape and so many others nodded their appreciation. Only Raj Singh Dungarpur who had waited all morning missed out an innings of true quality and class.

But Rajbhai will not have to wait long. The press hailed this prodigy and immediately began comparing him to the great Gavaskar.

Kapil Dev has rightly said that many a career has been nipped in the bud by such comparisons. There was a young boy named Guru Gupte, who was extremely talented, but somewhere along the line he fizzled out. I understand in the recent past, Rajdip Kalsi was also promising but there is one thing I can definitely say: Sachin, though 15, bats like a 26 year old. It would be a great sight to watch Sachin bat with his captain, Dilip Vengsarkar. It will be an object lesson for him to learn the tricks of the trade from the world's number one player. Also, I sincerely hope that all the 'technicians' of the game leave Sachin alone. Leave him only to his coach, Ramakant Achrekar, for it is only Achrekar who knows Sachin, his temperament, his attitude, and above all, his talent.



With Milind Rege, who played an important role in Tendulkar's development.

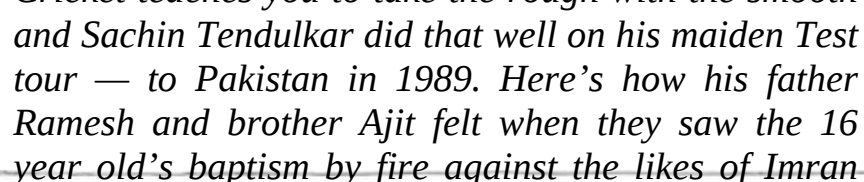
If one is to go down memory lane, Sachin will probably fall in line with such wonderful stroke players as Gundappa Vishwanath, Dilip Vengsarkar, Kapil Dev, Ramesh Saxena, Chandu Borde, Dilip Sardesai, Ajit Wadekar and Hanumant Singh. But it is a long climb to the top.

Gavaskar and Vengsarkar were lucky that they had 'Marshall' Vithal Patil to bowl to them hour after hour at the Dadar Union nets. Patil felt that Sunil needed to play 50 outswingers every day. He fed him with this. Sachin also needs the outswingers, but unfortunately, Patil has stopped playing, and Bombay has no one else who can do this. Also, another small request to the well-wishers of the young cricketer: no more felicitations. Let us leave him alone for there is many a slip between the cup and the lip.

December 1988

Sachin Has Always Been Bold

Sharda Ugra



Cricket teaches you to take the rough with the smooth and Sachin Tendulkar did that well on his maiden Test tour — to Pakistan in 1989. Here's how his father Ramesh and brother Ajit felt when they saw the 16 year old's baptism by fire against the likes of Imran Khan, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis.

He's always been temperamentally bold. He knows the strength of the opposition he's facing. "We are the ones who worry," Ramesh Tendulkar, the father of Sachin Tendulkar (who no longer needs any introduction!)," says when asked about how Sachin faced the Pakistani quick ones. Being India's cricketing prodigy is something this 16 year old has to cope with. Sitting on the sidelines watching their son's baptism by fire is what the Tendulkar family has to go through.

They have watched most of Sachin's matches except his hurricane innings in the Peshawar one-day exhibition match. "We thought he wouldn't play, so I heard of his innings only when I returned from college (Tendulkar Sr. teaches at Kirti College). I think he did very nicely in this series."

But it's not only the success that the family have followed. His father saw him on TV being hit by a bouncer on the nose in the Sialkot Test. "I was very worried, but my greatest solace came from the fact that my son Ajit had gone there to be with him. Then, I rang him up at Sialkot and he told me not to worry as it was nothing. Before the team left, the team doctor, Dr. Vishwas Rao said that Sachin would be well looked after."



Wasim Akram appeals unsuccessfully during the 1989-90 series against India.

Ajit went to meet the wounded soldier with one of Sachin's friends from the building where they live. "He was very happy to see Avinash and me. The injury was because he tried to duck after committing himself. The seam cut his nose. When I went there, it was swollen but that's all. And Sachin was more worried about India's position than his own injury," says Ajit. In a team full of seniors, two familiar faces from home must have given him more courage.

"There will always be tension when he plays for India. He has been to London but he has got a chance to play for India. Within a short span of five years, he has moved from inter-school to Test cricket. It is such an opportunity for him. He was very sure from the beginning about what he wanted. There was some talk of taking him earlier into the Indian team to go to the West Indies. I asked him whether he would be willing to go on the tour and whether he would be afraid. He said it was alright, he would go. He is not afraid," says Ajit. Sachin himself is not superstitious. As his father says, "On one hand, we become more

sensitive to what is said about him and more superstitious, but on the other hand, we know that he is capable of playing well. We have faith. Even Sachin prays to God.”

Some might feel that the pressure cooker environment is too much for a child to take. “We left it to the selectors,” says Ramesh Tendulkar. Now that Tendulkar has justified his selection, Ajit says, “I hope he will be able to keep everything in proportion and not get a swollen head. But you can never say. At the moment he is a friendly boy. But cricket is his main priority. He practices for about seven hours a day.” Ajit is a one who nurtured his younger brother’s talent and saw the potential that this pint-sized boy had. Ajit took him to his coach in school and from then on Sachin’s talent has propelled him forward.

He’s still in college and his father is keen that he continues his education. “When Sachin started to get recognition, Sunil Gavaskar wrote him letter about the importance of continuing, says Ramesh Tendulkar. “Gavaskar told him that education would be very important to getting through bad patches in life. Apart from that, with education, you learn other things – culture, grace. We don’t expect great results from him. He gave his SSC last year after taking part in the Ranji semi-finals and all his friends helped him, came here, sat with him and he got through. In fact, it was his decision to sit for the exams. We have let all our children choose what they wanted to do and encouraged them in that.” Ajit, from whom Sachin is inseparable, says that the stories of Sachin’s sleep walking are true. “He does it all the time here. Even I used to. He talks in his sleep, takes catches, asks for his bat. He loves the game a lot.”



Now that Tendulkar has justified his selection, Ajit says, “I hope he will be able to keep everything in proportion and not get a swollen head. But you can never say.”

The Tendulkars wait for the son, who has made them so proud to return on the 24th.

December 21, 1989

Marvellous at Manchester

Harsha Bhogle

*Celebrated cricket commentator and author of this piece, Harsha Bhogle entitled his book on India's 1990 tour of England, *The Joy of a Lifetime*. It probably wouldn't have been that had it not been for Sachin Tendulkar's maiden Test hundred at Old Trafford.*

Batting partner Manoj Prabhakar offers his congratulations as Tendulkar returns to the pavilion after scoring his first Test century against England at Manchester in 1990.



MANCHESTER: Long after the Old Trafford Test match becomes just another page in Wisden, the memory of a charming, almost embarrassed

young man receiving the Man of the Match award will linger. Sachin Tendulkar will score many more hundreds for India but the freshness of this one will never fade.

“I was there,” the spectators will say forever and what a tragedy there were only 1778 of them. Never was it more truly said that the loss was entirely theirs.

They say romantics never win. That they dazzle and depart leaving great tragedies behind them. Sachin Tendulkar proved them wrong with a hundred of such romance that the heart allowed itself to soak itself in it, the throat allowed a lump to form and an unknown force picked a sprinkling of spectators and brought them to their feet.

If Sachin (and pardon the use of the first name) had inherited his father’s love for literature, he couldn’t have written a better script. And one’s heart went out to his brother Ajit, fiddling nervously with the radio, no doubt. After the Lord’s Test he had blamed his presence for Sachin’s failure since the boy had done no wrong till then. He would have grown three inches taller to see his little protégé come of age and do his country proud so many thousands of miles away from that hallowed land called Shivaji Park.

Tendulkar walked in at 109-4, having just seen Manjrekar and Vengsarkar depart at the same score. Twenty minutes later he saw his captain, on whom India had depended so much, edged into the leg trap.



They say romantics never win. That they dazzle and depart leaving great tragedies behind them. Sachin Tendulkar proved them wrong...

Only once did he waver. When there was need for caution, he opted for adventure and Hemmings’ weary hands that seemed destined to spin England to victory, let him down.

Thereafter he was the master of all he surveyed, his bandaged bat coming straight as a pendulum. When Hemmings bowled, he crouched and almost smelt the ball in a manner that would make his coach, Ramakant Achrekar (whom he publicly thanked later) proud. And when Fraser and Malcolm bowled, he stood upright like he was 10 feet tall.



Young Sachin out to prove himself.

As India inched along and the prospect of saving the game appeared real after all, he rose in stature. "Softly, oh softly, we bear her along," Sarojini Naidu's *Palanquin Bearers* had said. They would have sung in the same rhythm to see a young man carrying his side with the same feeling and care.

At Napier, the brashness of youth had cost him a hundred. Here too, the youthfulness was there, but only in physique. Mentally Tendulkar had matured more than most would in a lifetime, as he first reached his highest Test score and then a hundred.

His teammates appeared on the balcony and as Tendulkar took his helmet off,

one realised once again, that the steely eyes it exposed had a strictly adolescent look behind them after all. There was no flailing of arms, no punching of fists, just a little smile and a raising of the bat.

For, it was a hundred that was achieved and celebrated with poise and dignity. What a tragedy that while television can show some picture of youthful achievement, brash, cocky and irreverent, in Andre Agassi, it cannot show another that would be such a fitting model for teenagers.

Spare a thought for Manoj Prabhakar, in the midst of a gruesome tour. He must have wished, at times, that he had the talent of Tendulkar. But he made up for it with determination in equal measure. He stood up to the test just as sternly and his bat had never been broader. Admittedly there was an edge and Gooch, showing again what a great leveller this game is, put it down. For 150 minutes he battled in what clearly must be the most valuable innings he has played.

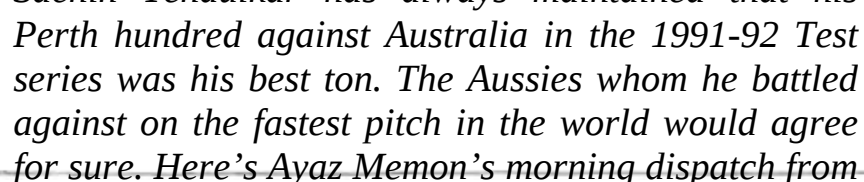
And as the covers were pulled on in Old Trafford, the sun made a fleeting solitary appearance to bestow his blessings on Tendulkar and as his innings became history, only memories remained.

They'll take some erasing, those.

August 16, 1990

No Perth Pangs for Sachin

Ayaz Memon



Sachin Tendulkar has always maintained that his Perth hundred against Australia in the 1991-92 Test series was his best ton. The Aussies whom he battled against on the fastest pitch in the world would agree for sure. Here's Ayaz Memon's morning dispatch from the Western Australia Cricket Association ground...

PERTH: Tendulkar reiterated his enormous batting talent to score his third Test hundred and rescue India from an utterly precarious situation on the third morning of the final Test here today.

As he stood at only 50 when Kapil Dev and Manoj Prabhakar followed Venkatapathy Raju to the dressing room in rapid succession, Tendulkar (112) in the company of a determined Kiran More (11), raised India's total from 159-8 to 233-8 at lunch.

Every time Tendulkar makes a hundred he seems to outdo his previous effort. The debate amongst aficionados, therefore, about the merits of his three Test centuries continues. But for sheer tenacity, precision and power in strokeplay and capacity to control the game completely, this innings will take some beating.

Tendulkar rose from the ruins of the Indian batting to the stature of a titan within two hours of glorious batsmanship.

Mike Whitney, opening the bowling this morning, got three wickets from 22 deliveries to plunge India into grave crisis.

Raju went in the first over of the day, Kapil Dev hoisted straight to fine leg after surviving a second ball chance to slip, while Prabhakar slashed the second ball he received, straight to gully.



Acknowledging the cheers from the Perth crowd after reaching his sizzling hundred in 1992.

The end looked imminent till Tendulkar devastated all Australian joy with his brilliance.

He scored 81 of the 98 runs made by India in the session, most of them with drives, off the front foot and back, in front of the wicket.

Hughes, bristling with aggression, was hit for four boundaries, the cocky

Whitney for three, debutant Reiffel for two and McDermott, brought belatedly into the attack, for another two.

The first from McDermott, a straight drive played with negligible backlift, took Tendulkar to his hundred which included 14 fours and came off 135 deliveries.

February 3, 1992



Tendulkar and Kohli in a cheerful mood during the MCA prize distribution function at the Wankhede Stadium in 2005.

Madras Meal for Tendulkar

Ayaz Memon



This is probably the start of the love affair between Sachin Tendulkar and the M Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai. This was his first Test hundred on Indian soil and while he creamed the bowling for a brilliant 165, he became the first player to score five Test tons before the age of 20.



MADRAS: Precocity in talent often implies innocence of personality. And while both attributes appear to fit Sachin Tendulkar to a nicety, the cricketer in him has galloped ahead to mastery of method in his batsmanship. Both in terms of skill and game tactics.

There was in Tendulkar's fifth Test hundred (and his highest — 165) evidence of the anchor, the equisetetic stroke player and the ruthless executioner. When a batsman acquires all these three facets, bowlers often find it impossible to bowl to him, and for long spells today, no Englishman felt quite up to getting into the delivery stride against this young genius.

The truly delightful aspect of Tendulkar's batting was his control over himself and the run of play. In the first session, he was all searing shots and rasping blade. Paul Jarvis was an early victim of fine touch, but Devon Malcolm, the unhappy, bigger victim of hurtful intent. There were glorious cover drives played with the full back lift and two straight hits with no bat swing at all, only splendid timing. The second of these, off Malcolm, got him his century. The 30 runs he needed to reach this mark yesterday came from 25 deliveries, and included seven boundaries.

Then, with the spectators expecting unstinted fireworks, Tendulkar shrewdly, almost unobtrusively, changed gears to ensure that the Indian innings would be extended till beyond tea. The departure of Azharuddin, who was in form, compelled this, and Tendulkar responded with the responsibility he assumed in South Africa. His success is vindication of such thinking. But the beauty of the innings also lay in the quality of his defence and the choice of balls to hit thereafter.

Tendulkar looked good for a double hundred when he fell suddenly, playing too early in an attempt to hit Ian Salisbury out of the ground and getting the leading edge. He has made more challenging hundreds, at Perth last season and at Johannesburg not too long back. But this innings seemed the most rounded, complete, and a fair affirmation of batting greatness.

February 13, 1993

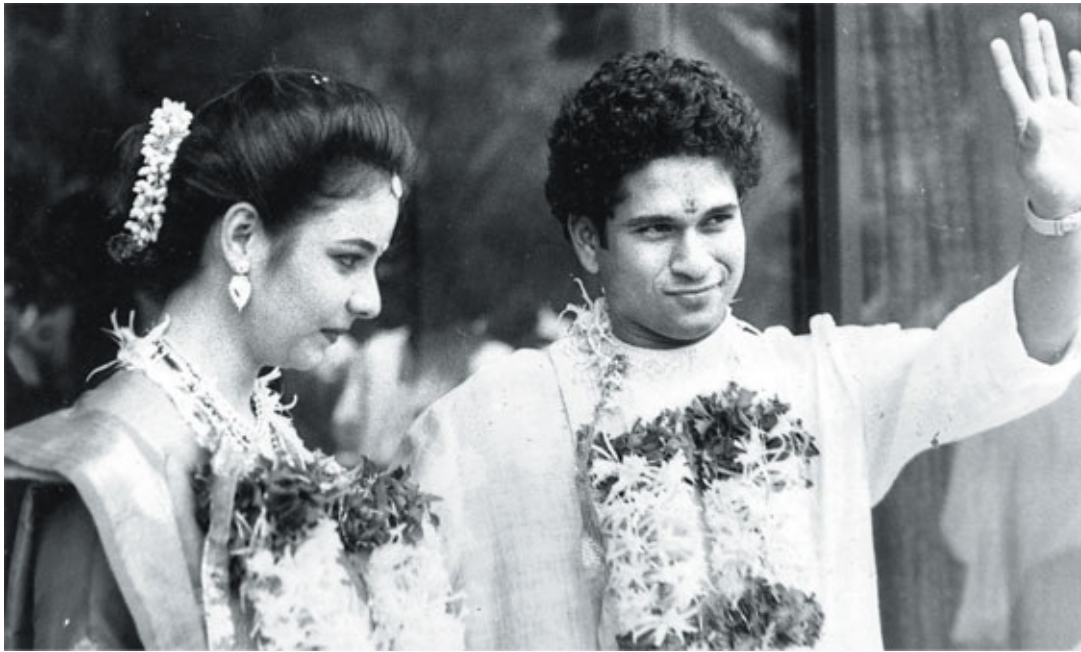


Spraying champagne after playing a leading role in India winning the Chennai Test against England in 1993.

The Big, Yet Quiet Tendulkar Wedding

Ayaz Memon

In 1995, television coverage was not like it is now, but that does not mean there was any shortage of media frenzy when Sachin Tendulkar and Anjali Mehta decided to tie the knot. The private side of Tendulkar is evident in this piece.



With wife Anjali at Jewel of India, Mumbai after the marriage ceremony in May, 1995.

What do Imran Khan and Sachin Tendulkar have in common? Marriage is on their minds and both their mothers-in-law are called Annabel. End of story? Perhaps, but not quite.

When Imran Khan's sudden marriage to Jemima Goldsmith knocked Sachin off the front pages of newspapers, the brilliant self-effacing young Indian cricketer felt it was just as well.



The rigours of managing the wedding arrangements of India's best known face have produced sleepless nights and unending tension for the Tendulkar family, so any respite was welcome. Yet, there has not been too much rest.

"I love my privacy and would have preferred a simple, family affair," Sachin said on Saturday, supervising the completion of his tastefully designed new flat in Sahitya Sahwas colony in Bandra even while watching *The Terminator 2* beamed by a sleek new laser disc player on his 32-inch TV.

The Tendulkars would have liked a low key affair. But obviously this was not possible. Already nearly 500 letters are arriving each day, from all over the country, asking for an invitation to the big do.

After much debate and discussion, what will happen now is a simple wedding ceremony with fiancée Anjali Mehta on May 25 to which only 75 members from either family have been invited.

This will be followed by a reception on May 26 at the Jade Garden for the cricketing fraternity and other friends of the families, and yet another reception on May 27, (location confidential) for people from his colony.

The wedding ceremony itself will be simple and performed according to

Hindu rites, the *muhurat* time having already been ascertained. Sachin will be dressed in a traditional kurta-churidar for the occasion made by Anja San (which incidentally is owned by Asha Bhonsale) while Anjali will wear a saree. For the receptions, Sachin will be dressed in suits made overseas.

Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray and Manohar Joshi are among the many special invitees for the wedding. Sachin's colleagues from the Indian team, barring Manoj Prabhakar, Javagal Srinath, Anil Kumble and Sanjay Manjrekar (all playing currently in England) will be in attendance.

The contrast between the marriages of Asia's two most compelling cricketing superstars is fascinating. While Imran has always loved to bask in the limelight, both Sachin and fiancée Anjali have zealously guarded their privacy, and have tried to live life as normally as possible.

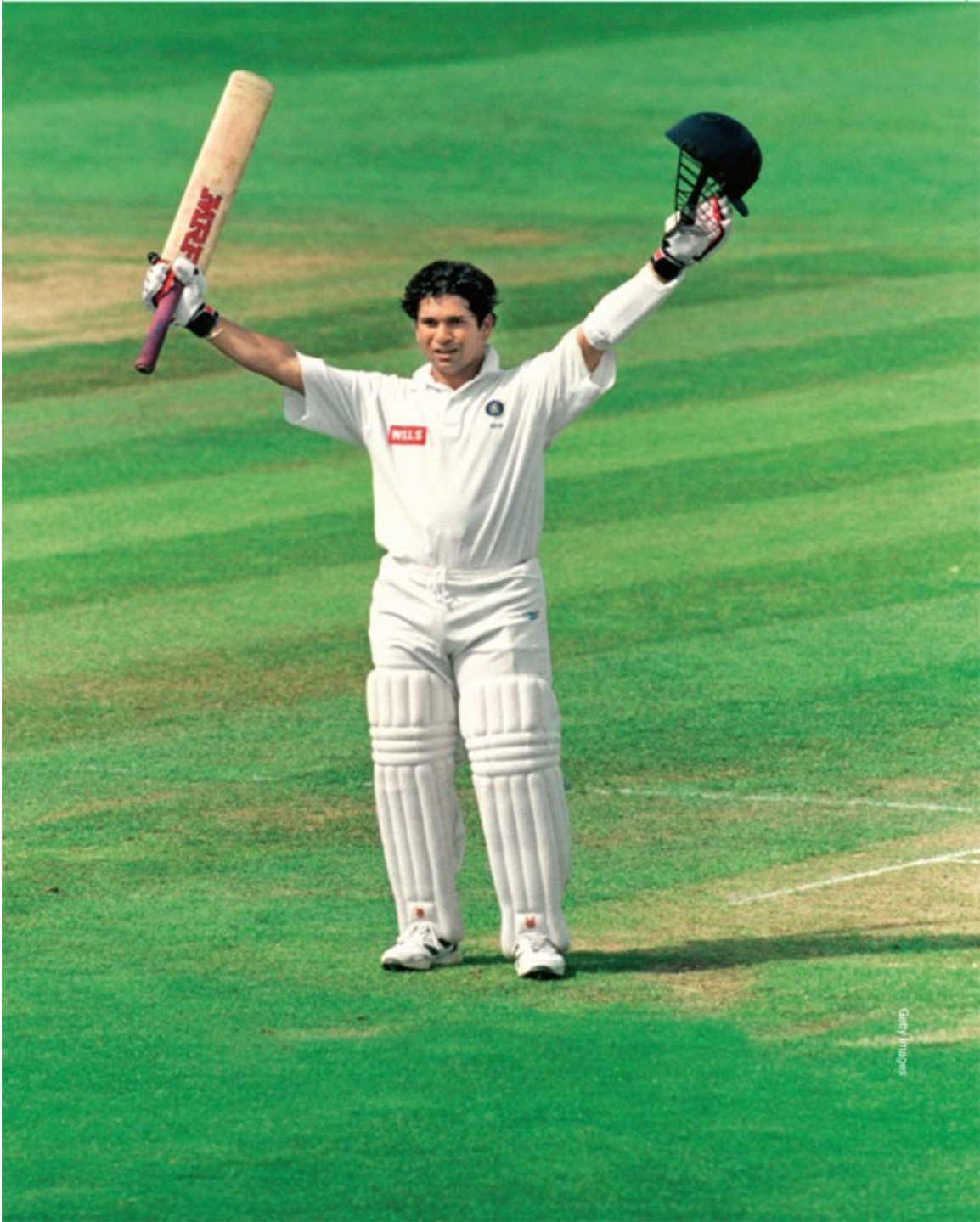
In fact, the reclusive Anjali Mehta, who is working towards an MD in pediatrics, will be on emergency duty at the JJ Hospital till the day of her wedding.

Sachin himself has steered clear of talking about his three-year-old romance or impending marriage.

"That's the way I like it," he says. "This is an extremely personal affair. All these high society things I shun. And Anjali feels this even more strongly."

That's perhaps why they seem made for each other.

May 5, 1995



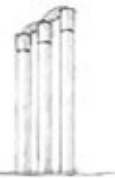
Acknowledging applause from the crowd after completing his hundred against England in the 1996 Birmingham Test.

Sachin Sizzles, India Fizzles

Ayaz Memon



Another hundred for a losing cause. That Tendulkar scored 63.9 per cent of the runs while he was at the crease shows the disparity between him and the rest of the Indian batting. The dispatch does justice to the brilliance of the batsman.

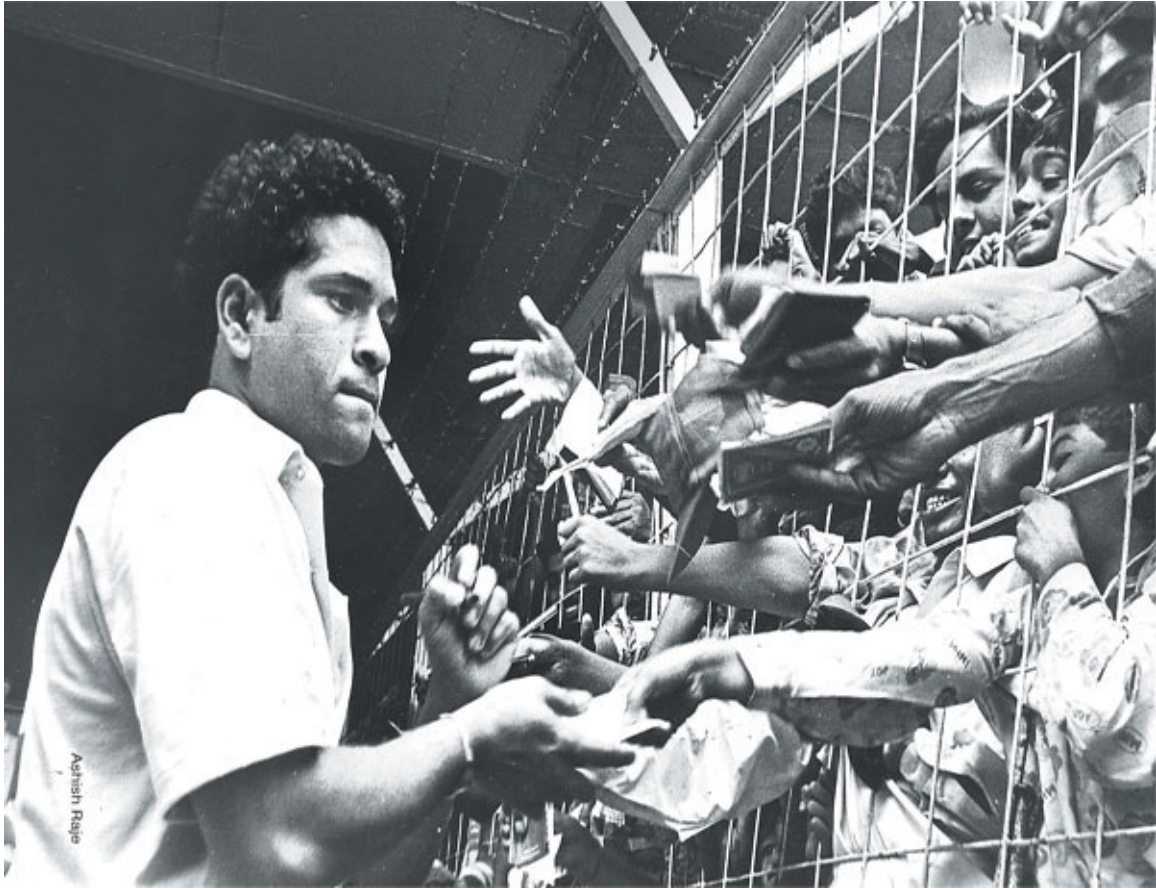


EDGBASTON: Sachin Tendulkar's ninth Test century (122 runs, 263 minutes, 177 balls, 19x4, 1x6) made on Saturday in a vain and forlorn battle to preserve India's hope in the first Test raised a couple of interesting queries. Was this his best innings ever? Would Don Bradman have done better in similar circumstances?

International cricket can be terribly harsh, even to a genius in full flow and at the height of his prowess. By the time the third day of the Test had been completed, England were cruising to a seemingly comfortable victory that may never have truly revealed the character or calibre of Tendulkar's innings. Scorecards, after all, can lie. But consider this.

Tendulkar came in to bat when India had lost two wickets for 17 runs by the 12th over.

By the 17th over, when India lost their fourth wicket at 36 — skipper Mohammed Azharuddin unedifyingly bowled round his legs by Alan Mullally for a blob — an innings defeat looked imminent. Four hours later, England were compelled to chase an irksome 121 for victory by Tendulkar who had made an outstanding 122.



Obliging autograph hunters by the score.

The next best score after his 100 was injury-hit Sanjay Manjrekar's patient 18.

Two other batsmen got 15 runs apiece, and those were number 8 and 10. Tendulkar made 122 out of 191 runs when he was in the middle, and with better support from a couple, even one frontline batsman, could have possibly turned this game on its head.

Only Rathore, who got a terrible decision, could claim clemency.

But it was the manner in which he batted that proclaimed Tendulkar as the game's finest batsman.

On a wicket of uneven bounce, where the ball seamed alarmingly and made survival, leave aside stroke play worrisome, Tendulkar charted out an unblemished hundred which showed high technical aptitude and an astonishing array of shots.

Spurred on by the grim challenge of the situation, Tendulkar began circumspectly, and settled quickly into a rhythm which produced a dazzling

array of strokes that quickly dispersed the field and England's smugness, and finally finished with what could only be described as a tour de force.

With Anil Kumble showing more spunk than five of the first six batsmen, Tendulkar saw the usefulness of keeping England for greater time in the middle, though he could not resist reaching his 100 with an enormous straight six off left-arm spinner Min Patel.

There is a showman in him somewhere.

Kumble's run out, following a terrible mix up, broke the rhythm of India's fight back. A little Srinath departed, leg before to a vicious breakback from Chris Lewis, and then Tendulkar mishooked England's best bowler to mid-wicket to signal India's demise.

Meanwhile, back to the interesting queries. Was this his best innings ever? His third century, at Perth in 1992 on a flier and with only the tailenders for company, was a brilliant effort.

But that was made in the first innings when the wicket had not cracked. Here, he was caught on a bad wicket. Would Bradman have done better in similar circumstances? Suffice to say, that Tendulkar has instigated a stimulating debate. Perhaps the answer may come from the great Australian himself, some day.

June 9, 1996



With Ajay Sharma and Kiran More (right) during the 1989-90 tour of Pakistan.

Next Man In

Clayton Murzello

The crowd at the airport car park prevented Sachin Tendulkar from giving this post-tour interview peacefully. So, he told the writer to accompany him in his car. As he turned to get onto the Andheri highway in Mumbai, he said, "I'm ready for the captaincy".

One can understand why the writer remembers the exact location when the quote was given. It was a significant story.

MID-DAY City Edition
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I AM READY FOR THE CAPTAINCY: SACHIN

All set for the Games
By Khalid A H Ansari

ATLANTA, July 16
AN estimated quarter million Atlantans flocked in the summer heat on Sunday to witness the opening of the centennial Olympic square, a \$ 150-million plus testimonial to the 1996 Olympic games and to its corporate sponsors, notably Coca, IBM, A&E T and Reebok.

It's mostly the square was a mad pit. But the comment of Billy Payne, the local visionary who dared dream that the world would award the centennial games to his city despite all its shortcomings of lack of infrastructure, overrating summer heat, non-availability of financial resources and many more in the face of stiff competition from Athens, host of the inaugural Olympics and Manchester has made the dream a [continued on page 36]

EXCLUSIVE
he'll ask of his players is commitment and 100 per cent effort all the time. 'I don't care if they are successful or not but if these two qualities are there nobody can stop you. The guys are talented and capable of doing it,' he said. Is it the right time for him to jump into Indian cricket's hot seat? 'When you become captain of India you shouldn't be thinking of this. It may not be the ideal time. But I think when your country is struggling that's the time you have to give a helping hand. I was prepared all the time.' He knows the price to be paid. And that it could affect his batting. So how is the little master going to tackle that? 'I really don't know what will happen. But I think I'll be more responsible. At least when I led Mumbai my [continued on page 36]

DO I FIT THE BILL? Sachin Tendulkar on his arrival at father airport from London late last night. Picture by Suresh Harbore

SERVO
PROTECTS ENGINES ADDS LIFE
WORLD CLASS LUBRICANTS

Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri's clarify
NIRMAL ZAVERI of the Zaveri Bharu showroom of Tribhovandas (Bharu) Zaveri (TRZ) has denied that his showroom is up for sale. 'Some of my rivals have been spreading such rumors, but all these reports are absolutely baseless,' he said.

I am prepared for captaincy because I have led Mumbai and West Zone too for two and a half years. Whenever the country needs me I am there. I am quite okay with that," said Sachin Tendulkar in an exclusive interview early this morning.

"This England tour has been a good one for me, although I didn't click in the one-dayers. I got a bad decision in the first game but these are things which you

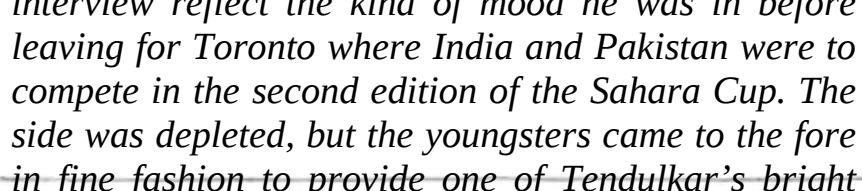
take in your stride. In the second, I was run out and in the third I got a good bouncer," he said, while driving from the airport to his Bandra residence.

Tendulkar must have tons of energy. He had just arrived from London, but he managed to drive his car as effortlessly as those extra cover drives he executes on the field. And if he is made captain, the first thing he'll ask of his players is commitment and 100 per cent effort all the time. "I don't care if they are successful or not but nobody can stop them. The guys are talented and capable of doing it," he said. Is it the right time for him to jump into Indian cricket's hot seat? "When you become captain of India you shouldn't be thinking of this. It may not be the ideal time, but I think when your country is struggling that's the time you have to give a helping hand. I was prepared all the time." He knows the price to be paid and that it could affect his batting. So how is the Little Master going to tackle that? "I really don't know what will happen. But I think I'll be more responsible."

July 16, 1996

I'm Not to Blame: Sachin

Clayton Murzello



The answers Sachin Tendulkar provided in this interview reflect the kind of mood he was in before leaving for Toronto where India and Pakistan were to compete in the second edition of the Sahara Cup. The side was depleted, but the youngsters came to the fore in fine fashion to provide one of Tendulkar's bright spots in an otherwise forgettable captaincy stint.

Judging from the inexperienced bowling attack you have, do you seriously think India can win the forthcoming series?

I am pretty confident of doing well. But I wouldn't like to put too much pressure on the young bowlers. They should be left alone. In one-day cricket the important thing is to stick to a line. Even if you do not have any wickets beside your name but have been able to contain the opposing batsmen, then you've done your job well. I'm sure this bowling attack will fare decently.

How stressed are you?

If I let the pressure get to me, what about the rest of the team?

Are you afraid of losing the captaincy?

Not at all. I'm just concentrating on getting results for India.

Are you willing to step down in case of failure?

Why should I? They (selectors) have made me captain.

But you keep saying that India will be a top-class team in time to come and there are no signs of the first step towards that goal...

We have not been playing at full strength. I think not more than three or four players have played more than 15 Tests. They are all young and it will take some time before success comes along. I think we have to wait for a while.

How long will this wait be?

I really don't know. Maybe six months... maybe a year.

How much of the blame should the selectors take for the recent defeats?

I can't respond to this.

Do you take the blame for this slump in Indian cricket?

Not at all. I've tried my best.

You were quoted saying before the Asia Cup that you got a 'B' grade team. Is this true?

I never said that.

But you were unhappy with the team you got...

Yes. I did not get the team I wanted.

Has your experience with the selectors prompted you to think about threatening to step down if you do not get the team you want?

No, I did not think of that. But I was happy with the team for the Sahara Cup.

You were disappointed when Vinod Kambli wasn't considered for the Asia Cup, but you didn't play him when he came into the team?

We couldn't possibly drop anyone to accommodate him.



In a grim mood prior to a selection meeting at the Cricket Club of India in 1997. Sambaran Banerjee is to Tendulkar's right while MP Pandove and coach Madan Lal are facing him.

Why was Debasis Mohanty not included when he fared well in the second Test against Sri Lanka?

Mohanty bowled well in the Test but we did not want to drop our main bowler Venkatesh Prasad, and Abey Kuruvilla was bowling well too.

But Prasad had an injured shoulder...

That wasn't affecting his bowling, only his throwing.

Your own form hasn't been very good...

Well, I got two hundreds in the Tests against Sri Lanka so I don't think anything is wrong. **You haven't got the big scores in the one-dayers; it looks like you want to hit every ball over the top. Do you think this cavalier approach is doing the team any good?**

When I hit, people clap. When things go wrong people start to criticise. I am not going to stop playing my natural game simply because that gets me runs.

Should you bat lower down?

You shouldn't be asking this question: most of my runs have come as an opener.

You just have to compare my record batting lower down to when I have opened.

But the public feels the team will do better with you coming lower down as there is not much depth in the batting after No 5 or 6...

We don't have to plan according to the cricket lover. We have to do what the team as a whole thinks is good for it. Most of them believe that my opening is ideal. But we don't have fixed ideals. If the situation demands — as in the Asia Cup final — I will come lower down. And if needed, I'll do that in Canada.


A year as captain... have you done justice to the job?

We haven't really played our full strength this one year. We have not had the services of Javagal Srinath for the West Indies and Sri Lanka tours. I think we've tried our best. It's just that we have not had favourable results.


September 14, 1997

Spark to Flame

Ajit Tendulkar



Who better to talk about the radiance of Sachin Tendulkar than his brother Ajit, who knows his game like no other expert. It's a piece every young cricketer should read before he aspires to bigger things.



Since Sachin started playing cricket at such a young age, I guess he was always the youngest one in the team.

I think when he first played for the Cricket Club of India (CCI), he was just about 15 and most of the others in the team were already first-class players. He was playing alongside the likes of Sandeep Patil and Ravi Shastri, so big names did not matter that much to him. And I don't think Sachin was ever overawed by the fact that he was playing first-class cricket as a 15 year old.

His Ranji debut was against Gujarat and he scored a century in that game. His attitude right from the beginning was to think positive and believe that every match provided him with an opportunity to prove himself. His first real break was in the same season when he scored 76 against Delhi in the Ranji Trophy semi-finals.

Most of the top Bombay players were away on tour and the side was dependent on him. That match showed that Sachin had the 'big match' temperament which is so essential to succeed.



Playing an off-side shot in the Faisalabad Test against Pakistan on the 1989-90 tour.

Raj Singh Dungarpur was the chairman of selectors then, and he had seen Sachin from his CCI days. He wanted a younger team, a team for the 90's, and I guess Sachin fitted in with those plans.

When he was picked for the tour of Pakistan in 1989, we were a little surprised. I guess from the time of his record-breaking efforts in junior cricket, we felt that his playing for India at age 16 was something really special. Sachin was at first a little concerned. After all, Pakistan had bowlers like Imran Khan, Wasim Akram and the emerging talent of Waqar Younis. I think for a while, Sachin wondered whether he would really be up to the task. Pakistan is not an easy place to tour, but Sachin was in the company of some of his seniors from the Bombay team like Sanjay Manjrekar, and they really helped him.

He was extremely tense in his first, and then when he was hit in the fourth

Test by a Waqar bouncer, there were some doubts over whether it would leave a mark on the game. But in the same over that he was struck by Waqar, he hit him for a couple of boundaries.

Psychologically, that was an important breakthrough. It showed that Sachin was ready for the big league. By the time the one-dayers arrived, Sachin's confidence was back. Any tension that he felt at the start of the series was gone.

That one over in Quetta where he struck 26 runs off Abdul Qadir was proof that Sachin had arrived.

He was always a confident cricketer. Now that he knew what he could be at the Ranji Trophy level, he could repeat in Test cricket too. I think it was after that tour that Imran remarked that Sachin would go on to become a great player.



On his next tour of New Zealand he had a great chance of breaking Mushtaq Mohammad's record to become the youngest player ever to score a Test match hundred. He was out at 88 to a bad shot and afterwards I spoke to him.

I think his basic attitude has always been to learn from his mistakes and to keep improving all the time. It was the attitude that enabled him to make a transition into the big league so quickly. After that, Sachin scored runs all over the world, but to my mind the one knock that really made me realise his full potential was his century against South Africa in 1992.

That innings in Johannesburg showed that Sachin was now in the top league of players since the runs were scored against one of the world's best attacks.

September 16, 1997

Sachin's Having a Ball

Khalid A-H Ansari



Relieved from captaincy, Sachin Tendulkar hit the right notes in a one-day tournament in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Khalid A-H Ansari was there to witness the start of Mohammed Azharuddin's second and last stint as captain.



DHAKA: The buzz at the National Stadium before yesterday's Independence Cup cricket match was that neither the Indians nor the Pakistanis were particularly keen to play.

The ostensible reason was bad light caused by the heavy blanket of smog which had enveloped this capital city for a week, denying Dhakaians even a glimpse of the sun.

Moreover, given the track record of the Bangladesh team, its lack of international experience and the result of the previous day's game which virtually ensured India a place in the final, it was all but certain that India would play Pakistan in the three match championship decider, because barring the highly improbable, the results of today's Pakistan-Bangladesh clash is a foregone conclusion.

As it turned out, the light improved appreciably enabling commencement of play an hour after the scheduled time of 9:00 a.m.

And the sun shone brightly upon Mohammed Azharuddin and his men who fashioned an impressive 18-run win over Pakistan doing a power of good to the team's morale which had plumbed the depths in recent times.

However, it is early days yet and one should avoid the temptation of getting carried away by an occasional victory over Pakistan who at any rate, are without the services of Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis.



In his two innings since his “demotion”, Sachin Tendulkar has given 110 per cent to captain and team.

Having said that, two wins out of two in the new year augur well for the team under Azhar’s second avatar as captain.

In his two innings since his “demotion”, Sachin Tendulkar has given 110 per cent to captain and team. And, relieved of the cares of captaincy, he is obviously enjoying himself once again as his vintage knocks of 54 and 67 on consecutive days and four catches and one for 24 yesterday so eloquently demonstrate. He was decidedly done injustice in not being named man of the match against Pakistan. That apart, Tendulkar’s body language speaks for itself as he, indeed, far revelled despite the pressure of leadership.

Having stood up to the reprehensible bullying tactics of the national selection committee in the matter of deciding the batting order, Azhar’s positive approach in promoting himself to No 3 and letting ground, climatic and state of match conditions determine star batsman Tendulkar’s position has paid off so far.

Any team’s best batsmen should be given the opportunity to lead the front and from the position in which they feel most comfortable without asinine interference.

These comments are being made in the fullest belief that premature value-judgements can be meaningless, misleading and therefore, misplaced.

Their validity is, therefore, strictly restricted to the two matches which the Indian team has played in this tournament: one against greenhorns Bangladesh, wooden spoonist in world rankings, the second against arguably the weakest Pakistan team in recent times with the possible exception of the one which played against us in Toronto last September.



Skipper Mohammed Azharuddin seeks Tendulkar's opinion during the Independence Cup at Dhaka in 1998.

This three-nation contest affords the players themselves, the team management and selectors an excellent opportunity to improvise, experiment, take stock and chalk out an action plan for the forthcoming home series against the Australians — provided we are prepared to learn our lessons. Alas, our cricket history records that we adamantly refuse to do so and are, therefore, condemned to repeat our mistakes. Of the Indian batsmen, only Tendulkar and Azhar have lived up to reputations. A question mark still hangs over the opening pair. If Tendulkar will open "as and when", the problem remains unsolved. The former captain has clicked in both positions he has batted in here, but a policy of chop and change cannot possibly be in the team's best interest in the long run. The sooner this issue is resolved, the better.

Sourav Ganguly has promised much but fallen short of reproducing his recent purple patch. Navjot Sidhu, run out in the first match, played a cameo innings of

36 off 42 deliveries yesterday but the indecision regarding his position in the line-up can be the recipe for neurosis in even the most battle-scarred veteran. Of the other batsmen/all-rounders, Ajay Jadeja and Robin Singh have yet to establish their credentials whereas Sairaj Bahutule's two outings to date have been undistinguished with both bat and ball. He went for 53 runs in his seven overs against Pakistan but, to be fair, there has been nothing in the wicket for the spinners.

For Javagal Srinath, who has returned figures of five for 23 and two for 40, his shoulder injury appears a distant memory. Debasis Mohanty looked menacing against the inexperienced Bangladeshis but was prodigal when bowling to the Pakistanis, Aamir Sohail in particular.

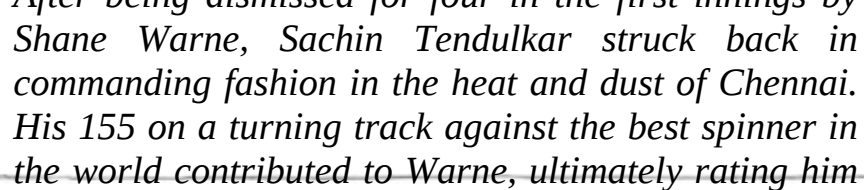
Harvinder Singh, brought into the squad yesterday, claimed the prize wickets of Ijaz Ahmed, Saeed Anwar and Azhar Mahmood but conceded as many as 47 runs in his eight overs. Moreover, Ijaz and Saeed were palpable victims of over-confidence.

India's ability to capture wickets at regular intervals and exert pressure has been impressive but we must not lose sight of the fact that the opposition has been either weak or cocky — or both.

January 12, 1998

Shabash, Sachin

Khalid A-H Ansari



After being dismissed for four in the first innings by Shane Warne, Sachin Tendulkar struck back in commanding fashion in the heat and dust of Chennai. His 155 on a turning track against the best spinner in the world contributed to Warne, ultimately rating him as the best batsman he had bowled to.

CHENNAI: Authoritative batsmen of the superlative kind, a sporting declaration, aggressive captaincy and lethal bowling by the home side set the stage yesterday for a probable India victory in the first Test against Australia at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.

The cornerstone of India's effort, however, was a classic unbeaten, chanceless innings of 155 by Sachin Tendulkar, who has served unmistakable notice to the Australians that he will be the biggest stumbling block in their mission to defeat India in India for the first time in 29 years.

The touring Australians have been unabashed admirers of the boundless batting talent of the former India captain. No less a legend than Sir Donald Bradman has termed him the greatest batsman in the world today, one whose technique and style resemble his own.

Not that any proof was required for the legend's assessment, but Tendulkar yesterday demonstrated that he is fast learning to curb his impetuosity, to exercise restraint, to extend scores of 50 to 100 and more.

Blessed as he is with limitless talent, he has often been his worst enemy throwing away his wicket when all set but bored with treading the straight and

narrow, extemporising the unusual, the innovative, the audacious.

Tendulkar himself does not consider yesterday's knock his greatest but there can be no denying that it must rank among the classier of his 15 centuries in 59 Tests. The fact that it was achieved in oppressive 37 degree C (40 degree C ambient temperature) heat and humidity makes it all the more remarkable.

Tendulkar's contribution, as indeed those of Mohammed Azharuddin and Rahul Dravid, must be evaluated in the context of a wicket which was not at all conducive for playing strokes what with the ball coming on to the bat lethargically, the odd one turning and bouncing brutishly at the end of which the Aussie bowlers had created a rough on their follow-through and which Shane Warne exploited in characteristic fashion.



Tendulkar's contribution, as indeed those of Mohammed Azharuddin and Rahul Dravid, must be evaluated in the context of a wicket...

Dravid fell to one such nasty delivery after Tendulkar had narrowly escaped being bowled the first ball from Gavin Robertson who has made a dream Test debut here.

The savage assault which Tendulkar and Azhar (the latter started tentatively but grew rapidly in confidence) launched on Shane Warne in particular presaged an early declaration.

But many among the cognoscente were taken aback when Azhar closed the innings after setting the opposition the identical target — 348 — as was set for India in the famous 1986 Madras (as it was then known) tied Test.

Some among the Australian press party opined that Mark Taylor would never have declared at that stage. Others were even prepared to offer attractive odds on an Australian win but Azhar, obviously believing in the ability of his bowlers, was prepared to risk sackcloth and ashes in his courageous pursuit of victory.

But all this was before Javagal Srinath and Anil Kumble, inspired by their captain's sporting declaration and a positive attitude manifest in the form of aggressive field placements and imaginative bowling changes, struck lethal blows which left the Australian innings in shambles.



Addressing the media at the Cricket Club of India, Mumbai on becoming captain of India for the second time in 1999.

With Mark Taylor, Michael Slater and Greg Blewett back in the pavilion for just 31, it will take a monumental effort on the part of the remaining batsmen to save — let alone win — this Test.


March 10, 1998




With Vivek Razdan and Salil Ankola (left) at a party on the 1989-90 tour of Pakistan.

I Would Bowl to Sachin with a Helmet
On: Lillee

Clayton Murzello



Dennis Lillee made a surprise visit to Bangalore from Chennai and performed the role of guest commentator. And when he was not behind the mike, he chatted up with his former captain Ian Chappell and partner in crime Jeff Thomson as the writer waited three hours outside the commentary box. Lillee was mighty impressed after watching Sachin Tendulkar get 177.



BANGALORE: Dennis Keith Lillee. The name conjures up images of shattered stumps and beleaguered batsmen who had to put up with his pace in the 1970s and the early 1980s.

The former Australian pace ace, who once held the record for the most number of Test victims — 355, was in the Garden City yesterday to watch the second day's proceedings of the third and final Test between Australia and India at the Chinnaswamy Stadium.

For the past several years, Lillee has been involved with the MRF Pace Foundation at Chennai which has helped to bring to surface several fast bowling talents, Javagal Srinath and Venkatesh Prasad being the most prominent of names.

Lillee met his friends and adversaries during the day's play, including former Australian skipper Ian Chappell under whose captaincy Lillee emerged a great fast bowler, his opening partner Jeff Thomson who is doing television commentary and Sunil Gavaskar who, it may be recalled, staged a walkout at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in 1980-81 after being declared out leg before wicket to Lillee.

Though he did not play international cricket on Indian soil during his 13-year Test career, he has countless admirers here. The only series in India held in the 1970s was held in 1979, but Lillee could not make it due to his involvement with Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket.



Drives during the 1998 home series against the Australians.

Excerpts from an interview:

Your impressions on Sachin Tendulkar...

He is the best player in the world, no doubt about that. He is one of the best players I have ever seen. I just can't talk highly about him. I think he is a marvel.

How would you have tackled him?

How would I tackle him? With a helmet on. I really don't know. You don't know unless you are right there. It depends on the wicket and conditions. Let's put it this way, I would have not given up. I would have given my everything.

I have played against great players in the same mould as Tendulkar like Viv Richards, Barry Richards, Garry Sobers, Rohan Kanhai, Gordon Greenidge. They were all brilliant. You try to work them out while bowling to them. If it's your day, you get them out. If you don't, then they get the runs.

Do you think Sachin has a lot of Viv Richards in him?

I think he is his own player. He is aggressive like Viv was, there's no doubt there. He's a different player as well. He's got more soft touch than Viv and you learn that on pitches like these. He's not quite as explosive as Viv but then, they both have great qualities which make great players.

Would you be surprised if Tendulkar does not go on to break your countryman Allan Border's record run tally of 11,174 Test runs?

There is no reason why he shouldn't. Barring injury he should more than cross over that tally.

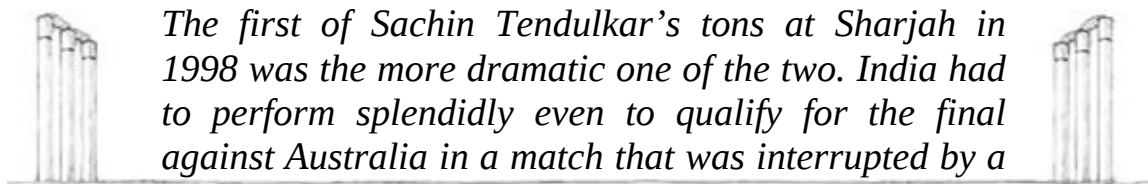
March 27, 1998



Waving to a teammate after leading India to victory in the Coca-Cola Cup final against Australia in 1998.

A Genius Called Tendulkar

Ayaz Memon



The first of Sachin Tendulkar's tons at Sharjah in 1998 was the more dramatic one of the two. India had to perform splendidly even to qualify for the final against Australia in a match that was interrupted by a sandstorm. Here's how Tendulkar did it for India to qualify.

SHARJAH: One of the problems of assessing genius is that limits are never defined. Just when you have a fix on them, they exceed their earlier barriers, and the chase for a new definition begins again.

For instance, it is commonly, and justifiably, believed that Sachin Tendulkar is a great cricketer. But just how great, remains intriguingly indeterminate. For instance, he now seems twice the cricketer he was last year. And last year, he was rated one of the best. By simple inference, he must be the number one cricketer in the world this year, and those who disputed that surmise would have been compelled to hasty revision of their opinion after seeing his magnificent 143 yesterday against Australia.

The innings was not good enough to win India the match. But it was brilliant enough to snatch a place in the final, and sensational enough for all the people assembled here — spectators, colleagues, critics, opponents — to acknowledge that Tendulkar was the master of batsmanship.

"We have seen one of the greatest innings of our time," said former Australian captain and TV commentator Richie Benaud. And he could hardly be faulted for overstating the case. Perhaps only Kapil Dev has played a better, more significant innings for India (175 not out against Zimbabwe in the 1983 World Cup), but Tendulkar's overall influence in one game may take some beating. He dismissed Mark Waugh for 81 with a cunning leg-spinner, luring the well-set batsman into top-edging a drive to a wide delivery after negotiating two on the off stump. Twenty runs later, he ran out Steve Waugh with a direct hit from deep square leg.

These would have been enough good deeds for an ordinary mortal to be

pleased with his day's work. But Tendulkar was not satisfied. He strode out later to play a tour de force. India had actually done well to restrict Australia to 284 with some good, restrictive bowling and tight fielding in the last 10 overs. At one stage, with Mark Waugh and Mike Bevan in the middle adding 90 runs for the fourth wicket, a score in excess of 300 seemed a certainty. But Tendulkar stymied Mark Waugh's assault, never let Steve Waugh settle down, watched Bevan make another superb hundred, then came out to bat and revealed the enormity of his talent. Steve Waugh, captain and green baggy junkie to the core, had claimed recently that Bevan was the best one-day player in the world. For half the match, and considering what he has done in this tournament as yet, this did not seem like an idle boast. But three hours later, the Australian captain may have made an amendment in his rating. He had his breaks, he could have been run out a few times, and even had one catch dropped when he was past his hundred. But the brilliance of Tendulkar's innings lay not in the mere runs he made, the strokes he played, the sixes and fours he hit (though not a trifling, what with nine hits reaching the fence and five going over), but the excruciating circumstances in which he batted.



The brilliance of Tendulkar's innings lay not in the mere runs he made, but the excruciating circumstances in which he batted.

He started with two audacious sixes over mid-wicket off Michael Kasprowicz to break the shackles, then befriended caution cutting out the big shots, intent on preserving his wicket to ensure that India's primary target of reaching the final was achieved by simple tactics and some support from his colleagues.

By the middle of the innings, that support had disappeared, Sourav Ganguly had flattered to deceive, Nayan Mongia, promoted in the order, had departed after playing a gem, but alas too brief a spell, and Mohammed Azharuddin and Ajay Jadeja, unable to adjust yet to the slow wickets here, had fallen cheaply again. At 138 for four in 29 overs, India looked like they were taking the flight back home on Thursday instead of playing the final on Friday.

Fortunately, Tendulkar found a sensible ally in VVS Laxman, who accepted quickly that he had to play second fiddle to the maestro and after a phase of anxious jabbing and plodding, concentrated on giving Tendulkar the strike. A


sandstorm that hit Sharjah was like the gods paying obeisance to the chosen one of cricket. The 20-minute stoppage made India's target to qualify stiffer (103 runs in 14 overs), but it also made Tendulkar even more determined. After the sandstorm, came the thunderstorm — from his bat. Kasprowicz, brought on for his second spell, was driven straight and high for a rousing six. Steve Waugh, called the Iceman for his placid demeanour even in the worst crisis, was clouted for a six over mid-wicket and straight-driven for a four. The Australian captain could not remain cucumber cool and kicked the pitch repeatedly in frustration. Tendulkar raced to his hundred rapidly, and India's target whittled down quickly to within gettable limits. By now he was lambasting everything and anybody, including the overly aggressive Fleming for a huge six over long-on. By now the Australian fielders and bowlers were like dying ducks in a thunderstorm. Tendulkar was now chasing victory, but a tired hook shot saw him play late and edge to the wicketkeeper instead.

The momentum of the match collapsed after that, after India, well on their way to victory, settled happily for being in the final. The battle had been won, the war remains to be won. Meanwhile, there is time to toast the magnificent exploits of a genius called Sachin Tendulkar.


April 23, 1998

Runs and Roses from Sachin

Ayaz Memon



Sachin Tendulkar not only gave consistency a good name on April 24, 1998 when he scored another hundred but also proved beyond doubt that there is a big difference between great and legendary. Some birthday to remember this!



SHARJAH: Sachin Tendulkar decided to gift his wife a century on his 25th birthday and made the Australians pay for it. An unblemished 134 (131 balls, 12x4, 3x6) flowed from his bat as tribute to his better half who had decided to skip his big day so that Tendulkar could focus on the finals, leaving the hapless Aussies shattered to pieces by this overt sentimentalism. The Coca-Cola Cup in Sharjah circa 1998, with the passing of time, could well become an important chapter in the history of great modern romances.

The Australians are tough competitors and not known to be good losers. Nevertheless, Steve Waugh was honest and magnanimous in defeat. "He is a great player," he said of Tendulkar, "and there is nothing much you can do when he is in this form." That in itself is adequate comment on Tendulkar's dominance in the match.

It was another brilliant performance from a cricketer beginning to reach the zenith of his skill. Besieged by birthday greetings from a record crowd at the Sharjah Stadium, Tendulkar perked himself up to put up a virtuoso performance. Compared to the melodramatic hundred on Wednesday which enabled India to reach the final, this one was more controlled but no less scintillating. Once he had got his eye in, Tendulkar was a man with a mission. He battled with such ruthless efficiency that there was nary a chance for the bowlers or fielders.



With Shane Warne before taking on Australia in the 2001 Mumbai Test.

And if it was not against the intrinsic Aussie competitive spirit, they would have stood and applauded the methodical annihilation at the end of every over.

India were set a fairly stiff target even allowing for the fact that this was the best batting wicket of the tournament. No other side had chased 273 in this tournament, and during the luncheon interval, it seemed that Azharuddin had made a grave error in opting to field after winning the toss. But Tendulkar's marvellous knock, with excellent support from the skipper, finally made the task look ridiculously easy.

When he notched up his 15th hundred in limited-over internationals, India had pulled away from the pressure of scoring, putting out more runs than balls per over. A huge six greeted the return of Tom Moody in his second spell, and a bigger one awaited Kasprowicz in his second.

By this time, Tendulkar was revved up like a fighter plane ready for a final assault on the specified target. He would have loved dearly to take India to victory himself, but an atrocious decision by umpire Javed Akhtar saw him declared leg before to Kasprowicz bowling round the wicket, with the ball

clearly missing off stump.

Akhtar was to compound this error by declaring Azhar caught behind when the ball had clearly touched his pad. But by then, the Aussies had surrendered too much to make a difference to the outcome. It was much too little too late.

The Titanic had well and truly been sunk.

April 25, 1998




Sir Don Bradman's residence at Holden Street in Adelaide.

With Sir Don Bradman at his Adelaide home in 1998.




Sachin to Meet Bradman

Ayaz Memon



When it was reported that Sir Don Bradman said that Sachin Tendulkar played in similar fashion to him, Tendulkar had no hesitation in saying that it was the best compliment he had ever received. Meeting Bradman at his home in Adelaide must have given the Indian master a bigger boost. Here's the scoop on his visit.



Sachin Tendulkar, acknowledged universally as the finest contemporary cricketer, has been invited Down Under as a special guest, for the 90th birthday celebrations of Sir Donald Bradman, still rated as the finest batsman to have played the game.

Sir Don turns 90 on August 27, and the missive to Tendulkar has come from the South Australian Cricket Association (SACA) which has organised a series of events for the occasion, including a 'Grand Bradman Dinner' for 1300 special invitees at the Adelaide Convention Centre. Tendulkar, it is learnt from Mark Mascarenhas whose company WorldTel manages his affairs, has accepted.

Bradman himself will not attend the dinner since he wants to spend this day with his family. But SACA chief executive Michael J Deare has stated in his fax received today, to the star India player, that, "I understand that Sir Donald has put aside some time for a private meeting with you during your visit." Tendulkar became a celebrity in Australia when Sir Don said a couple of years ago that he (Sachin) was the player who reminded him most of himself.

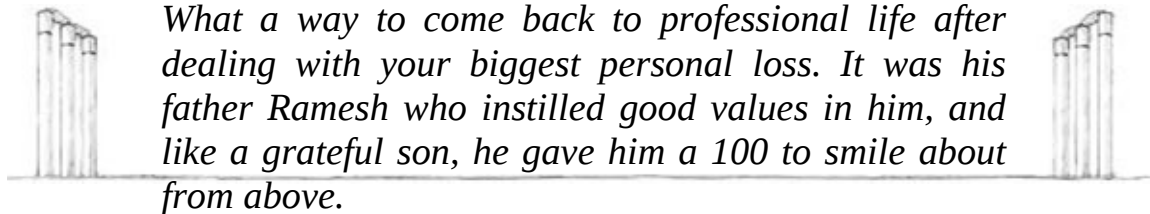
August 16, 1998



Looking up to the heavens after completing his 1999 World Cup century against Kenya in Bristol soon after his father's death.

‘This Ton’s for Dad’

Ayaz Memon



What a way to come back to professional life after dealing with your biggest personal loss. It was his father Ramesh who instilled good values in him, and like a grateful son, he gave him a 100 to smile about from above.

BRISTOL: Who scripts Sachin Tendulkar's life story anyway?

Six days after encountering possibly the biggest tragedy in his 26-year old life and with the added pressure of even more expectation from millions of Indians, he returns to this tournament and gives his side the kiss of life with a hundred of rare quality and unending thrills. What next?

Okay, so this was Kenya and not South Africa, but none of Tendulkar's 21 previous ODI hundreds could have been as dynamic, as crucial or as excruciatingly difficult. Cricket had been farthest from his mind in the five days he was away, in which he had also logged many thousand miles of fatiguing air travel. Both mentally and physically, he should have been vulnerable except, as the Kenyans discovered to their chagrin, the usual human limitations don't seem to apply to the young master.

"I have not been able to wipe off the recent events from my mind completely," said Tendulkar after the match before dedicating the century to the memory of his recently deceased father, "and making a hundred is always difficult, against any opposition. But I did not feel tired at all, and enjoyed the innings."



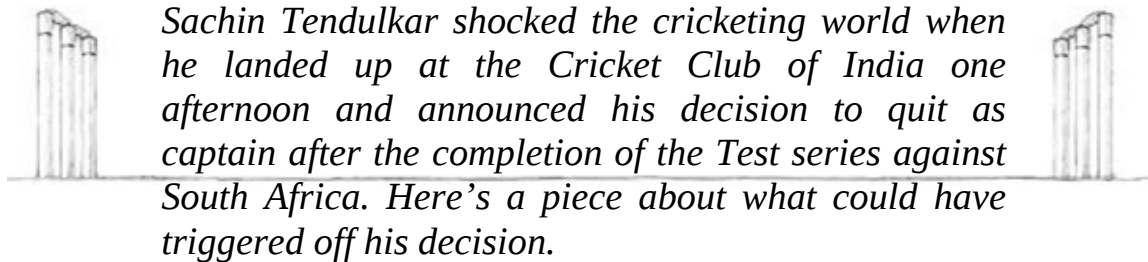
With brother Ajit at the airport after landing in Mumbai to attend their father's funeral in 1999.

The capacity crowd, which appeared to have turned up solely to see Tendulkar, was palpably overjoyed. The Indian team, understandably less demonstrative, could not have been less happy. The dismal events of the last week virtually finished off their prospects of reaching the Super Six stage; now there was some light at the end of the tunnel. Even the normally reticent Mohammed Azharuddin strode down to the edge of the boundary near the pavilion to greet Tendulkar and the other centurion Rahul Dravid and thump them on their backs after the Indian innings had been completed. Why, he even managed a smile!

May 24, 1999

Sachin Quit in Disgust

Khalid A-H Ansari



Sachin Tendulkar shocked the cricketing world when he landed up at the Cricket Club of India one afternoon and announced his decision to quit as captain after the completion of the Test series against South Africa. Here's a piece about what could have triggered off his decision.

Khalidoscope learns from reliable sources that the decision by Indian cricket captain Sachin Tendulkar to resign after the current Test series against South Africa was taken out of disgust at being embroiled in the unseemly controversy concerning Mohammed Azharuddin.

While handing in his resignation to Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) selection committee chairman Chandu Borde at the Brabourne Stadium, CCI, yesterday afternoon, Tendulkar reportedly expressed his anguish at being dragged unnecessarily into the imbroglio for which he has no stomach.

He is said to have stated in no-nonsense terms that although he enjoys the responsibility of captaincy, at the same time he values his "clean" image and that he was disappointed that nothing had been done by those concerned to help him preserve it.

This was obviously a reference to the unsavoury controversy between former Test captain Kapil Dev Nikhanj and BCCI secretary Jaywant Lele.

Selection committee members tried their best to dissuade Tendulkar, assuring him that they were solidly and unitedly behind him and that they were prepared to give him time to become a "great" captain, but the skipper stood his ground.

After concerted persuasion, the world's best batsman agreed to captain the team for the Test series only, because the first Test against the Proteas is just four days away.

In a recent interview with India Today magazine, Tendulkar had categorically asserted that he was not part of any "conspiracy" to keep Azharuddin out of the team. He stated that he had "no problem" with any player in the 10 years that he had been playing international cricket.

It will be recalled that this column had suggested ("Save 'treasure' Sachin", February 2) that 'national treasure' Tendulkar be persuaded to step down of his own accord in the interest of Indian cricket and for his own good.

Whatever be the extenuating circumstances, Tendulkar's resignation should be commended for being in the best interest of Indian cricket — albeit indirectly.

By accepting 'moral responsibility' for the team 'debacle' in Australia, as he terms it, Tendulkar has set a shining example of accountability which some of his teammates, now increasingly perceived as being mercenaries, would do well to emulate.

One can well imagine the degree of agony which must have gone into the captain's momentous decision ever since the team returned from the disastrous tour Down Under.

However, what ultimately settled the issue was the fact that Tendulkar was sick to his gills of the raging nation-wide controversy over Azharuddin.

The timing of the announcement has led to all manner of unfortunate, but predictable, speculation in a cricket environment that is perennially charged with rumours of sinister cloak-and-dagger happenings.

The fact that Tendulkar beat a hasty retreat after reading out his terse statement at yesterday's press conference and that BCCI secretary Jaywant Lele was nowhere to be found after facing a volley of disconcerting questions from media-persons did not help matters.



Sachin Tendulkar waves to the crowd during the Delhi Test against Pakistan in 2007.



In a contemplative mood before a practice session at MIG Cricket Club in Mumbai in 2004.

Selection committee chairman Chandu Borde put many misgivings to rest during yesterday's rather tumultuous press briefing that the statement expressing his decision to quit had been received by his committee *before* the meeting.

This countered the suspicion that the resignation may have been prompted during the meeting by the inclusion of Azharuddin, whose exclusion from the tour of Australia reached cataclysmic proportions.

By agreeing to play two Test matches in the same team as Azharuddin, Tendulkar has put paid to all diabolical theories that he has any personal animus against the former captain.

The sooner this distasteful controversy is ended, the better will Indian cricket be served.

Azharuddin's "unanimous" inclusion in the team, along with Nayan Mongia, is an implicit admission on the part of the selectors that they erred in leaving them

out of the squad which toured Australia.

The suspicion that they bowed to pressure from the public and possibly the BCCI is inevitable but it would be grossly unfair to draw conclusions on the basis of speculation.

As far as this column is concerned, the former captain's recall is retrograde in the context of the selectors' expressed decision to give young players a chance. The only justification for Azhar's recall can be their recently stated objective to strike a (judicious) balance between youth and experience.

"We thought he (Azhar) was the need of the hour," explained Borde.

In his injury-aborted knock at the historic Brabourne Stadium yesterday, Azhar demonstrated, with apologies to William Shakespeare (*Antony and Cleopatra*), that age has not yet "withered him, nor custom staled his infinite variety" with a dexterous flick to leg off the hips off the second ball that he faced, the first being a testing bouncer from Lance Klusener.

The absence of coach Kapil Dev Nikhanj at yesterday's selection committee meeting is curious in the extreme.

When questioned, Lele stated that Kapil had been invited but did not "turn up", adding that he was not aware of the reasons for the same.

Kapil's sharp reply recently to a journalist's query as in whether Azhar was missed in Australia to the effect that "we missed Sunil Gavaskar too", his remark that the former skipper was "not popular" in the Indian dressing-room, his general approach to the unfortunate controversy while on tour in Australia and the "head-on-the-line" interview on Star TV have only served to underscore the cold war between the two former captains.

On balance, the selectors deserve kudos for nominating a well-balanced team that has a neat blend of youth and experience.

The dropping of Venkatesh Prasad in favour of Ajit Agarkar is perhaps because of the captain's faith in the Mumbai all-rounder. The inclusion of Nikhil Chopra presumably has been dictated by the tourists' known discomfort against spin bowling. The induction of youngsters Mohammed Kaif, Murali Kartik and Wasim Jaffer is praiseworthy in the wake of the Australian nightmare which necessitates drastic measures in favour of youth.

The dropping of two regulation catches by Mongia in the current match (BCCI President's XI vs South Africa) will cause the raising of eyebrows but the

need for experience as a balancing element and the fact that Mongia is easily still the best wicketkeeper-batsman in the country justify his recall.

February 21, 2000

Cheers to the 100-Test Man

Sourav Ganguly

Sourav Ganguly has had a good look at Sachin Tendulkar on and off the field. And from the other end, especially in one-day cricket, a format of the game they excelled in as opening partners.

Ganguly turns back the clock to a time even before he first played with Tendulkar for India. Boys will be boys!

My relationship with Sachin Tendulkar go back to our under-15 years when we both were selected in the national camp in Indore under the coaching of Vasu Paranjape, a very dear person to me and all in my family. He was a very young boy then, a boy with enormous talent who had raised hopes of being a very successful player.

Fifteen years have passed since then and I can bet he has transformed every dream and everyone's hopes into reality. I still remember the day when one afternoon, my room partner Abhijit Chatterjee and I woke up to find our room flooded with water and our suitcases floating around. It was the handiwork of none other than Mr Tendulkar and his bosom pal Vinod Kambli, waiting for us outside the balcony with huge grins on their faces. They had put tubs of water under the door to wake us up as I had asked him to give a wake-up call for afternoon practice.

It gives me immense pleasure to see the heights he has reached and the standards he has set for a lot of others to follow. Sachin is a national icon, rightly so, and one of the most popular and respected persons in India. He is one of the best cricketers India has produced along with Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev but is unique to have broken all records and set ones that can become very hard to beat.

The whole world knows about his ability but what amazes me the most is his hunger and desire to succeed every time he walks out to play for India. This game is his life and he knows only one thing in the world and that is to score runs.

There is no fuss and no theory in the way he plays. He keeps it simple, sticks to the basics and when you talk to him about batting, you realise how uncomplicated it is.



The whole world knows about his ability but what amazes me the most is his hunger and desire.

He uses a big, heavy bat, which was probably heavier in his younger days. And when you ask him the reason, Sachin feels he can't hit the ball off the square with a lighter bat.

It has been a pleasure for me to watch him from the other end. We have been playing together for seven years now and I have been fortunate enough to watch some of the best one-day and Test innings ever. Among his best Test innings, his hundred at Perth against Australia (1991-92) would be ranked top most and the one at Headingley (2002) on the seaming pitch would be very close to it.

The best one-day innings would be at Sharjah against Australia in 1998 though I have seen a lot of other breathtaking innings that have changed the course of a game. He is an absolute match-winner and that is what makes him different from the rest.

Sachin is a very tense and God-fearing person. I remember sharing a room with him in 1991 in Australia. Those days we did not have the system of staying in single rooms as we do now. He was awake till four in the morning, unable to sleep as he had to bat the next morning. Even now there are times when he has told me that he has struggled to sleep. Music is his absolute passion and that is how he relaxes his mind to get ready for the game. He has different kinds of music to keep him going for the day. When I see him with headphones on, I know immediately he is very focused. When one sits to write about the man, one does not know where to finish. I take this opportunity to wish him good luck for his 100th Test. It is a major milestone for any Test player and I know he will play many more before he retires. Sachin will set his own records and as a colleague I will really be surprised if he does not score 100 international hundreds. Well done, Sachin. It has been an honour playing with you.

September 4, 2002

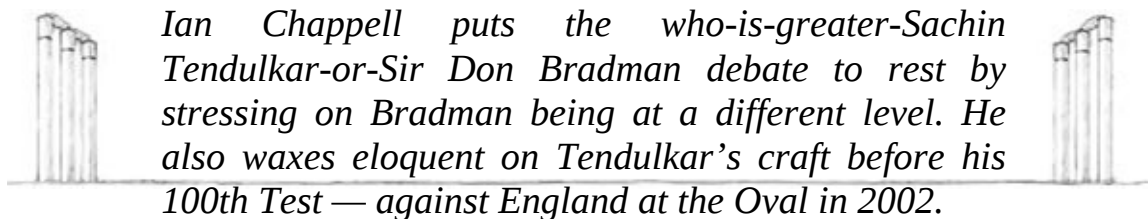


Srinath KK

Relishing a stroke

The Best Batsman of His Era

Ian Chappell



Ian Chappell puts the who-is-greater-Sachin Tendulkar-or-Sir Don Bradman debate to rest by stressing on Bradman being at a different level. He also waxes eloquent on Tendulkar's craft before his 100th Test — against England at the Oval in 2002.

Is Sachin Tendulkar a better batsman than Sir Donald Bradman? Probably not. Is it important? No, Tendulkar doesn't have to play against an Australian team brandishing Bradman.

What really counts is that Tendulkar is the best batsman of his era; slightly better than Brian Lara and comfortably ahead of Steve Waugh or any other frontline batsman. The only player who currently matches Tendulkar for consistently destroying attacks is Adam Gilchrist and it's unfair to compare him with someone who bats in the middle order and can fall back on his wicketkeeping to retain his place in the side.

Nevertheless, it's batsmen like Tendulkar, Lara and Gilchrist who keep opposing captains awake at night — players who can carve up attacks and do it for prolonged periods. Those players can quickly change the course of a match but unfortunately for Tendulkar and Lara, so often they still finish on the losing side because their team's bowlers lack penetration.

There was a time after Lara scored his magnificent 277 at the SCG in 1992-93 when I felt the left-hander was marginally superior to Tendulkar. Both were adventurous and skilful players who could carve up opposition bowlers but Lara tended to do it with a greater degree of safety. Lara didn't hit a six in that marathon display at the SCG but nowadays he attempts to hit bowlers over the top regularly.



Airing his views to commentator Ian Chappell at the toss during the one-day series in Sri Lanka in 1996.

That, and Lara's inability to harness his mind on a regular basis have resulted in his fall from grace but when he does fully utilise his powers of concentration, as he did against Australia in 1998-99 and Sri Lanka in 2001-02, he's still as formidable as Tendulkar.

However, Tendulkar has handled his fame with great equanimity and on the odd occasion when his mind has wavered on the field, he's quickly been able to re-focus with dramatic effect. There's no better example than his recent century at Headingley, which came at a time when people were starting to wonder whether his career had reached the summit and was on the downhill journey.



In full flight against Pakistan during the Mohali one-day international in 2007.

His concentration was superb at Headingley and it was an innings spiced with the right amount of determination and flair. To top it off, that innings wasn't played in vain as India went on to win the match and square the series, which must have given the highly competitive Tendulkar great satisfaction.

The finest innings I've seen the little maestro play was at Chennai in 1998 when Sachin won a battle with Shane Warne, which resulted in a famous Indian victory. This was a classic case of two champions going into battle against one another with the result of the game hinging on the outcome.

Tendulkar had prepared for this moment by practicing against former Indian leg-spinner Laxman Sivaramakrishnan bowling into specially prepared 'rough' in the nets. He was ready when Warne came around the wicket and dispatched the leg-spinner with ferocious power through and over the on-side.

Warne had to alter the thrust of his attack but Tendulkar had gained the upper hand. By the time Tendulkar had raced to 155 not out, the game was virtually won and all that remained was for the bowlers to complete mopping up operations.

This was a perfect example of the value of a counter-attack and there is no better exponent in the modern game than the mighty Mumbai midget.

The fact that Tendulkar has handled fame so well and has maintained an attacking outlook throughout a long career is a tribute to not only his skill but also his wonderfully alert mind. He's certainly had to cope with more than Bradman when it comes to the weight of expectation of his fans and the globalisation of the modern game.

In his career Bradman only had to acclimatise to 10 different venues (five at home and five in England) while Tendulkar has played at 49 different grounds in all 10 Test playing countries. Ironically Tendulkar's 100th Test is at the ground where Bradman failed to score in his final innings when needing only a boundary to average a hundred in his remarkable career.

Tendulkar's momentous occasion will afford him the rare opportunity of a triumph over Bradman.

September 5, 2002

Big Runs in Big World Cup Battle

Khalid A-H Ansari



The mother of all World Cup battles — India vs Pakistan at Centurion in 2003. Sachin scored, India won.



JOHANNESBURG: India crushed Pakistan by six wickets in a memorable Pool 'A' match in the ICC World Cup at Centurion Park on Saturday to secure a berth in the Super Six round of the tournament.

India's epic victory, their fourth in as many World Cup matches against Pakistan, was largely the result of a classic knock of 98 by Sachin Tendulkar, ably assisted by some eminently sensible batting by Yuvraj Singh (50 not out), Rahul Dravid (44 not out) and Mohammed Kaif (35) after Pakistan had scored 273, thanks to an elegant innings of 101 by Saeed Anwar. After all's said and done, it was largely India's superior *jazba*, allied with better teamwork, discipline and self-belief that prevailed over a dispirited Pakistan team that has been rent asunder by internal strife.

Due credit must also go to India's bowling attack — to Zaheer Khan (two for 46), Javagal Srinath (one for 41) — and to the high level of fielding.

Even as he strode out to bat, Sachin Tendulkar's demeanour bespoke grim determination, a here-and-now urgency to not only set India authoritatively on course to victory but also to put to rest, on the world's biggest cricketing stage, all asinine debate concerning the world's premier batsman.

He started off with a flurry of savage, bludgeoning strokes which seemed to suggest that, although they came in the aftermath of Mr Jaswant Singh's Union Bill, he was not budgeting for runs in the initial stanzas of the run-chase. Virender Sehwag followed suit almost dutifully, almost matching the genius stroke for stroke.

It rained sixes and fours as the pair put Shoaib Akhtar, bowling at full throttle in the 150-kph speed zone, and Waqar Younis, now only a shadow of his devastating self, to the sword. The 50 of the innings came off only 32 deliveries amid frenetic waving of innumerable tricolours in the packed stands.

Ganguly departed without scoring to leave India in a somewhat perilous state at 53 for two. But Mohammed Kaif, who was on the verge of being excluded from this momentous encounter, helped Tendulkar put the innings back on the rails while helping him cross the 12,000 ODI run mark.

Kaif dropped anchor, remaining scoreless while Tendulkar, who was granted a reprieve by Abdul Razzaq at mid-on off Wasim when on 32, imperiously plundered runs from all points of the ground's meridian.

But once he had settled in, Kaif demonstrated a delectable array of strokes in an invaluable cameo of 35 runs. An inspired passage saw him cover drive Waqar for two consecutive fours, then flick the skipper to the square leg fence, followed by an immaculate straight drive that would have done credit to Sunil Gavaskar.

Tendulkar was beginning to feel the effects of cramps in his foot which he aggravated while going for a sharp single when on 98.

He collapsed at the bowlers' end and was attended to by physio Andrew Leipus. The very first over after resumption saw him back away awkwardly from a snorter from Shoaib, who had smelt his prey. The nasty delivery ricocheted off the bat to Younis Khan, who scooped up a brilliant running catch inches from the ground as he dived full stretch forward. Tendulkar's 98 had come off just 75 balls and included one six and 12 fours. Batting with circumspection, Rahul Dravid and Yuvraj Singh avoided further alarm to steer the team to a convincing win.



Blazing away and providing complete entertainment to his fans.

Waqar Younis's predictable decision to bat after winning the toss on a flat wicket in bright sunshine under an azure sky was vindicated when Pakistani openers Saeed Anwar and Taufiq Umar blunted the innocuous Indian pace attack to put on 58 before Umar was bowled by Zaheer through the 'gate'.

The stream of Indian fans, many decked out in the team colours, in the 18,000-capacity Centurion Park stadium, had further cause for rejoicing when the enormously talented Abdul Razzaq fell to a brilliant one-handed diving catch to his right by Rahul Dravid off Ashish Nehra to make it 90 for two in 20 overs.

The out-of-form Inzamam-ul-Haq, arguably among the finest batsmen in the

world, having scored just 10 runs in his previous four innings, proclaimed his intent when he smote the first delivery faced-off Anil Kumble — over the bowler's head to the fence.

However, Inzamam, who looks a picture after having shed 14 kgs, fell to what has become the stuff of jokes — run out by Sehwag after scoring 6. Pakistan were now 98 for three at the end of 22 overs.

But a thoroughly professional fourth wicket stand of 73 between Saeed Anwar and Yousuf Youhana put the Pakistan innings on a steady course until Javagal Srinath, bowling with nagging accuracy in the channel, had Youhana caught by Zaheer Khan at deep extra cover in essaying a lofted cover drive.

Indian skipper Ganguly failed to ring the requisite bowling changes that would have prevented the batsmen from settling down. In an unimaginative act of wishful thinking, he persisted inordinately with Nehra who went for 74 runs and bowled his two left-handed pace bowlers with almost metronomic tedium. The incomprehensible tactic suited the batsmen just fine, thank you.

Anil Kumble, who was included in the side in preference to Harbhajan Singh bowled economically (none for 51 in 10 overs), but one felt that Sehwag, Mongia and Ganguly himself could have been given longer spells in preference to the profligate Nehra.

Saeed Anwar, who had been in the cricketing wilderness for six months for reasons ranging from loss of daughter to religious pursuit to injury to omission by selectors, rose to the occasion in an innings of pristine artistry that was replete with wristy cuts and exquisite flicks on both sides of the wicket. He fell for 101, scored off 126 balls, bowled by Nehra but not before he had helped stabilise Pakistan's innings in conjunction with Younis Khan (32) and Rashid Latif (29 not out) to set India a defensible score.

SCOREBOARD

***Pakistan:** S Anwar b Nehra 101, T Umar b Zaheer 22, A Razzaq c Dravid b Nehra 12, Inzamam-ul-Haq run out 6, Y Youhana c Zaheer b Srinath 25, Younis Khan c Mongia b Zaheer Khan 32, S Afridi c Kumble b Mongia 9, R Latif not out 29, W Akram not out 10.*

Extras (b-2, lb-7, w-11, nb-7) 27.

Total 273 for 7 in 50 overs.

Fall of wickets: 1-58, 2-90, 3-98, 4-171, 5-195, 6-208, 7-256.

Bowling: Zaheer Khan 10-0-46-2, Srinath 10-0-41-1, Nehra 10-0-74-2, Kumble

10-0-51-0, Ganguly 3-0-14-0, Sehwag 4-0-19-0, Mongia 3-0-19-1.

India: S Tendulkar c Younis Khan b Akhtar 98, V Sehwag c Afridi b Younis 21, S Ganguly lbw b Younis 0, M Kaif b Afridi 35, R Dravid not out 44, Yuvraj Singh not out 50.

Extras (b-1, lb-3, w-19, nb-5) 28.

Total 276 for 4 in 45.4 overs.

Fall of wickets: 1-53, 2-53, 3-155, 4-177.

Bowling: Akram 10-0-48-0, Akhtar 10-0-72-1, Younis 8.4-0-71-2, Afridi 9-0-45-1, Razzaq 8-0-36-0.


March 2, 2003




With wife Anjali at a function in 2010.

The Woman Who Knows Sachin Best

Anjali Tendulkar interview



Sachin Tendulkar's better half is not known to provide the media with sound bytes and extended views. This rare interview was conducted by former India batsman and coach Anshuman Gaekwad for his book on the batting great.



What kind of person is Sachin at home?

He is a very normal kind of person at home, as all husbands are.

Does he help in household chores, like in the kitchen, shopping etc?

He does sometimes but not in everything. He will not do dusting and other routine work, but helps with the cooking sometimes. He is extremely fond of non-vegetarian food and loves cooking it himself (smiles). He thinks he is a very good cook, the greatest.

What kind of a father is he?

He is a great father, he dotes on the kids. He loves playing with them whenever he is at home. He becomes one himself with them. He teases them, tosses them and does everything else a normal father does.

What kind of clothes does he like?

Yes, he likes designer stuff but he does not have any particular brand. He buys anything that he likes. He prefers dressing casually. He likes designer t-shirts, jeans, watches *etc.* He avoids formal clothing which he wears only for official functions and big parties. Otherwise he loves and lives in his denims and tees.

What kind of clothes does he like you to wear?

He does not like me wearing skirts or ultra-modern clothes. Mostly he likes me to wear salwar-kameez, saris or jeans. Most of the time I am traditionally dressed. Sachin is very particular when it comes to my hair-styling too. He

prefers it being simple.

What is the one thing you like most about him?

There are lots of things I like about him, but one quality that I really like is that he does not have double standards in life. He is true to himself and very aware and in touch with his roots. He has not let success and fame go to his head. He does not behave like a superstar at home or in public and is very down to earth.

Is there anything you hate about him?

Nothing in particular. He is a very likeable man.

Has he ever let you down?

NEVER. He has always been there for me and always gone out of his way to do things for me.

Has he ever gone out of the way to express his love for you?

Oh, he has. Last Valentine's day he was busy on tour, and he called me a day before Valentine's. He asked me what I was going to be doing for Valentine's. I told him that I may go and purchase a small bracelet for myself as a Valentine's gift, and he said okay.



Anjali Tendulkar drives Sachin and their kids, Arjun and Sara home from Mumbai airport on the Indian team's return from Pakistan in 2004.

But that was not the end of it. Early next morning, on Valentine's Day, the doorbell rang and when I opened the door a man handed me a small parcel in a brown envelope. He said, "Sahab ne bheja hai". When I opened it, I was in seventh heaven, for what was inside really made my day. It was a beautiful diamond necklace that Sachin had sent for me. It was a beautiful surprise. He must have really gone through a lot of trouble to get it organised from where he was in less than 24 hours.



Sachin (along with wife Anjali) raises a toast to childhood friend Ricky Couto on his wedding day — January 30, 2005.

If there is one thing that you would like to change about him, what would it be?

I would like to change his stubbornness. He is very stubborn and once he has made up his mind to do something he will not rest till he has finished it at any cost, no matter what the consequences.

What is the funniest thing he has ever said to you?

(Laughs) When he told me to go and inform 'his' parents about our marriage plans.

How do you handle it when women try to get close to him and flirt with him? Do you hate it, get jealous or what?

I really do not get jealous or hate women when they do all this stuff, but I get irritated at their behaviour. However, this is normal for me as I understand that he is a superstar so all these things are a part and parcel of his life.

Do you have the same passion for cricket that he does? Does he talk cricket with you?

I am married to a cricketer, and I like to watch him play. Other than that, my knowledge of the game is very limited. He rarely talks about the game to me because he thinks I do not know anything about cricket. He has lengthy discussions with his brother Ajit on the topic.

When was the last time you had an argument with him?

No arguments till date, but yes we do discuss a lot. I try and tell him to go out and have a good time with us, without bothering about the world, which he avoids. I understand why he feels that way, but then I keep telling him to let his hair down.

*Excerpts from Sachin Tendulkar: Jewel of India by Anshuman Gaekwad,
published by Saistar Publications.
April 24, 2003*




Shahid Kapoor

During an interview with MiD DAY before his 30th birthday in 2003.

Sach is the Art of Coping

Clayton Murzello



What's Sachin Tendulkar like when the going gets tough in terms of injuries? This interview, conducted at his home in Bandra, Mumbai may give you a fair idea.

The weather outside Sachin Tendulkar's Bandra house depicts the state of his cricketing life — gloomy, but not dark. And like we are convinced that the sun will come out, Tendulkar knows that he will take guard soon. Since 1999, he's not been in the best sporting health. Yet, there are indications that he has managed to tide over the crisis with characteristic poise.

Ask him a question about how he has coped with back, foot, finger and elbow injuries and he'll soon add that you forgot the shoulder and hamstring injuries.

Excerpts from an interview:

Since 1999, you have suffered from back, foot, finger and elbow injuries. What is the mindset of a top sportsman in such situations?

I have carried a lot of injuries for the last six years. I had a bad hamstring injury before the last World Cup and a shoulder injury towards the end of the West Indies tour in 2002. If you are going to consistently push yourself hard and to the limit, injuries are going to happen. In any sport, it's very normal to see players go down with injuries. Somehow things go wrong. Where I am concerned, it's part and parcel of sport but I would prefer to carry on with the other parcel which doesn't have any room for injuries.



Delighted after a fruitful session with a bowling machine at MIG Cricket Club, Mumbai in 2002.

I have overcome most of the obstacles. This (tennis elbow) has been around for a year now — since August 18 last year. I have to be mentally tough which I am prepared to be.

How critical was the back injury in 1999?

It happened while I was playing (against Pakistan in Chennai, 1999). I got an attack of cramps. Everything started cramping — forearms, the area between my index finger and thumb.

I was finding it difficult to stretch my muscles. The situation was such that I had to carry on somehow. It started because of dehydration. Whatever fluids you take, the heat saps you. You saw what happened to Mohammad Kaif when he was batting against Australia there (in 2004).

Kaif is probably the fittest member of the side and it happened to him. He had probably batted half the number of hours of what I did. He scored 64 while I scored 136. It's all about keeping yourself properly hydrated.

Talking about hydrating, not many people know that I had to set an alarm just to drink water at night. I used to make it a point to stuff myself with water and sleep. It is not what you do that morning, it is what you do 10-12 hours prior to the game which is important.



“Not many people know that I had to set an alarm just to drink water at night. I used to make it a point to stuff myself with water and sleep.”

Have you felt uncertain about your future when you had these injuries?

Honestly, I never thought like that. If you start thinking in that direction then... as they say... the body reacts to how you think. If the thinking is not healthy, then the body will take longer to recover. I make all the effort to think that it's going to get better at some stage.

Have all these injuries made you a different batsman?

Not the injuries. It's just my age and probably my maturity. Everything changes with time. I feel people should be wise enough to accept that because everything changes. The greatest example is Amitabh Bachchan. He plays different roles.

Similar is the case with the other sportspersons. Great players like Vivian Richards, Sunil Gavaskar, Allan Border — they all represent varied styles.

When I first got into the team I was very aggressive while others like Vengsarkar and Ravi (Shastri) were naturally at a different level altogether. Then later, there were Azharuddin and Sidhu.

Now, I have reached that level and guys like Viru (Sehwag), Yuvraj and others are playing different roles. It is all about what the team needs. If the team wants me to go out there and go bang, bang, I can do that. You have each guy doing different things.

Eventually when things come together, it clicks. It's not important what five people sitting 100 metres away think about how you should play. It's about the team.

Does the fact that you've come back each time provide inspiration in these times?

Yes... it does. I know I have overcome so many obstacles. For my back injury, I went to Australia to fix it and it worked. I've just got to be patient. Each injury is going to have a different time frame for recovery. I have got to respect that.

What makes you so positive?

I've worked hard for this and there are people around me who have worked equally hard. With their support, I feel extremely confident. It's very tough, but with them showing me the light at the end of the tunnel, I get more determined.

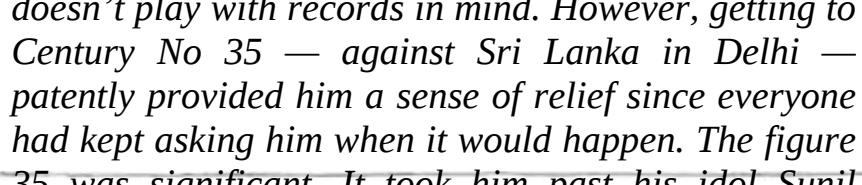
I want to play for sometime. I am not just looking at the next few matches but at a broader perspective. I don't want to play a couple of games and see things go wrong.

It's my family... the way we interact at home has helped me to be positive. Also, the desire to play for India makes me think in that direction. To get to the top, you have to have a support staff and for me, that is my family.

August 21, 2005

India's Sunny Side

Ian Chappell



Sachin Tendulkar never tires from saying that he doesn't play with records in mind. However, getting to Century No 35 — against Sri Lanka in Delhi — patently provided him a sense of relief since everyone had kept asking him when it would happen. The figure 35 was significant. It took him past his idol Sunil Gavaskar's mark of 34 Test hundreds.

Over to Ian Chappell...

Now here comes the real 'Little Master'. These words were spoken at the 1996 World Cup opening ceremony by Sunil Gavaskar and he was referring to Pakistan batting genius Hanif Mohammad.

Both Hanif and Sunil were similar in stature, went by the same *nom de plume* and had a distinct thirst for runs. At the same time as Sunny spoke these words, about a hundred metres away, out in the middle of Eden Gardens, was a potential third member of the 'Little Master' club, Sachin Tendulkar. Who is the best of the three?

Well Sachin is the most aggressive, Sunil had the toughest job as he had to face the West Indies pace bowlers at the peak of their prowess and Hanif is the only one to have a Test triple century to his name. At the time Gavaskar spoke those words in 1996 it was hard to imagine that anyone would attain let alone surpass his record of 34 Test centuries. Now nine years on, Tendulkar has passed Gavaskar's mark and has become Test cricket's most prolific century maker.

For nigh on a decade Tendulkar and another diminutive stroke maker Brian Lara have vied for the title of best batsman in world cricket. Tendulkar hit the scene as a precocious talent, 16 years of age but extremely mature in thinking. No bowler could tie him down and he cemented his reputation as a player of immense skill and courage by first scoring a century at the SCG as a teenager and then a month later going one better by amassing a brilliant hundred on the bouncy WACA pitch against a four pronged Australian pace attack. Here was a player of great skill and nerve who wasn't intimidated by any opponent and about whom Sir Donald Bradman observed, "He's the batsman who most

reminds me of the way I played.”

How tough is it to score a century at the WACA? Well, the first time Sunil Gavaskar played there for the World X1 he was out cheaply to a ball from Dennis Lillee that climbed off a good length and passed his nose. “Are all the pitches in Australia like this?” he asked me that night.

“Why?” I responded. “Because if they are,” said Sunny, “I might as well go home now.”

Gavaskar was only joking; he was never one to duck a challenge, as instanced by the great tour he had of the Caribbean in 1975-76 when Andy Roberts and Michael Holding were in full cry. A great mimic and raconteur, Gavaskar loves recounting a story of batting at Sabina Park in Kingston. After three bouncers in a row, Holding finally bowled a good length ball and one of the many fast bowling fans in the audience immediately called out, “Hey Mikey, bowl him a bouncer.”



Gavaskar could drive the opposition to distraction with his immense powers of concentration while Tendulkar just drove them to the boundary.

Technically as sound as any opener I’ve seen, Gavaskar had the patience of Job. However, he never missed a scoring opportunity and would pounce on anything loose and either drive it through the off-side or flick it off his pads as though it was an annoying little insect. He was fleet-footed and this allowed him to get quickly into position and even against the fastest bowlers he had time to defend or deflect.

Fast bowling never bothered Gavaskar but mention slow scoring and immediately his antenna rises. Ask him about the 1975 World Cup match at Lord’s and scoring only 36 in 60 overs and he always replies, “No Ian, in a 60-over match.”

As a fellow commentator I have enjoyed his company on many occasions and he is quick with a story and keen on a glass of wine, as long as it’s after the 20th in the month. I haven’t had many opportunities to mix socially with Tendulkar but when I have he appeals as a man who enjoys a good time and appreciates humour.



With fellow batting legend Sunil Gavaskar at the release function of Cricket at Fever Pitch by Khalid A-H Ansari at the Cricket Club of India in 2006.

India have been fortunate to have two such different but equally successful batsmen. Gavaskar could drive the opposition to distraction with his immense powers of concentration while Tendulkar just drove them to the boundary. Neither has been fortunate enough to regularly have great attacks to fully capitalise on their mammoth run scoring skill but their teammates have had many occasions to thank them for putting victory out of the opposition's grasp.

Tendulkar and Gavaskar have continued a trend of highly successful diminutive batsmen in world cricket. There have been precious few batsmen deserving of the title 'Little Master' but when it comes to compiling Test centuries the two Indians are out on their own.

December 11, 2005




Sachin Tendulkar being interviewed in a make-up room in 2008.


Shreshth KK

Look into that Mirror, Sachin

Ian Chappell



Probably, the most controversial of all articles on Sachin Tendulkar was written after the 2007 World Cup by Ian Chappell, hitherto an admirer of Tendulkar. The comment piece sparked off reactions from all over the country. Not unexpected though considering the icon involved.



In the fallout from India's early demise at the World Cup one of the major decisions will concern the future of Sachin Tendulkar.

Before anybody else makes a decision on what will happen to Tendulkar, the player himself has to have a good long look in the mirror and decide what he's trying to achieve in the game. At the moment he looks like a player trying to eke out a career, build on a glittering array of statistics. If he really is playing for that reason and not to help win as many matches as he can for India then he is wasting his time and should retire immediately.

When you think that for a decade Brian Lara and Tendulkar went head to head in a wonderful battle of stroke play to establish who the best batsman in the world was, they are now worlds apart in effectiveness.

Lara's quick-footed tip toe through a terrific innings against a good Australian bowling attack when the rest of the West Indies top order succumbed easily was in direct contrast to Tendulkar's stumbling effort in the crucial Sri Lanka match.

The amazing thing about Lara's brilliant career is the fact that he hasn't changed his style at all over 17 years. This is a credit to his technique and mental strength, as the aging process generally makes a player more progressively conservative. Tendulkar hasn't worn as well; his last three or four years have been a shadow of his former self.



Speaking to the electronic media at Brabourne Stadium in 2004.

His double century at the SCG in January 2004 was a classic case of a great player really struggling. He came to the crease out of form and despite amassing all those runs and batting for in excess of 10 hours he was no closer to recapturing his best touch than he had been when he had started out. It was a tribute to his determination but it was a sad sight to see; there are enough average players around so that you don't want to see a classy one reduced to that level.

Tendulkar hasn't been as lucky as Lara; the Indian batsman has suffered a lot of injuries in this period where his play has deteriorated and there is nothing that melts your mental approach quicker than physical handicaps. Lara has been relatively free from injury and he certainly doesn't have the weight of numbers riding on his shoulders that Tendulkar does. However, the population of the Caribbean might be small but they are extremely demanding.

Despite all the fuss and the odd controversy that has surrounded Lara's career he has remained himself; as if to assert — this is my game and this is how I play.

For whatever reason Tendulkar hasn't been able to maintain his extremely

high standards for the last few years and unless he can find a way to recapture this mental approach he's not doing his team or himself any favours.

If Tendulkar had found an honest mirror three years ago and asked the question; "Mirror, mirror on the wall who is the best batsman of all?"

It would've answered, "Brian Charles Lara."

If he asked that same mirror right now, "Mirror, mirror on the wall should I retire?"

The answer would be; "Yes."

March 30, 2007



Sachin Tendulkar exults after reaching his century against Australia at the

Sydney Cricket Ground in 2008.

Act of Will in Sydney

Peter Roebuck



Sachin Tendulkar's third Test hundred at the Sydney Cricket Ground came during the most controversial Test in recent times. Despite his century effort, India ended up losing. Forget Monkeygate and savour what came before that.



SYDNEY: Sachin Tendulkar's reaction upon reaching three figures at the Sydney Cricket Ground told the tale of his innings.

His response came as much from his heart as his head. A push through the covers took him to the coveted tally and the crowd stood to cheer. Just for a moment the Indian appeared frozen, as if the accomplishment of a feat long in the making was too much to absorb.

After a pause that lasted an age, he slowly raised both arms towards the heavens and stood staring with something akin to ecstasy etched in his face. Clutching his bat and helmet he raised his arms a second time, punching upwards like a gladiator who had looked immortality in the eye and survived.

It was not so much that he had conquered a field or a fierce opponent. He had conquered himself.

Tendulkar stayed with arms aloft for several seconds. Everything seemed to be happening in slow motion. Harbhajan Singh, a frisky counterpoint to a grave elder, dashed across to embrace his colleague but his partner had withdrawn into some ethereal world of private contemplation and hardly seemed to recognise him.

As the ovation finally faded Tendulkar walked towards square leg to give himself time to recover and then went back to work. Stuart Clark's next delivery was met with a discouragingly straight bat.

At times of heightened emotion it seems almost impertinent to delve into the innermost thoughts of the performer. Perhaps, he was thinking about a father whose passing moved him deeply. Perhaps, he was remembering previous

successes on a ground that relishes him. Or maybe he was reflecting upon the passing of the years, knowing that he could not expect to tread this path again. Accordingly, he had steeled himself to produce something special.

At stumps every day he had repaired to the indoor nets to tighten his game. Presumably, he was working on his back foot drive, the shot that had been bringing him down. Batsmen of this calibre do not allow bad habits to take hold.

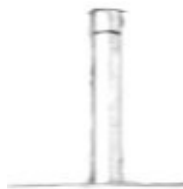
It was an innings notable for its construction and control. As much as an exhibition of batsmanship, it was an act of will. Every thought was precise, every decision certain, every stroke seemed to be carved in stone. It is not that his batting was thrilling or that any flamboyant strokes were played. Indeed, he hardly produced anything exceptional till three figures had been reached whereupon he fed the boundary at third man with upper cuts and crafty steers.

Rather his innings was satisfying, in the manner of a perfect chess game. Throughout, his head was immaculately still and his eyes remained fixed on the ball. Somehow his bat appeared broad of beam, an illusion created by presenting the full face of the blade to every delivery. Not for him the rubbery movements and wristy flicks commonplace in the subcontinent. Hardly once, too, did he lift the ball, preferring to keep it scorching the turf.



Cuts during the Delhi Test against Pakistan in 2007.

Tendulkar set about building his score methodically and meticulously. Exuberance is the prerogative of youth, wisdom belongs to elders who seek not glory but achievement. Bafflingly Tendulkar is sometimes chided by his own constituency for advancing slowly, as if it were fit for a man to remain forever young. Now, he reminded supporters that age, too, has its satisfactions.



Unperturbed, he kept tucking the ball away, kept collecting runs, gradually gathering momentum. Not the least distinguishing feature of the Indian's innings lay in his willingness to play second fiddle to various partners.

Mostly Tendulkar pushed the score along with superbly constructed defensive strokes placed into gaps. It was the innings of an old pro. His first run of the day had come with a push wide of mid-on and an alert scamper. Already the brain

was ticking. For a time, his attacking strokes found the fieldsmen, a frustration that did not upset him. Unperturbed, he kept tucking the ball away, kept collecting runs, gradually gathering momentum. Not the least distinguishing feature of the Indian's innings lay in his willingness to play second fiddle to various partners. Tendulkar watched as Sourav Ganguly unfurled numerous sweet strokes before his untimely dismissal. Later he was happy to support Harbhajan as the spinner played with the utmost spirit. Tendulkar did not try to dominate the strike, did not panic as wickets fell to the second new ball. Nothing was allowed to disturb his resolve. Throughout, he concentrated on serving the side the best way he could. By scoring a hundred.

January 05, 2008

The Great Adelaide Connection

Mike Coward



Never say never when it comes to Sachin Tendulkar, but you can't blame even old hands if they thought the fourth Test of the 2007-08 series was his last in Australia. Here's something on the Sachin Tendulkar-Adelaide connection.



It is only right that Sachin Tendulkar should play his last Test match in Australia at Adelaide Oval for he has a very special affinity with this city of churches and Chappells and festivals.

For this was Don Bradman's hometown for 66 years and in 1998 India's little master came here especially to pay homage to the game's greatest batsman on his 90th birthday.

It is a part of the game's rich lore, of course, that Bradman said he could see something of his youthful self in the way Tendulkar plays.

While he has always been acutely embarrassed by any comparison with Bradman, such an endorsement guaranteed Tendulkar would be deified even beyond the vast Hindu pantheon.

At the annual Test match dinner at the Adelaide Oval pavilion on Tuesday night, he told an audience of 1140 that his meeting with Bradman in the lounge room of the family home at Kensington Park in Adelaide's leafy eastern suburbs will forever be etched in his mind.

Like Bradman, Tendulkar has carried the expectations of a nation each time he has batted and such is the Indian diaspora today that he is a prisoner of his fame even outside his homeland. Bradman often spoke of the intolerable pressures of living every waking moment in the public gaze.

Also like Bradman, Tendulkar receives an extraordinary amount of correspondence. Recently, he received a letter from the Bradman Foundation expressing the hope that he could find a way to make a gesture for the betterment of the Bradman Museum at Bowral in the southern highlands of

NSW.

He was thrilled to be approached and after some consideration signed a favourite short-sleeved jumper he used in Australia. Given he was back in Bradman's town Tuesday night, he tucked the jumper under his arm as he left for the dinner and during the function presented it to Bob Horsell, the chairman of Cricket New South Wales, who is in Adelaide for the Test match. It was a delightful gesture and was warmly applauded.

Aside from his visits as India's master batsman which began in 1991-92 when he was 18, he was also in Adelaide for treatment for a severe back injury in 1999. And to the delight of Rod Marsh and Wayne Phillips, then principals at the then Cricket Academy, he insisted on living with the students in a single room among the dormitory accommodation of the Del Monte guesthouse at suburban Henley Beach.



He is, of course, among the most self-effacing of men who has carried himself with great dignity throughout a remarkable career.

Tendulkar laughed when reminded that he had once asked "Mr Phillips" for permission to leave the digs to buy fish and chips at nearby Henley Square.

He is, of course, among the most self-effacing of men who has carried himself with great dignity throughout a remarkable career. Late next year he will have played in the Test arena longer than Bradman whose career stretched from 1928 to 1948.

It is a presumption, of course, that Tendulkar will not again return to Adelaide Oval for Test cricket. After all, he has been blessed with super-human powers. That said, it does seem most unlikely. He will be 35 on April 24 and India is not scheduled to return here for Test matches before 2011-12.



Waiting for his turn to bat in the nets at the Gabba in Brisbane on the 1991-92 tour of Australia.

On Tuesday night he gave nothing away about his immediate future although obviously he will play against Australia in India in October. He said he was simply content to enjoy his cricket without making any rigid plans. Certainly he was relaxed and grateful that he still has the will and strength of mind and body

to compete.

It is never easy to say goodbye to someone who has graced the game in such a manner and brought us great joy. There is a sense of privilege at having lived in his time but at the same time a deep regret that he won't be back again.

We experienced the same conflicting emotions here just 26 months ago when Brian Lara bade farewell to cricket in this country. Lara was then six months into his 37th year.



Over the years there has been much animated debate as to who among the two, Tendulkar or Lara, has been the pre-eminent batsman of the contemporary game. Lara, the more classical of the two, was never in doubt that the distinction belonged to Tendulkar.

Over the years there has been much animated debate as to who among the two, Tendulkar or Lara, has been the pre-eminent batsman of the contemporary game. Lara, the more classical of the two, was never in doubt that the distinction belonged to Tendulkar. Indeed, he famously observed: "Sachin is a genius, I'm a mere mortal."

These days that tribute is even inscribed on coffee mugs available from a merchandise shop beneath Tendulkar's restaurant near the renowned Gateway of India in Mumbai.

Those who did not see Bradman can boast they saw Tendulkar and Lara. And it is a very proud claim indeed.

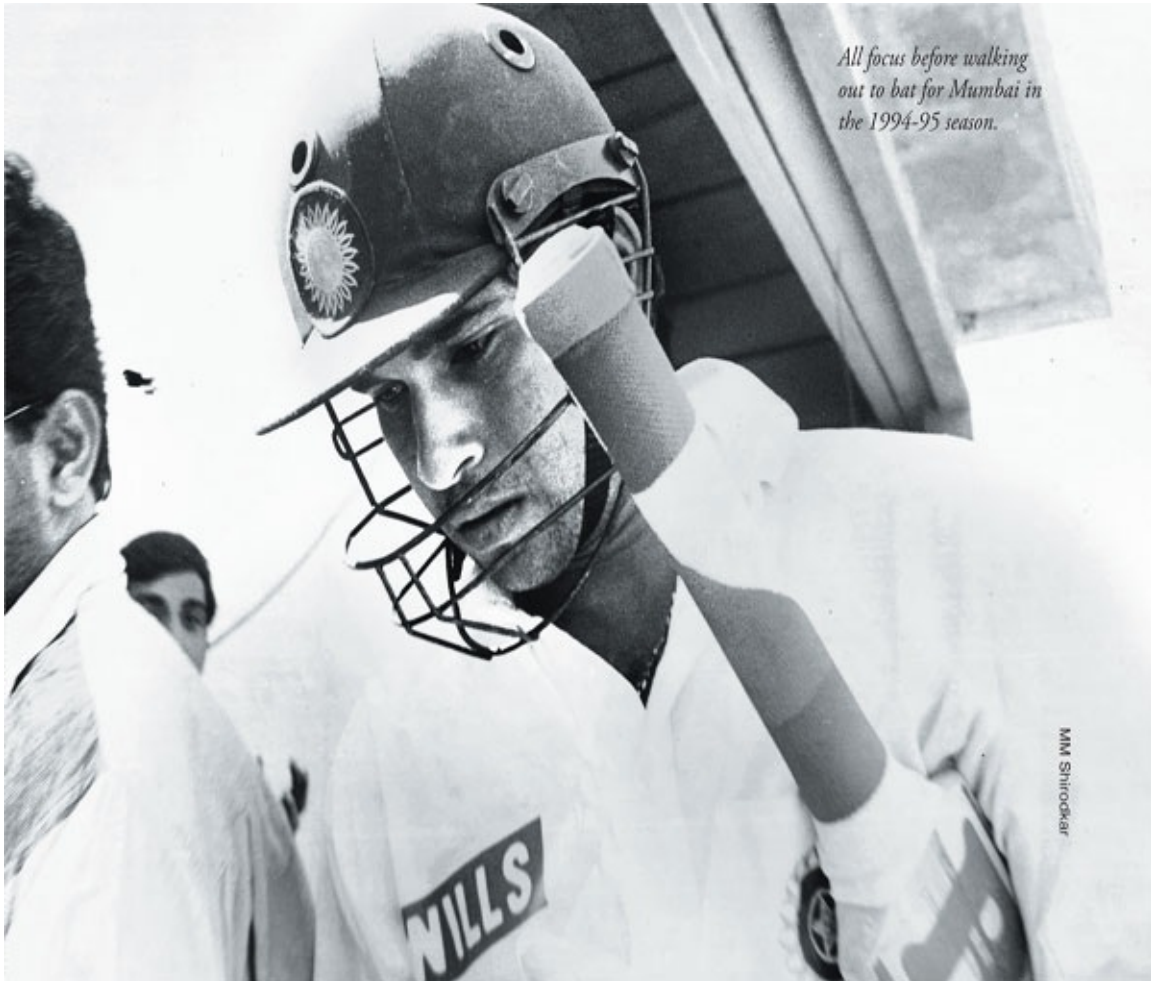
If this is the end for Tendulkar as a Test cricketer in this country it is most appropriate his stage will be the world's most classically beautiful cricket ground.

January 24, 2008

Importance of Being Honest

Sanjeev K Samyal

Even the most gifted of cricketers have to labour in the nets. Proof of this comes in the form of this piece written after Sachin Tendulkar contributed to India regaining the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.



All focus before walking out to bat for Mumbai in the 1994-95 season.

JAMTHA (NAGPUR): It is a season of retirements. Two of the five stalwarts have already called it quits while the pressure is building on Rahul Dravid. The biggest name, Sachin Tendulkar has, however, consistently said that he is in no mood to call it a day yet. During this series he has announced his intentions with the bat too.

His sequence of scores in seven innings against Australia so far reads — 13, 49, 88, 10 not out, 68, 47 and 109 — an aggregate of 384 at an average of 64.00. Throughout this series he has batted with consistency and in important situations. The only thing missing was a three-figure knock. He fulfilled that desire too by reaching his 40th century on the opening day of the fourth Test against Australia at the newly built Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium yesterday.

Thanks to Tendulkar's knock and half-centuries by 100-Test man VVS Laxman and Virender Sehwag, India rallied to 311 for five. The Mumbai legend's 146-run partnership with Laxman was the highlight of the day. It came at a time when India had lost debutant M Vijay, Rahul Dravid and Sehwag in 29 deliveries towards the end of the first session.



Tendulkar may have a good record against Australia. But it's not that he just went out there and turned on the magic.

But it did not come as easily as it looked. Tendulkar may have a good record against Australia. But it's not that he just went out there and turned on the magic. He sweated for hours and hours, diligently preparing for the series.

While teammates were playing the Irani Trophy, Tendulkar was making the most of the time he had on hand with intense, planned training sessions, dividing his time between National Cricket Academy, Bangalore, and Mumbai Cricket Association's indoor cricket academy at Bandra Kurla Complex.

His close friend, Atul Ranade, who was training with him at the BKC, described the training sessions as 'intense'. Observing his practice sessions, former India player Chandrakant Pandit, MCA's Indoor Cricket Academy Director, who had witnessed Tendulkar's preparation, predicted Tendulkar would be unstoppable in this series. "He would come at 7:30 a.m. and train till

almost 1:30 to 2:00 p.m. He would bat for hours in the indoor nets and then bat outdoors for hours. He did rigorous strength training as well,” said Pandit.

“He was unbelievably focused. I remember once I crossed him as he was going to bat and our eyes met. But he was in a trance and saw through me. Normally, we wish each other but I realised he was focused,” revealed Pandit.

It wasn't just long training hours, his latest success is a result of proper planning. The Aussies won the 2004 series with defensive fields and keeping it tight. Their game plan was to play on the batsman's patience and then throw in a teaser which is wide off the off-stump. Pandit said this time Tendulkar was ready for this attack. “He thinks about the opponent's plans and his practice is carefully planned. He practised leaving the ball outside the off-stump and one could see he was very comfortable with that line and length.” Certainly, Tendulkar is looking good for a couple of years more.

November 7, 2008




Tendulkar with son Arjun, daughter Sara and wife Anjali pose with his Madame Tussauds wax model at a function in Mumbai in 2009.




It's Chennai Yet Again!

Clayton Murzello



In 1999 against Pakistan in Chennai, centurion Sachin Tendulkar witnessed a spineless display from the rest of the batting order which helped Pakistan grab victory from the jaws of defeat. The last day of the Chennai Test against England in 2008 was an apt time for him to remind batting partner Yuvraj about 1999. The reminder played some role in India ensuring a win against Kevin Pietersen's team.



Yesterday's epic unbeaten 103 against England at Chennai has probably convinced Sachin Tendulkar that there is justice in this game, something which he may have not believed in, on January 31, 1999.

MA Chidambaram is Sachin Tendulkar's happiest hunting ground (five tons in nine Tests) but this ground also gave him his most painful moment on a cricket field nine years ago when his 136 against Pakistan went down the nearby Buckingham canal at Chepauk through India's 12-run loss to Wasim Akram's team.

It was a similar match situation yesterday but this time Tendulkar ensured it was a happy ending by not throwing it away. Over nine years, lessons have been learnt and he has added a new chapter to his cricketing life.

Tendulkar told me yesterday that visions of that 1999 disappointment appeared during his innings yesterday. "Yes, I did think of it," he admitted from his hotel room in Chennai. India benefited from Tendulkar's presence as he played good shepherd to his junior batting partner Yuvraj Singh. "I went down and told Yuvraj that it's still not over; don't think it's over and I have experienced it (a close loss) so don't relax," Tendulkar revealed.



Returning to the pavilion after being dismissed by Pakistan's Saqlain Mushtaq for 136 in the 1999 Chennai Test which Pakistan won by 12 runs.

At one stage he had to relay a message more emphatically: "Yuvraj played a shot to Monty Panesar which landed in between short mid-wicket and long on. I told him not to do that. He was confident, but some small thing can cause a soft dismissal and it only needs a wicket-taking ball to a new batsman to cause

further damage," Tendulkar explained.

Yesterday, it was not only Tendulkar, who was doing the talking. "We kept telling each other that we have to stay there till the very end," he said.

In 1999, Nayan Mongia was dismissed playing a rash shot just when it appeared that the pair would take India home. India lost their last four wickets for four runs after Tendulkar and Mongia put on 135.

Chasing 271 for victory, Tendulkar played a gem against the likes of Akram, Waqar Younis and Saqlain Mushtaq.

At 254 for six, Tendulkar decided to take on Saqlain again but this time he lofted one to mid-off where Akram accepted it with glee. The atmosphere at the ground resembled a morgue; probably the dressing room too and in the press box, the pen pushers' cynicism rose alarmingly but was ultimately true: Tendulkar gone and with it, the match. Later, the media learnt that one of his best hundreds was scored not only under duress, but in physical pain too. Saqlain intensified his effort and Pakistan went on to win by 12 runs. It was a heartbreaker for the whole of India but nothing less for Tendulkar.

He was more than misty-eyed after that loss and was in no mood to attend the post-match presentation. Tendulkar would have extracted some pleasure in going back to that dressing room seat but as he said yesterday, "they've changed the dressing rooms."

December 16, 2008



Pradeep Merchants

Lifting the Titan Cup after beating South Africa in the final at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium in 1996.

My 20 Greatest Moments

As told to Clayton Murzello



A few minutes here, a few minutes there! Tendulkar found time to think, select and elaborate on his 20 greatest moments for this special piece to commemorate his 20 years of international cricket.



The first time I put on my India cap

It was a great moment for me. If I am not mistaken, Chandu Borde, our team manager handed me my cap, but there was no presentation ceremony like they have today.

My first Test hundred

It came at Old Trafford in 1990. Manoj Prabhakar helped me with some determined batting at the other end. I was not at all surprised by what he did that day because I had played with him earlier and I knew that he was a terrific competitor. We prevented England from winning.

Counter-attacking 114 at Perth

This ton is a favourite of mine. Australia had four quick bowlers (Craig McDermott, Merv Hughes, Mike Whitney and Paul Reiffel) but I thought McDermott was the most challenging to face in Perth. Throughout the series he was their main bowler.

Bowling the last over against SA in the 1993 Hero Cup

South Africa needed six runs to win in the last over. There was no plan for me to bowl that over but I said I am very confident of bowling it successfully. I conceded just three and we won.

82 (off 49 balls) against NZ as opener in 1994

I was the vice-captain then and our regular opener Navjot Singh Sidhu woke up with a stiff neck. I requested Azhar (Mohammad Azharuddin) and Ajit Wadekar

(cricket manager) to 'just give me one opportunity and I am very confident of playing some big shots. And if I fail, I'll never ever come to you again'.



I requested Azhar (Mohammad Azharuddin) and Ajit Wadekar (cricket manager) to 'just give me one opportunity and I am very confident of playing some big shots. And if I fail, I'll never ever come to you again'.

Winning the Titan Cup in 1996

South Africa were playing terrific cricket right through the tournament. We adopted a different strategy. As captain I chose to have five fielders on the on-side. I told Robin Singh not to bowl seam but cutters into the body and make them score everything on the on-side. Maybe that came as a surprise for them. This was one low-scoring game that I can never forget.

1997 Sahara Cup win over Pakistan

We were without our top three bowlers for this tournament which I led India in. We were without Javagal Srinath, Venkatesh Prasad and Anil Kumble but we had Abey Kuruvilla, Harvinder Singh, Debasis Mohanty and Nilesh Kulkarni as newcomers. It was a fantastic effort and we beat Pakistan 4-1. Incredible!

Scoring 155 against Australia at Chennai in 1998

I thought getting used to that angle from Shane Warne was important. Before the Test I not only practised with Laxman Sivaramakrishnan but Nilesh Kulkarni and Sairaj Bahutule in Mumbai too. They gave me a lot of practice. I clearly remember saying to my friends after I scored a double hundred for Mumbai against Australia that Warne has not bowled a single ball round the wicket and I know that he will do it in the Test series.

1998 Sandstorm hundred in Sharjah against Australia

Another memorable hundred against Australia in a series which was held after the Test series at home. The revised target and sandstorm made it challenging. It felt really good to follow up that hundred with another one in the final which was played on my 25th birthday.

Meeting Sir Don Bradman in Adelaide

Without doubt, the most riveting moment in my off-field career. The trip to Adelaide in 1998 with Shane Warne was truly special and to meet him on his 90th birthday made it even more memorable. It was great to spend 45 minutes to an hour talking cricket with him.

Celebrating India's triumph in the semi-final of the 1993 Hero Cup at the Eden Gardens, Kolkata after bowling a brilliant last over.





Returning to the pavilion after scoring a brilliant, match-winning 82 off 49 balls against New Zealand at Auckland in 1994.

Beating England at Leeds, 2002

Sanjay Bangar played beautifully for his 68 and he put on a good partnership with Rahul Dravid, who played superbly. I remember going to bat after tea and Andrew Flintoff was bowling a lot of short pitch stuff round the wicket. I moved pretty well the next day and I remember leaving deliveries off Matthew Hoggard, who bowled a few overs outside the off stump. I paced my innings well (193) and went past Sir Don's tally of 29 Test hundreds.

Match-winning 98 vs Pak in World Cup 2003

There was that six off Shoaib but there were other shots which I felt good about in that match. I was playing with a finger injury and the finger wouldn't

straighten. I avoided fielding practice through the tournament because I was experiencing a lot of pain while catching. I gave fielding practice to the team though.

First ever series win in Pak (2003-04)

Undoubtedly, one of the top series wins in my career. Remember, Pakistan had a good side and we went there and won convincingly.



I just could not sleep and woke up at 8:00 a.m. to catch a morning flight. I was trying every possible thing to be fresh for the next day's match.

35th Test hundred (vs Sri Lanka in Delhi, 2005)

There was this pressure which was building up to go past Sunil Gavaskar in the Test century tally. The room service and housekeeping people in my hotel only spoke about getting Century No 35. I was glad and relieved when it happened because I could then start enjoying the game again.

Nottingham 2007 Test win over England

We have always managed to come back well after a defeat or saving a match. This is a classic example. We escaped defeat in the opening Test at Lord's but came back to win in Nottingham.

Perth Test win in Australia, 2008

We were determined to win this Test after what happened in Sydney. We shouldn't have lost in Sydney considering we were in a good position on the first day itself but then, the world has seen what happened. (Referring to umpiring.)

Tri-series triumph in Australia, 2008

Not only India, but all other sides found Australia too hard to beat. My hundred in the first final at Sydney was satisfying but the second match in Brisbane was tough. We went to bed at 3 a.m. in Sydney after a day-night game. I just could not sleep and woke up at 8 a.m. to catch a morning flight. I was trying every possible thing to be fresh for the next day's match. The next day we won the toss and batted. It was quite humid so the conditions were tough. We knew that the

first half hour was crucial. I thought even if I don't get runs quickly, it's fine because if we don't lose early wickets, the big stroke players can always capitalise on the start and that's what happened.

Going past Brian Lara's run tally in Mohali, 2008

Becoming the highest run-getter in world cricket doesn't happen overnight. Lara is a special player and a good friend. We respect each other immensely. To go past his tally meant that I have contributed something to cricket.

Chennai Test hundred against England, 2008

Awesome feeling to get that hundred which I dedicated to the people of Mumbai. It was a very emotional time. It was important to stay there till the end and I remember telling my batting partner Yuvraj Singh that it's still not over so don't relax. I recalled that close game against Pakistan in 1999 when we lost by 12 runs.

175 against Australia in Hyderabad, 2009

I know my body well and I know how much I can push so I was not surprised to score a 175 at the age of 36. Even if I had to complete those 20 runs by running them, I was absolutely fine. I was a few runs short of completing 17,000 ODI runs before the match but that wasn't playing on my mind. However, every now and again it appeared on the scoreboard. That's not important to me. The important thing was to go out and win.

November 15, 2009

Hail the Master!

Khalid A-H Ansari



The incredible aspect of Sachin Tendulkar came to fore yet again — against South Africa at Gwalior in 2010. His ODI double century was too great a feat not to wax eloquent about from Down Under.



SYDNEY: If our chests are puffed with joy today, our heads aloft with pride, our sense of belief in our ability to conquer the world sky-high, we, as a cricket-crazy nation, owe a debt of gratitude once again to the inspirational Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar for becoming the first human to break the 200-run barrier in 2961 international ODI matches.

Tendulkar's brilliant, flawless, historic, unbeaten 147-ball knock in Gwalior yesterday in his 442nd game in 20 years of international cricket in a career that has seen him obliterate all manner of Test and ODI records, was vintage Sachin, one that will rank alongside his best in the limited overs version.

The Little Master's achievement yesterday was all the more commendable since it came in humid conditions against the fiercely competitive attack and athletic fielding of one of the most formidable teams in the world, one that ranks among the top three in both Test and one-day cricket.

It also bore testimony to his admirable physical fitness in that, at age 37, he remained unbeaten after batting through 50 overs, despite suffering from cramps in the last 10 overs. from cramps in the last 10 overs.

His incandescent display was illumined with 25 thrilling fours and 3

imperious sixes, but was also notable for 56 sprinted singles and 13 twos, the result of flawless timing and deft placements.

Tendulkar's accomplishments in a star-studded career, starting with his unbeaten 326 in the Giles inter-school final and his unbeaten stand of 664 with Vinod Kambli in an inter-school match for Shardashram School on the very day — February 24 (in 1988) — are too well-known to bear repetition.

Suffice to say that even after 47 Test and 46 ODI centuries (a total of 93) against all comers all over the world, the diminutive Goliath (not an oxymoron in this context) said after yesterday's memorable innings that he would like to play another 50-over ODI innings.

On the evidence of yesterday's performance, and given that Tendulkar is showing no traces of losing any of his magical powers (10 of his hundreds have come in the last 12 months), there is no reason why the self-effacing genius — a gentle, compassionate human being if ever there was one — should not complete a century of centuries in the very near future.



Thanking the heavens after becoming the first man to score a one-day international 200, against South Africa in Gwalior in 2010.

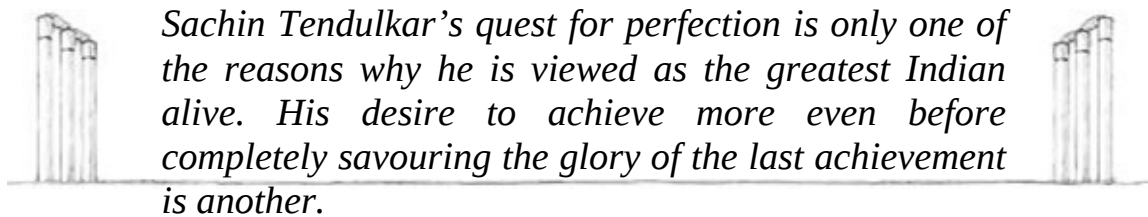
Significantly, Tendulkar dedicated his record yesterday to "all people of India... who stood by me and supported me."

When he scores his 100th century, it will surely be another reason for all Indian hearts (he stresses he is Indian first before all else), to swell with pride again.

February 25, 2010

There Will Be No Lack of Commitment
from Me: Sachin

Clayton Murzello



Sachin Tendulkar's quest for perfection is only one of the reasons why he is viewed as the greatest Indian alive. His desire to achieve more even before completely savouring the glory of the last achievement is another.

That Sachin Tendulkar is no sucker for big celebrations was manifest in the fact that he was in his Gwalior hotel room not long after helping India to one of their most memorable wins in one-day international cricket.

On a day that saw him become the first batsman to score a double hundred in one-day international cricket, he was as normal as ever. Quite clearly, Tendulkar's ability to keep his feet firmly on the ground is as admirable as his cricketing skills.

Excerpts from a telephonic chat:

How do you celebrate on days like these?

I don't do much. I am just sitting in my room right now and we have to pack our bags.

I've not done anything (meaning celebrating).

If there's a message to people who expect greater things from you, what would it be?

All I can say is, the passion is still there. I will always go out and give my best and whatever has to happen will happen. From my side, there won't be a lack of commitment.

So, do you feel on top of the world?

I don't know. Honestly, I've not thought about it. It is difficult to explain right now. I've got a lot of text messages and have responded, but it's (double hundred) not sunk in yet.

What's the most special message you received today?

(Laughs) They (well-wishers) have various things to say and I respect each and every message. Some may use 50 words; some might say it in two words, but the appreciation is most important to me.

Does the double hundred seem special because it has come in your 21st year of international cricket?

Well, the season has been a good one. I have enjoyed everything... right from the first tour of the season to Sri Lanka.

Did you surprise yourself with this knock?

I was striking the ball well, but I didn't think of 200. When hitting the ball, you don't start thinking of a double century. All I did was continue with the bat swing and flow.

Even after scoring 100, I didn't think of it. When I got close to 180 or so and there were eight to nine overs still to go, that's when I realised I have a chance, and from the other end, Yusuf Pathan and MS Dhoni played some fabulous shots. I just looked to rotate the strike and hit boundaries in between.

RIGHT: In a joyous mood at the Oval in London after India's series triumph over England in the 2007 Test series.



Dhoni's innings (68 off 35 balls) was quite amazing...

Absolutely. He and Yusuf (Pathan) played some incredible shots and it was fantastic to see such power-packed hitting... just superb.

You were captain when Saeed Anwar scored 194 at Chennai in 1997. What

did you think of 194 as a score? Did you think that it was incredible and impossible?

One hundred and ninety four is a huge score, but at that stage, I was just thinking about the match. Records are meant to be broken and I felt someday, somebody will do something like this.

But you didn't think of doing it yourself?

You can't go out and say, 'today I am going to score a double century.' It doesn't happen that way. I certainly didn't feel that way in the morning. I hit a couple of shots and felt good and did not look too much ahead. At that stage, it is about watching the ball as closely as possible and finding the gaps.

The last three years have been critical, hugely successful...

Yes, after the 2007 World Cup, right from the next tour to Bangladesh. Then we went to Ireland and fared well against South Africa. There has been a lot of enthusiasm, passion and I have enjoyed every moment.

February 25, 2010

Bat-on Baaton Mein!

Hemal Ashar



This piece is a result of Sachin Tendulkar's first ever interview. It was conducted at an Irani restaurant near Shivaji Park with Sachin's brother Ajit in attendance. As you will discover in the piece, he fancied limited overs cricket rather than the longer version.



Sachin Tendulkar has endorsed quite a few bats in his 22-year international career. Here's a piece that caused some mirth.

Sach yaar. These divorce cases are becoming just as *fataafat* as T20 cricket these days. Yesterday, just like that, Sachin Tendulkar, said goodbye to us, old bats. From today, we hear that he is picking up a new willow. We could become the classic weeping willows but, then, since the divorce has been amicable, let's remember the good times. In fact, we remember with a laugh how we have sent the ball crashing to the ropes, or soaring above heads as Sach was at his most destructive. As bats, it was fun to see the bowler's face crumble, his shoulders sag and his footsteps falter, as Sachin swung us around. We always gave a little chuckle and even sledged the bowler a bit, but I admit we had to be more careful since stump microphones came in.



Imagine a bat being booked for sledging! Ha ha, I bet we could have made history.

Everybody thinks it is easy being Sachin's bat, but sometimes, we have had hard times too. In fact, during the 2003 World Cup as Sachin carted Shoaib Akhtar all over the ground, the noise was deafening. We actually burst an ear drum and had to visit an ENT specialist after that innings.

Like, in every marriage, there have been heartbreaks along with the hurrahs. Like after the Shoaib drubbing, the way Sachin got out on four in the 2003 World Cup final. From deafening, the noise in that stadium was deathly all the way back to the pavilion.

Remember, how we formed a little puddle of tears in Chennai, 1999? Sachin made a ton against Pakistan, but we still lost the match. Losing to Pakistan, made even us bats, who many call inanimate, taste bitter ashes in our mouth. When Sachin would get bowled for a duck, he would sometimes hit us hard against the ground in disappointment.

Then, back home, it would be back to practice as he knocked the living daylights out of us. It is good we are as tough as teak truly, because even as we retire, comes the news that we, as Sachin's bats, might soon face murder charges. For murdering numerous bowling attacks all over the world. Oops. Got to run and look for a lawyer to apply for bowl...err, bail we mean!

October 25, 2010



Samer Markande

In a cheerful mood at a felicitation function in Mumbai organised after his 35th Test century.



Training with a stump prior to Mumbai's Irani Cup tie against Rest of India at Chennai in 2003.

Extraordinary Centurion Rules Super Sport Park

Sai Mohan

The venue name was apt for cricket's greatest century-maker and for Sachin Tendulkar, to get a landmark 50th Test ton here was certainly special. However, there was a hold on the celebrations.

Celebrating his 50th Test century — against South Africa at Centurion in 2010.



CENTURION: The most profound memories of Sachin Tendulkar were of an Indian team failing to get past the line, despite the little master stroking his

way to a gem. Be it Perth 1992, Birmingham 1996, Cape Town 1997 or Chennai 1999. That, in a nutshell, sums up his career. And fittingly, when a genius reaches the pinnacle of his feats, the song remains the same.

India required a miraculous effort to save the Test. Tendulkar obliged with a breathtaking knock (107 not out) — one of his finest efforts in recent times. It didn't include his widest array of strokes, and yet rose to the occasion. Maybe, the gods wished for the day Tendulkar reached his zenith to not be remembered for yet another India loss. Maybe that's why there was a downpour just minutes after he reached his hundred.

It is a known fact that Tendulkar's record in South Africa is not as good as what he does in England or Australia. Asked if this knock got that monkey off his back, Tendulkar said: "Every knock is going to be different. Everyday you can't go out and play in the same manner. Every time you walk out to the middle, you have to contend with different surfaces and bowling attacks. The ball is going to do something different. I always plan my knocks based on these facts. You cannot go out with a fixed set of plans." Asked to compare this knock to his innings of 169 at Cape Town in 1997, Tendulkar said: "It (Cape Town) was a different scenario. I played a lot more aggressively that day. It is important to be spontaneous and judge the situation. You need to be clever."

So, was that bowling attack tougher to contend with?

"Every attack has its own strengths and weaknesses. I always try to identify that and so I feel good as a batsman. I respect every attack.

I don't like to compare knocks or attacks. We all evolve with time.

I respect my opposition in every walk of life. That's how I have always looked at life."

When India were restricted to six down at lunch, India's innings was done and dusted.


The Press here was already preparing for India's post mortem. Having reached 95 with a beautiful hit over long-off, the crawl from 95 to 100 brought out the best in the crowd, which had been waiting with bated breath. Every ball drew collective "ooohs" and "aaaahs" from the anxious crowd.

Eventually, it has turned out to be a huge relief. Finally, the subject surrounding the milestone is dealt with. But none of it will matter to Tendulkar if India can't save the Test today.


December 20, 2010

History Here!

Clayton Murzello



A look at the stories behind Sachin Tendulkar's century efforts, some of them extracted from his former teammates.



1990: SUNNY'S TIP DOES THE TRICK

Sachin Tendulkar's first Test hundred — at Old Trafford in 1990 — was a match-saving effort. An evening before the Test was spent at former India wicketkeeper Farokh Engineer's place which was graced by some members of the Indian team including Tendulkar.

The young batsman thrived on the opportunity of spending some quality time with Sunil Gavaskar, who advised him not to chase the ball on those English tracks. "Wait for the ball," was Gavaskar's advice. Tendulkar took that very seriously and helped himself to a masterly hundred a few days later.

1992: IT ALL HAPPENED AT THE SCG

The next Test hundred from the blade of Sachin Tendulkar came in Sydney on the 1991-92 tour to Australia. Veteran Ravi Shastri took a double hundred off the Australians led by old warhorse Allan Border and got some lip service from his aggressive opponents while piling on the runs.

When Tendulkar noticed what his batting partner was being subjected to, he is believed to have told Shastri: "I will give it to them too." We don't know whether Tendulkar (19) wanted to return the favour in terms of words or deeds but Shastri told him to just do his thing with bat in hand.

And he did exactly that — scored a classy, unbeaten 148 which made him the youngest ever to score a Test century at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Reaching his first Test hundred in Australia during the Sydney Test of 1992.



1992: WHO'S SCARED OF WACA CRACKS?

Tendulkar has always maintained that his finest hundred was scored at Perth's Western Australia Cricket Association (WACA) ground in 1992. His 114 was scored against the likes of pacemen Craig McDermott, Merv Hughes, Paul Reiffel and Mike Whitney.


Wicketkeeper and useful batsman Kiran More, with whom he put on 81 runs for the ninth wicket, remembers: "There were huge cracks on the pitch which you just couldn't take your eyes off. In fact, some of the cracks were so wide that you could actually put your hand into them. But we decided to try and forget about this and enjoy ourselves while building a partnership.

"To see him hitting the Aussie quicks on the up through the covers was exhilarating. Not only for me, but also for those in the slip cordon and elsewhere on the field.


"On more than one occasion I think I heard tough nuts like Allan Border, Dean Jones and Mark Taylor say... 'Jesus, this is something special'."

My Most Unforgettable World Cup 2011 Moments

As told to Clayton Murzello



Sachin Tendulkar has experienced several high noons in his career, but the 2011 World Cup win took the cake with all its icing — undoubtedly his finest hour from a team point of view.



Unforgettable dressing room moment:

The moment the winning runs were scored, I jumped. Viru (Sehwag) who was next to me, jumped too. We were sitting in the dressing room and praying.

Unforgettable part of the celebrations:

Getting the trophy in our hands, and the popping of champagne. Also, when the team lifted me with the tricolour in my hand. That was the ultimate feeling.

Unforgettable innings that you played:

I was batting really well against South Africa, but in terms of importance, it's got to be the one against Pakistan.

Unforgettable innings from your teammates:

There were many! The one Viru played in the first game against Bangladesh, Yuvraj Singh played many, Suresh Raina, Gautam Gambhir, Virat Kohli... all the guys chipped in.

Unforgettable bowling spell:

Zaheer Khan bowled some very important spells. In the semi-final, Ashish Nehra bowled well. Munaf got some important wickets too. Harbhajan Singh and R Ashwin bowled well too. Everyone has chipped in. That is why I call it a thorough team performance.

Everyone did their job and somewhere they made an impact.

Unforgettable captaincy move:

We set a 6-3 field against Pakistan at Mohali. Their opening batsman, Mohammad Hafeez tried to play a sweep shot off Munaf Patel and got caught behind. I thought that was the turning point of the match.



Everyone chipped in. That is why I call it a thorough team performance. Everyone did their job and somewhere they made an impact.

Unforgettable catch:

The one Viru caught off Shahid Afridi. The match was very much alive then because Misbah and Afridi were batting and we needed two-three big overs at that stage, so that was an important catch — an easy one, but important.

Unforgettable tense moment:

There were many moments when we were really tense especially in the last three matches — we knew there would be no second chance.

April 5, 2011

RIGHT: Carried by his India teammates after winning the 2011 World Cup by beating Sri Lanka in the final at the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai.



‘I Had a Dream’

By Clayton Murzello



Believe it or not, the seeds of determination to help India win the 2011 World were sown in Indian cricket's darkest phase of recent years — the 2007 World Cup debacle.



Did you ever dream that you would win the World Cup at the Wankhede Stadium?

That was my dream — after we lost in 2007. I took up that challenge. I said, the next World Cup final is in Mumbai and this is where I would want the trophy. And I started working towards that.

When exactly did you start thinking about the 2011 World Cup?

After the 2007 World Cup — when we got to know that the next one is in India and the final would be held in Mumbai. That is when I felt that this is the place where we have to lift the trophy.

How could you be so positive? After all, it was a dismal time for India...our cricket had just crashed...

Yeah, it was really tough. My family and friends really supported me at that stage. It was probably the toughest phase of my career and I was really demoralised.

But talking with friends and family about the World Cup in India at that time was something which motivated me.

The final match in Mumbai... that was greater motivation because this is where I grew up playing cricket. I wanted to do something really, really special here in India and Mumbai.

Does this World Cup win send out a strong message about never giving up on a dream?

Absolutely! I firmly believe that one should never ever give up in life and that is something which happened in my case. It is never too late. Even after 21 years (of international cricket), you can still go out and win the World Cup.



Training at MIG Cricket Club (Bandra) in 2005.


During the 2003 World Cup, you kept singing and listening to the song *Jaane Kya Dhoondta Hai* by Lucky Ali. What was your favourite song in this World Cup?

This time, I was listening to U2's *Where The Streets Have No Name*. Most of the time, I was listening to this song for pleasure and satisfaction.

April 5, 2011

Sachin: Now, I Can Move On

Clayton Murzello



After a one-year wait, Sachin Tendulkar scored his much awaited 100th international century. Here, he talks about the sense of relief he experienced in Dhaka.

Of the many phone calls Sachin Tendulkar received in Dhaka after becoming the first man to reach 100 international centuries, the call from his brother, Ajit, was probably most special.

Ajit was the one who took young Sachin to Ramakant Achrekar's coaching nets at Shivaji Park in 1984 to kick off a journey whose end Sachin doesn't exactly relish talking about.

"Ajit's was the first call I got. Yes, it was special because he has been physically and mentally with me throughout. It's like he has played with me all these years," Sachin told SUNDAY MiD DAY from Dhaka yesterday evening, where he is playing the Asia Cup.

"Like me, my family members are happy and relieved. This (ton) was pending for a while and they have seen me go through these times. They are all delighted."

His fellow cricketers have called his 100 century-feat the greatest achievement in the willow game. What did he do when he returned to the dressing room after scoring 114 (which ultimately ended up in a losing cause) against Bangladesh? "I went to my room and the first thing I did was light agarbattis to God and thank him for this moment," he said.



Suresh Chandra Tendulkar

Showing what the India crest on his helmet means to him after reaching his landmark 100th international century - against Bangladesh in Mirpur on March 16, 2012.

His spiritual moment was not followed by tears, but a thought process that has been the basis of his greatness; a formula to stupendous success — the ability to enjoy the moment and move on. "This (100th international century) is history. Now, I can move on and not think about it. People were only talking about this (record)."

Once, while recalling his younger days when he used to come home after a batting performance, Sachin had said, "We celebrated by distributing sweets and that was where it stopped. What I did the next day on the field was important."

Today, Sachin will walk out for yet another battle against India's arch-rivals Pakistan, an opponent against whom he has enjoyed a good record in Cup encounters. He was Man of the Match (85 off 115 balls) in India's last game against Pakistan — at the 2011 World Cup game in Mohali.

March 18, 2012

Obsessed with Stats, but What a Player!

Ian Chappell

Former Australia captain is critical of Tendulkar's 200th Test-related retirement announcement and dwells on his great impact on the game

The choice of Sachin Tendulkar to retire after playing his 200th Test was an unfortunate one; it reinforced his recent obsession with the statistical side of the game. Nevertheless, Tendulkar's fascination with milestones, which appeared to be the driving force in the latter part of his cricket life, should only be a minor distraction from what he achieved in the bulk of his illustrious career.

Tendulkar burst on the scene as a breath of fresh air; supposedly a boy among men but in reality a master lording it over those who were hoping to teach him a lesson. He played with a swashbuckling freedom that only the young who fear nothing can produce. Where others saw danger, Tendulkar only sensed a scoring opportunity and I suspect it was this desire to dominate the bowling that attracted Sir Donald Bradman's attention.

Bradman's affection for Tendulkar's batting was not surprising; a young, short batsman dominating muscular fast bowlers was enough to make anyone sit up and take notice. When Tendulkar achieved this feat on a temperate SCG pitch as a nineteen year-old it was exceptional but when repeated the performance on the lethal WACA ground surface it was other worldly.



Suresh KK

The last goodbye with a bat in hand on November 15, 2013.

It was one thing for Tendulkar to dominate on his own surfaces but to achieve this euphoric state on pitches that were completely foreign to him and which, had flummoxed players as good as Sunil Gavaskar on first meeting, was enough to convince the cricket world that here was a special talent.

Over the years, Tendulkar dished out much punishment to Australian attacks. In addition to that exceptional Perth innings, my favourites were his Test century in Chennai in 1998 and two exquisite One Day hundreds in the Sharjah heat later that same year.

The Chennai century was admirable because of the preparation he put in to face Shane Warne and the way he then applied the lessons to beat the opposition's champion when the match was in the balance. This clash was Test cricket in all its glory; two champions meeting head-on with the one who prevailed guaranteeing his side victory.

The two desert hundreds were admirable for their dominance and the fact that they were achieved when not only the game was on the line but also India's future in the tournament. The first century steered India into the final and the second delivered the trophy.

Tendulkar's influence on the game has come from his on-field deeds, which have delighted his legion of fans. However, his greatest legacy has been the way he's inspired the current generation of Indians to bat with a flair that's generally absent in the play of the other country's willow wielders.

October 14, 2013

Friday the 15th: No better place to be
than Wankhede

Harit N Joshi

A significant day in Indian cricket when Sachin Tendulkar batted for the last time in a Test match.

The gates open at 7.30 am — a good two hours before the start of the second day's play. Chants of 'Sachin, Sachin' reverberate at the Wankhede Stadium even before the Indian team steps on the field. A bank holiday means less people have to stay away from work.

A huge roar greets the team as they start their warm-up. It gets louder as the Little Master steps on the field.

It gets deafening when Tendulkar and Cheteshwar Pujara walk in to bat. The crowd want to see their hero Tendulkar take strike, but Pujara faces up to Tino Best.

The Saurashtra player takes a run off the fourth ball which is greeted by a huge roar — unthinkable for a run in Test cricket.

Tendulkar, overnight on 38 is ready. The crowd go bonkers as he takes his first run — a single to mid-wicket — off the last ball of the over to retain strike. Back-to-back fours off Shane Shillingford — a back foot punch and paddle sweep — are greeted with deafening applause.

West Indies pacer Best is trying his best to disturb Tendulkar's rhythm. But the batting maestro is composed. Tendulkar effortlessly ducks his bouncers. With the batting legend three short of a half-century, Best appeals emphatically for a caught behind, but the ball seems to brush Tendulkar's sleeve before reaching wicketkeeper Dinesh Ramdin. The tension is palpable.



Battling West Indies' pacer Tino Best on Day Two of the Mumbai Test on November 15, 2013.

Tendulkar's wife Anjali is seen breathing a sigh of relief when the umpire doesn't raise his finger.

Few balls later, a Tendulkaresque straight drive off Best brings up his 68th half-century as the Wankhede erupts in joy. The cheers refuse to die down.

The batting maestro raises his bat, acknowledges the crowd and his family seated in the President's Box.

Best's next ball to Tendulkar is a bouncer. It certainly does not go down well with the crowd. Chants of 'Tino sucks, Tino sucks' emerge.

Runs are now flowing from Tendulkar's blade. Hopes of a hundred appear large which would be a fairytale-like end to his career. While Best is in no mood to turn off the aggression, Tendulkar takes the humourous route. He gives Best a light 'punch' on his shoulder — a gesture which may mean, "keep trying your best."

Later, the master batsman races to 70.


At 74 Narsingh Deonarine surprises Tendulkar with extra bounce. Trying to cut, he edges to Darren Sammy at first slip. The mute button at Wankhede is pressed. Everyone's shell-shocked. Tendulkar waits for a while, stares at the pitch before taking the long walk back. He then decides to turn around, raise his bat and helmet to acknowledge the crowd.

Soon, there are more empty seats at the Wankhede than ever before in the day.
For Mumbaikars, Test cricket has become lonely.

November 16, 2013

Emotional Sachin Bids Adieu

Clayton Murzello



In three days, it was all over – Sachin Tendulkar’s final fling in Test cricket and the second India vs West Indies Test in Mumbai. Of course, the latter didn’t matter as much.

It was eloquence all the way in Tendulkar’s farewell to cricket at the Wankhede on Saturday. Only the stone-hearted wouldn’t have been moved.

You needed a hard-as-a-new-cricket-ball heart to not shed a tear or not endure a rugged throat on Saturday afternoon. The inevitable happened. Sachin Tendulkar walked away from a pitch in whites for the last time. This was after doing a lap of honour with his teammates. Here, at the pitch, he was alone. He bowed in respect, in gratitude, deepest appreciation, touched the pitch with both hands and then drew them to his chest.

Earlier...

The lunch break was delayed when the West Indies were two wickets away from defeat. “Can they do that,” asked the pundits in the press box. “Only if nine wickets are down,” someone said. Not that it mattered. Soon, the last West Indies wicket fell, but all eyes were on the man with the floppy hat. Ravi Shastri was seen down at the far end boundary, walking through the ground to conduct the presentation ceremony. He was the first non-playing member to wish Tendulkar after the game. Only fitting, considering Shastri had been a senior colleague and later a mentor/advisor.

Lunch was ready for the media, but there were very few takers. All waited for the other awards to be over and done with, for Shastri to call on Tendulkar to give his speech. As a ritual, Tendulkar always spent a few moments to tap the pitch with his bat so that the crowd could settle down. In this case, he put the microphone to use and requested them to settle down. The speech was just perfect. Not profound, but thorough and well-prepared just like he went about his cricket.

Probably, the most emotional bits were when he mentioned his late father, the person he misses most in his life and when he stressed that he would miss the ‘Sachin, Sachin’ chants. He didn’t leave out the media, who supported him ‘till this morning.’ For him to remember his late agent and friend Mark Mascarenhas was a fine act.

After the speech, it’s back to work for the journos. No, wait, there is the lap of honour. Later on, I hear Mahendra Singh Dhoni initiated the process of carrying his most celebrated teammate on his and Virat Kohli’s shoulder. Suddenly, the Wankhede Stadium looked fuller and noisier than what was witnessed in the morning when the West Indies succumbed without a fight.

In the back row of the press box was Uday Gharat, the scorer, whose Tendulkar inscriptions on score sheets date back to his ‘A’ division club debut for CCI in 1988. Gharat, official score sheet in hand, appears sad, but doesn’t express it in words.

For some, there are memories of Sydney 2004, when Steve Waugh was lifted by his teammates at his farewell bash at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

There are no memories of Waugh speaking at length on his home ground, but his lengthy press conference — also attended by his family — cannot be forgotten. Will Tendulkar address the media, ask a few optimist journalists. They don’t get a yes for an answer. Understandable, feel a few, considering he said so much in his speech. Dhoni’s absence at the media briefing does cause a surprise. Why should a captain stay away after winning a series, is a fair question. “He’s tired of carrying Tendulkar,” quips a reporter.

Man of the series Rohit Sharma arrives. He speaks eloquently on the retired maestro: “We wanted to give this special man something special — a series win. I’m happy we could ensure he went out on a winning note. That was a very emotional speech. We were all emotional. I didn’t know how to react. I was only looking at him. I knew it was the last time I’d be watching him in whites.” It’s time for some to dry their eyes and pull themselves together. But it’s hard. If you ever needed a new cricket ball-like heart, it was on Saturday.

November 17, 2013

*Walking off emotionally after paying respect to the Wankhede pitch on
November 16, 2013.*



Statistics

Sachin in Test cricket

	Mts	Inns	Runs	Hs	Avg	100	50	0	Wkts	Best	Avg	5W
v Australia	39	74	3630	241*	55.00	11	16	4	11	3-31	51.54	0
v Bangladesh	7	9	820	248*	136.66	5	0	0	5	2-35	26.00	0
v England	32	53	2535	193	51.73	7	13	0	2	1-26	160.00	0
v New Zealand	24	39	1595	217	46.91	4	8	1	7	2-7	38.85	0
v Pakistan	18	27	1057	194*	42.28	2	7	2	9	2-35	43.88	0
v South Africa	25	45	1741	169	42.46	7	5	3	7	3-10	42.85	0
v Sri Lanka	25	36	1995	203	60.45	9	6	0	0	-	-	0
v West Indies	21	32	1630	179	54.36	3	10	3	3	2-107	87.33	0
v Zimbabwe	9	14	918	201*	76.50	3	3	1	2	1-19	86.00	0
TOTAL	200	329	15921	248*	53.78	51	68	14	46	3-10	54.17	0

Sachin in One-Day Internationals

	Mts	Inns	Runs	Hs	Avg	SR	100	50	0	Wkts	Best	Avg	Econ	4W
v Australia	71	70	3077	175	44.59	84.74	9	15	2	20	5-32	44.30	5.06	2
v Bangladesh	12	11	496	114	49.60	85.07	1	2	0	12	4-54	14.58	4.54	1
v Bermuda	1	1	57	57*	-	196.55	0	1	0	1	1-1	1.00	1.00	0
v England	37	37	1455	120	44.09	89.20	2	10	0	3	1-13	142.66	5.79	0
v Ireland	2	2	42	38	21.00	71.18	0	0	0	1	1-24	24.00	6.00	0
v Kenya	10	9	647	146	107.83	97.00	4	1	0	2	2-28	70.00	5.83	0
v Namibia	1	1	152	152	152.00	100.66	1	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
v Netherlands	2	2	79	52	39.50	84.04	0	1	0	0	-	-	2.25	0
v New Zealand	42	41	1750	186*	46.05	95.36	5	8	4	13	3-34	48.07	5.02	0
v Pakistan	69	67	2526	141	40.09	87.49	5	16	5	29	5-50	46.27	5.44	1
v South Africa	57	57	2001	200*	35.73	76.31	5	8	1	17	4-56	60.58	5.02	1
v Sri Lanka	84	80	3113	138	43.84	87.54	8	17	3	21	3-43	44.28	4.79	0
v UAE	2	2	81	63	40.50	79.41	0	1	0	3	3-21	14.33	4.77	0
v West Indies	39	39	1573	141*	52.43	78.02	4	11	5	20	4-34	32.30	4.48	1
v Zimbabwe	34	33	1377	146	49.17	91.55	5	5	0	12	2-41	47.58	5.74	0
TOTAL	463	452	18426	200*	44.83	86.23	49	96	20	154	5-32	44.48	5.10	6

Sachin in T20 Internationals

	Mts	Inns	Runs	Hs	Avg	SR	100	50	0	Wkts	Best	Avg	Econ	4W
v South Africa	1	1	10	10	10.00	83.33	0	0	0	1	1-12	12.00	4.80	0
TOTAL	1	1	10	10	10.00	83.33	0	0	0	1	1-12	12.00	4.80	0

All records updated as on November 16, 2013

COMPILED BY RAJNEESH GUPTA

"This is an attempt to impartially probe the crucial mental, physical and emotional ingredients of a cricketing 'god'. I have tried to turn the laser on the maestro's persona - innumerable blemishes and all - to prevent the book from degenerating into a *shabaash*, *wah-wah* hagiography. For all his splendiferous achievements, Sachin has also shown that he is a mere mortal with feet of clay - witness his run-ins with authority, cricketering and civil".

KHALID A-H ANSARI

Sachin: Born to Bat by veteran journalist Khalid A-H Ansari and edited by Clayton Murzello is a unique ode to contemporary cricket's finest batsman.

Despatches to *MID DAY*, one of Asia's leading newspapers, from some of the world's most famous names in cricket writing - Ayaz Memon, Harsha Bhogle, Ian Chappell, Mike Coward, Peter Roebuck and other luminaries - grace the pages of this book.

Tributes from cricket's most famous personalities including Tendulkar's Team India teammates and coaches make this publication invaluable in helping cricket enthusiasts understand what makes Sachin the peerless champion he is.

The book also captures critical moments of Tendulkar's wondrous cricketering career from photographers who have followed him throughout his distinguished career.



Until his recent retirement, *Padma Shri Khalid A-H Ansari* was the guiding force of *MID DAY Infomedia Ltd* which publishes the newspaper (in two languages from Mumbai, New Delhi, Bangalore and Pune), the *Inquilab Daily* and other publications.

He was publisher of the magazine *Sportsweek*, which he started in 1968 to champion the cause of Indian sport and sportsmen until 1989, when he took up an assignment abroad. The author of three earlier books, he covered the Kargil war in 1999, the NAM conference in Harare and the CHOGM summit in the Bahamas. He was also a member of the Indian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and published the *Earth Times*, the official paper for the 1994 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. He has the distinction of having covered nine Olympic Games going back to Munich '72 and is a recipient of several honours and awards.



Clayton Murzello is *MID DAY*'s Group Sports Editor and has been a journalist since 1988. He is a recipient of two Sports Journalists Federation of India (SJFI) awards for excellence in journalism. He has co-authored a book on cricket anecdotes with former Test cricketer Sandeep Patil.



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