

50 MAGIC MOMENTS

All sportspersons, as indeed all lovers of sport, live for special moments on the field, moments during which all the action, all the drama, all the sweat and toil, find release. Moments that embody a burst of genius, or ones that capture the significance of a landmark moment. Cricinfo celebrates 50 such moments from the last half-century in this series featuring selections by a panel of cricket writers including Mike Coward, Rajan Bala, Tim de Lisle, Suresh Menon, Fazeer Mohammed, Rob Steen, Peter Roebuck, Christian Ryan, Mike Selvey, BC Pires and R Mohan.

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28	Slats socks it to England	Christian Ryan	Brisbane, 25 November 1994
29	Hollisake stands up to McGrath	Tim de Lisle	London, 25 May 1997
30	Walsh lends Lara a shoulder	Vaneisa Baksh	Kingston, 29 January 1998
31	Tendulkar goes after Warne	Boria Majumdar	Sharjah, 22 April 1998
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33	Shoaib strikes twice	Osman Samiuddin	Kolkata, 17 February 1999
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39	Tendulkar smacks Shoaib around	Rahul Bhattacharya	Centurion, 1 March 2003
40	Gilchrist walks	John Stern	Port Elizabeth, 18 March 2003
41	Dravid conquers Adelaide	Dileep Premachandran	Adelaide, 16 December 2003
42	Ntini takes 10 at Lord's	Neil Manthorp	London, 3 August 2003
43	West Indies win the Champions Trophy	Vaneisa Baksh	London, 25 September 2004
44	Bangladesh beat Australia	Andrew Miller	Cardiff, 18 June 2005
45	Flintoff consoles Lee	Peter Roebuck	Birmingham, 7 August 2005
46	Malinga takes four	Telford Vice	Guyana, 28 March 2007
47	Rajasthan Royals win the first IPL	Dileep Premachandran	Mumbai, June 1, 2008
48	Mendis arrives	Sidharth Monga	Colombo, 25 July 2008
49	Pakistan win the World Twenty20	Osman Samiuddin	London, 21 June 2009
50	Flintoff rocks Australia	Andrew Miller	Lord's, 20 July 2009

No. 1 **McGregor catches Weekes**

The last hurdle is cleared for New Zealand's first Test win

Don Cameron

Auckland, March 13, 1956

For what seemed an age, but was perhaps five or six seconds, the hearts of 9000 Eden Park faithful stopped beating - and many, many thousands of steam-radio listeners held their breaths - as the ball went steeple-high and then dropped down toward Noel McGregor on the midwicket boundary fence.

In the three previous Tests of the series, Everton de Courcey Weekes and his fellow West Indians hadn't really toured; they had simply taken the lead in a regal procession. The great man had centuries against Auckland, Canterbury and Wellington, and one in each of the three Tests - two of which West Indies won by an innings, and one by 10 wickets.

Weekes had different work to do at Eden Park. New Zealand fought so splendidly that on the last afternoon West Indies needed 268 in four hours - just the sort of challenge Weekes relished. However, by the time the maestro had his baton, his orchestra had lost wickets at 4, 16, 16, 16, 18 and 22.

West Indies were 68, Weekes 31, when the young legspinner Jack Alabaster, trying for extra turn, dragged the ball down short. As soon as he sensed the length, Weekes decided the ball would go over the midwicket fence.

"It turned a little more than I expected, I got it maybe three-four inches too high up the bat," said Weekes afterward.

And wee McGregor: "...when I saw the shot, I knew it was coming to me; then I realised it could be a catch. The thought flashed through my head that if I dropped it, I would hop back over the fence, and disappear in the crowd. Oh, the joy when I held the ball in my hands."

Normal heartbeats ensued until West Indies were out for 77, and New Zealand had their first Test cricket win.

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No. 2 **A Test is tied**

Hall, Meckiff, Kline, Solomon. It all came down to one ball.

Mike Coward

Brisbane, 14 December, 1960

A famous conversation embodying the much-vaunted spirit of Australian cricket took place at the Gabba during the tea adjournment on the final day of the first Australia-West Indies Test match on December 14, 1960.

Seeking 233 runs at a rate of about 45 an hour for victory Australia had been poleaxed by the monolithic Wes Hall, and were stumbling at 109 for 6, with about 120 minutes to go.

As was his habit, Sir Donald Bradman, the chairman of selectors, made his way to the rooms for a cup of tea. Looking straight at Richie Benaud, Australia's captain, he said: "What's it going to be?"

"Well, we're going for a win," replied Benaud.

"I'm very pleased to hear it," replied Sir Donald.

After assisting the great allrounder Alan Davidson in putting on 134 for the seventh wicket, Benaud, having counselled his partner against taking any unnecessary risks running between wickets, promptly committed himself to an impossible single and was run out.

The final over by the indomitable, charismatic Hall has claims to being the most fantastic ever bowled in Test cricket. Australia, now in pursuit of six runs, lost three wickets in seven deliveries. While there was a succession of defining moments, it was the seventh delivery that has become such a part of the rich lore of the game.

With the scores tied, Ian Meckiff tremulously waited for Hall. Meckiff received a ball pitched in line with middle and leg, and played it towards square leg and ran. Joe Solomon moved swiftly to make a clean interception, and with just one stump to aim at threw down the wicket. After 83 years, a tied Test.

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No. 3 **Worrell and Co. get a royal farewell**

West Indies may have lost the series, but they won the hearts of all Australia

Peter Roebuck

Melbourne, February 1961

Frank Worrell was West Indies' first black captain. Others had led the West Indian team for an occasional match, only to be put back in their place by a returning white-skin. Many black players had found themselves obliged to play under fools and even knaves.

Mostly it was a racial thing. To some it was inconceivable that a black man could be put in charge of anything, let alone a cricket team representing a bunch of independent islands. Here was a task requiring tact. White men had been trained to lead, blacks to serve.

Of course, the reliance on white leaders was insulting and absurd. Already the region had produced several remarkable cricketers, among them George Headley, Clyde Walcott, Everton Weekes, and Garry Sobers. Not before time, the cry went out for a black man to be chosen as captain.

Frank Worrell took the team to Australia in 1960-61. Strong of mind and gentle of manner, he knew the stakes were high. The tour was a triumph. Although West Indies lost 1-2, they played brilliant attacking cricket, and were sporting in victory and defeat. Worrell found a worthy adversary in Richie Benaud, and afterwards the pair shook hands, and the crowds came out to cheer as the West Indians received a farewell fit for heroes.

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No. 4 **Dolly gets a life**

The dropped catch that let D'Oliveira make his legendary 158

Rob Steen

London, 23 August 1968

The government of the ignoble land he'd fled tried to bribe him, then terrorise him. The return of this pesky Cape Coloured under another flag could only highlight its racist tyranny to an outside world all too willing to turn a colour-blind eye. Fortunately, Basil D'Oliveira was steeled by a rare determination and an even scarcer brand of bravery.

Even his new compatriots conspired against him: he was dropped after he made 87 not out in the first Ashes Test of 1968. Further success at Lord's would have enhanced his claims for selection on the impending MCC tour of South Africa, a tour that would almost certainly be cancelled if he was chosen.

Then fate got busy. Roger Prideaux dropped out of the final Test at The Oval with a mysterious illness. D'Oliveira was recalled. Then, on the second morning, on 31, he offered a catch. Barry Jarman, one of the ablest stumpers ever to don the baggy green, declined.

It would take another withdrawal, this time by that selfless socialist Tom Cartwright, for D'Oliveira's eventual 158 to secure a tour berth, prompting South African Prime Minister Vorster to greet the party as "the team of the anti-apartheid movement" and rescind the invitation. Thus did those seeking a boycott of South African sport find their first symbol of resistance. But for Jarman's error, Nelson Mandela might still be on Robben Island. EW Swanton called it "the most fateful drop in cricket history". Make that the most splendid error in sporting annals.

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No. 5 **Solkar takes a blinder**

Knott was looking to send it around the corner; around the corner was Ekki

Mudar Patherya

London, 23 August 1971

There are two contenders in my mind for the inflection point in the modern history of Indian cricket. One is Salim Durani clean-bowling Garry Sobers for zero at Queen's Park Oval in 1971. The other is Eknath Solkar catching Alan Knott off S Venkataraghavan at the Oval in 1971.

The first was so unexpected that most photographers were probably caught looking the other way. The second instance was well documented. Alan Knott turning the ball round the corner, Solkar doing a Gordon Banks, Farokh Engineer a bit surprised, and Sunil Gavaskar airborne in glee. Henri Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment".

Solkar described this catch years later. Venkat and he had "set Knott up". England's wicketkeeper liked to turn the offspinner round the bend. Most bowlers would have plugged the gap. On the contrary, Venkat and Solkar kept the area vacant, invited Knott to indulge. Solkar moved sideways in anticipation, and as soon as he reckoned that Knott was going to turn, he coiled for the dive, leapt, and took the plunge. Literally.

It would be easy to look at the picture, say "Wow", and move on to the next page. But wait, rewind the frame a couple of seconds, think the sequence over in your mind's eye and then regard the picture as the final frame. Solkar didn't just catch Knott inches above the Oval. He gave Indian cricket a new twist.

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No. 6 **Roberts and Murray stand tall**

Two West Indians in England set a school back home alight

Fazeer Mohammed

Birmingham, 11 June 1975

It was an afternoon when the numbers in math class just weren't adding up, simply because all of us were too preoccupied with counting down the runs required by the last-wicket pair of Deryck Murray and Andy Roberts to defeat Pakistan in a critical World Cup match in faraway Birmingham.

The teachers had long since abandoned the noble task of shaping young minds, and their personal transistor radios were blaring so loudly down the hallway that we could hear every anxious moment, every desperate Pakistani appeal, every West Indian cheer at a scrambled run, as the experienced and level-headed Murray - a real hero for us in Trinidad and Tobago - along with the newcomer Roberts (it was just his second ODI) worked their way steadily towards a target of 267 from what seemed a hopeless position of 203 for 9.

With just a handful of runs needed, all discipline and classroom decorum went out the window. Huddled around those precious radios, the crackling commentary from what seemed a world away had us all hypnotised. Anyone daring to voice his doubt at the miracle being achieved was banished from sight. All hands, whether sweaty or trembling, had to be on deck for this one, even from across the Atlantic.

And then it happened: Roberts tapping Wasim Raja to midwicket for the winning run with two balls to spare, triggering an explosion of youthful celebration throughout the school that had the old lady next door wondering if the building was on fire. It was, but only with the passion of cricket-crazy schoolboys experiencing the joy of an amazing West Indian victory.

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No. 7 **Richards runs out three**

The King makes Lord's gape in the first World Cup final - and this time he doesn't have to use the bat

Steven Lynch

London, June 21, 1975

Many one-day games are completely unmemorable, the details hazy the morning after the game, let alone years or decades later. That's probably because there are so many of them now: like London buses, there will be another one along in a minute. But back in 1975, during the first World Cup, they had a certain novelty, which has meant that several incidents have stuck in the mind. From the final alone, there's Roy Fredericks hooking Dennis Lillee out of Lord's, only to tread on his stumps; there's Clive Lloyd's thumping century, and his partnership with the almost strokeless, grey-haired Rohan Kanhai; there's the chaotic end, with hundreds of fans running onto the ground after a catch off a no-ball.

And then there are Viv Richards' run-outs. Odd that the Master Blaster's first big impact on English cricket was as a fielder: three successive - and vital - wickets fell to Viv's golden arm. Opener Alan Turner for 40, Greg Chappell to another direct hit for 15 after a stop-start mix-up with his brother, and finally and vitally, Ian Chappell himself, beaten by a majestic pick-up and side-armed flick back to the bowler. That was 162 for 4, and Australia's top order literally thrown out.

In those days giving the Man-of-the-Match award to a fielder would have been a bit too adventurous, and Lloyd got it for his terrific ton. But it was Richards who won that first final.

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No. 8 **Hookes hits out**

With five resounding strokes in the Centenary Test, a new poster boy for Australian cricket is born

Christian Ryan

Melbourne, 14 March 1977

A lofted off-drive, a hoick round the corner, a cover-drive, a whip off the pads, and a flick through the covers - off a looping straight-break, a half-tracker, a half-volley, a shortish one, and another over-pitched straight one; of such common-sense strokeplay is legend born. And what of the fact that Adam Gilchrist's five fours off one Mushtaq Ahmed over, also on debut, remain virtually unremembered? Well, that's cricket. Or, more particularly, that's showbiz.

For if not for those five gun-barrel blows off Tony Greig's five speculative offbreaks, David Hookes might never have become World Series Cricket's mop-haired centrefold. He might not have been dead-ended by a Kerry Packer lawsuit ("David will spend the rest of his life paying me back what I sue him for") when he considered bailing out. He might not have had his jaw realigned by an Andy Roberts bouncer.

Instead, he might have gone to finishing school against Bishan Bedi, Erapalli Prasanna, Dilip Doshi, and company in 1977-78 and 1979. He might have discovered his dancing shoes. He might have beaten Kim Hughes to the Australian captaincy. He might have played more than 23 Tests.

To perform one of Australian cricket's seven or so wonders at the age of 21, in a packed MCG, in your lucky Adidas squash shoes, on the game's 100th anniversary, with 218 of your Test predecessors looking on, is hardly cause for regret. And yet... expectations had been raised, perilously so. "I suspect history will judge me harshly," Hookes confided to his friend Alan Shiell in 1993. "But I tried to be aggressive and entertaining, and succeeded occasionally."

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No. 9 **Queen's Park stands up for Simmo**

An old-timer steps into the ring again, and is greeted with due respect

Fazeer Mohammed

Port-of-Spain, 3 March 1978

Bob Simpson just had to be a glutton for punishment. Why else would a 42-year-old choose to come out of retirement to lead a weakened, makeshift Australian side to the Caribbean to face arguably the most formidable cricketing force the game has ever known?

Unlike its Australian counterpart, the West Indies Cricket Board of Control had not alienated the defectors to Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket, so the likes of Andy Roberts, Colin Croft and Joel Garner were waiting impatiently for the chance to unleash fire and brimstone on the hopelessly outgunned visitors on the opening day of the series, at the Queen's Park Oval.

Even though rain had been pouring down from early in the morning, the ground was already up to capacity by the time Clive Lloyd and Simpson went out belatedly for the toss.

When the coin came up in the home team's favour, the collective roar that went up in the stands was like that in a Coliseum anticipating a slaughter.

Yet in the midst of the carnage that followed (Peter Toohey was struck between the eyes by a Roberts bouncer), there was a moving tribute to Simpson's courage when 24,000 fans stood as one to applaud the Australian captain all the way to the wicket, and then again on the return journey after Garner trapped him leg-before for a duck.

There was to be no heroic rearguard, and the tourists were routed for 90 on the way to being demolished by an innings inside three days. But as much as they revelled in the home team's overwhelming dominance, the celebrating masses were still knowledgeable and sporting enough to honour an ageing defender of the baggy green.

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No. 10 **Richards dispatches Hendrick**

Six over midwicket and done. The perfect ending to a World Cup final innings

Mudar Patherya

London, 23 June 1979

You don't need to see Vivian Richards' last-ball six off Mike Hendrick in the 1979 World Cup final through your plain-tinted glasses; you need to see it through the prism of the time.

The world was an innocent place in the late seventies. There was no live TV being beamed into drawing rooms in the subcontinent; our visual understanding of Richards was courtesy Patrick Eagar in Sportsworld, or through Reuters in Sportsweek, or fuzzy API pictures in newspapers.

It was a good four years before we actually saw how Richards did hit Hendrick. You slimed up to someone who gloated in the possession of cricket videotapes, you bought a VCR for Rs 20,000, you pleaded for the tape for a day, you invited the select to a private showing, you basked in the reflected glory of being "close" to Richards' six, you analysed it to death thereafter, and you emerged as an authority in a community that had been condemned to only read about it.

Replay Richards' coup de grace in your mind's eye, and you can see the magic even now. Richards stepped away to the off even before Hendrick had delivered; Richards dictated to Hendrick which line to bowl; Richards leaned to the off; Richards lifted the full-toss off the middle stump; Richards hit it over midwicket for six.

It is nearly three decades later and the world has since been corrupted by reverse sweeps, paddle sweeps, 180-degree bludgeons, glances picked from outside the off stump, and hoicks over midwicket. But Richards is still, well, Richards. For leaning to the off. For hitting over leg. And for flicking a six in the process.

When he had finished, he swung in one motion, made a complete rotation, smiled and ran out of sight.

Some decades down the road someone may well write a case study about how some people could actually enjoy themselves in the 60th over of a World Cup final.

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No. 11 **Chappell throws it away**

Small target, end of the day, what does the batting captain do? He gets bowled

R Mohan

Melbourne, 10 February 1981

It was a rank long hop, but it helped change a whole series. In walked Greg Chappell with the target a measly 143, and an expected Test and series victory for Australia never came about. The confusion in Chappell's mind was about which part of the inviting on side to hit the ball, from Karsan Ghavri, to. Sometimes it takes a bad delivery to lull a great batsman into a false sense of security. Keeping low as it passed the bat, the ball almost pitched a second time before thudding into the bottom of the stumps.

Australia were 24 for 3 at the close, and Dennis Lillee's conspiratorial whisper that evening was, "If I were a betting man, I would put my money on India." Prophetic words they proved to be.

An injured Kapil Dev was coaxed into coming out to bowl on the final morning and he bowled Australia out for 83 on a dual-paced pitch that was helping bowlers of pace and spin both.

A visibly annoyed Chappell, saddled with two spinners in his XI for that Test by dominating selectors controlling a united Australian team (the Packer intervention had just got over), may have blundered in putting India in on winning the toss, though only hindsight would have suggested that. The captain who had let India off the hook in the previous Test, in Adelaide, where Australia were expected to go 2-0 up, may have had a lot of explaining to do when the series was drawn 1-1 - the first such verdict for India Down Under.

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No. 12 **Boycott b Holding**

The perfect set-up, then the perfect kill. It was the most ferocious, exacting opening over by a bowler in a Test match

Mike Selvey

Bridgetown, 14 March 1981

It was, Michael Holding has said, as if time stood still. The moment when the off stump of England's premier batting technician, Geoffrey Boycott, was detonated from the Kensington turf and sent flying a full pitch length back towards David Murray. "I saw it," the bowler said, "as if it was slow motion. For a fleeting moment there was not a sound, as the stump came out and I realised what I had done. Then I was hit by a wave of noise that tumbled down from the stands."

Holding, fastest of them all, many say, and one of the purest, had just applied the coup de grace to complete what has come to be regarded as the most exacting, ferocious opening over ever sent down by a pace bowler in a Test match.

To Holding went the second over of the England innings, Andy Roberts already having tested Graham Gooch to the full. Ten minutes or so earlier, in the gloomy interior of the home dressing room in the Pickwick pavilion, "Sluggo", the West Indies' Australian physiotherapist, had worked Holding into a lather, as a trainer might a thoroughbred, the better to prepare him to inflict an onslaught.

Holding surged in, silent-footed, and menacing. Successively Boycott was smacked on the knuckles, beaten outside off stump, and rapped on his inner thigh. Fortitude and skill kept out the fourth and fifth as they reared at him, forcing him back into the crease. The sixth, pitched up and fast beyond comprehension, created his own history.

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No. 13 **Beefy hits it into the confectionery stall**

Botham's 149 was mostly all humpty, but one shot stood head and shoulders clear

John Stern

Leeds, July 20, 1981

It is one of the most iconic images of the decade, from one of the most iconic series of the decade. The sight of Ian Botham hitting Terry Alderman back over his head for six in the third Ashes Test of 1981 is the epitome of his resurgence in that series.

There he is, the great allrounder, freed from the shackles of captaincy, bearded, rejuvenated, inspired once more by his muse Mike Brearley. Botham's 149 not out in England's second innings, which turned round the match and the series, was a seat-of-the-pants job. "Let's give it some humpty," he said to Graham Dilley, one of his tail-end partners.

It was an unrefined innings, but this straight hit had power, beauty and technique. It was a clean, straight strike that showed Botham at his best, as a proper batsman with real skill, not a slogger with a three-pound bat - as a dwindling number of stuffed-shirt snobs tried to maintain.

As its accompaniment, it enjoys an equally iconic snatch of commentary from Richie Benaud: "Don't even bother looking for that. It's gone into the confectionery stall and out again." Confectionery? Who says that, even in 1981? It's pure Richie and enjoys pride of place in the large canon of Richie-isms that TV watchers of cricket in the UK have lapped up since God knows when.

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No. 14 **Imran bowls Vishy**

Pakistan's captain sends a chill down Indian spines in Karachi

Rajan Bala

Karachi, 25 December 1982

Around the time that the government of Pakistan persuaded the United States to give it the F-16, Pakistan's adoring cricket fans began to refer to their captain Imran Khan by the name of the fighter-jet. This was after he had led the way to a 3-0 series victory against India, taking as many as 40 wickets.

Imran was at his fast-bowling peak then, and at that express pace got the ball to swing late and seam disconcertingly. There were even whispers from the Indian camp that the ball had been doctored, a suggestion Imran angrily denied, asking the visiting team to get their own umpires.

In the first Karachi Test, India were 283 behind on the first innings and battling to avoid defeat. Sunil Gavaskar (42) and Dilip Vengsarkar (79) had been involved in a second-wicket association of 74 when Imran struck, bowling the Indian captain, the best opening batsman in the game, with one that did him for sheer pace.

Enter Gundappa Viswanath, with the score at 102. Six runs later he was gone, bowled by Imran for nought. A chill pierced every Indian heart at the National Stadium.

Vishy had let the delivery go, never believing it would come back so much. But it, quite incredibly, did. It was a season when Imran could do no wrong. Here he was magnificent. Vishy rates this delivery, along with the legcutter from Vanburn Holder that bowled him in Bombay in 1975, as the two best that got him out.

For the record, Imran finished with 8 for 60 from 20.1 overs in that second innings.

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No. 15 **AB and Thommo fall short**

They took it down to the wire; then the final, fatal stumble

Mike Coward

Melbourne, 30 December 1982

It has long been said that Melbourne is one of the truly great sporting capitals of the world. On the penultimate day of 1982, 18,000 burghers streamed through the city and across Yarra Park to reach the grand Melbourne Cricket Ground to witness the conclusion to one of the greatest Ashes matches.

The gates had been flung open. Australia required just 37 runs to regain the game's oldest and most glittering prize. What's more, the last two batsmen were at the crease. It was possible the mob would see but one delivery.

Requiring 292 for victory, Australia were 218 for 9 when Jeff Thomson, once the world's fastest bowler, joined emerging champion Allan Border on the nerve-racking fourth day. By stumps they had advanced the score to 255. Hope springs eternal in the eager breast, and to a man the crowd was strong in its belief that Border and Thomson would somehow conjure the 37 needed for victory. And but for a desperate last throw of the dice by England's captain, Bob Willis, the bravura of Ian Botham, and the reflexes of offspinner Geoff Miller, the most improbable Australian victory would have been achieved.

Not even the new ball at 259 caused problems. But Thomson poked at the first delivery of Botham's 26th over and provided a straightforward catch to Chris Tavaré at second slip. Tavaré could only parry the chance, and Miller, fielding deeper at first slip, took a couple of quick strides and managed to complete a remarkable catch, the ball just 18 inches off the turf. England won by three runs and Willis dubbed Botham "golden bollocks".

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No. 16 **Greenidge loses his off stump**

The third World Cup final: Sandhu lands the punch that makes the knockout possible

Lord's, 25 June 1983

Some sportsmen become prisoners of a particular moment. They become forever defined by that one instant. It helps, of course, if the man in question does not have a tremendous amount of other stuff to be said for him. Without wishing to be unkind, Balwinder Singh Sandhu really doesn't. In the mind of Indian cricket fans, he is always associated with that ball in the opening overs of the Prudential World Cup final against West Indies in 1983.

If one needed a portent that glorious June afternoon that things might just swing India's way, that ball was it. (Though it seems that way only in hindsight. Defending 183, things like portents were furthest from anyone's mind.) It wasn't quite the ball of the century, but it certainly was - in terms of its importance and surprise effect - the ball of the tournament.

Yes, surprise effect. That was it. It surprised everyone, not least, I suspect, Sandhu himself. It was the 12th ball that Gordon Greenidge faced in his innings. It pitched outside the off stump. It curled in. (With Sandhu, it curled in, never ripped.) Greenidge underestimated the curl. He shouldered arms. And was bowled.

Sandhu played only eight Tests and 22 ODIs for India. There never was a moment like that in his career - before or after. There are really not that many moments to rival this for gobsmacking, delirious pleasure, in India's one-day cricket history.

It must have been the uncharitable who later floated the story (apocryphal, surely?) that the ball did so much because it hit a pebble on the pitch.

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No. 17 **Kapil gets Viv**

The catch that made India's World Cup win possible

Kamran Abbasi

Lord's, 25 June 1983

In 1983, West Indies were unbeatable. They possessed the most fearsome bowling attack and possibly the most brutal batting line-up that anybody had ever witnessed. The first two World Cups had been demonstrations of Caribbean brilliance. The 1979 victory - a strutting, muscular annihilation of England - established Clive Lloyd's team as the kings of cricket.

The 1983 World Cup was following a predictable script. West Indies stormed to the final, and only Kapil Dev's Indian team provided a romantic antidote to their muscle, with a silky middle order and an arsenal of friendly medium-pacers.

India's arrival in the final was fun but never a threat. Indeed, once Messrs Marshall, Garner, Holding, and Roberts had despatched India for 183, the only disappointment was that Viv Richards would be denied a second successive World Cup final century.

As if mindful of that predicament, Richards set off like a train - a nuclear-powered one - and India's powder-puff attack was just that.

But then something peculiar happened. Madan Lal persuaded Richards into a mistimed hook over midwicket. The ball rose like a missile, swirling wildly in its descent, and as Kapil ran back, the pressure of the moment and the inevitability of Richards' triumph meant that nobody expected him to pouch it. But he did - over his shoulder.

Time stopped in complete disbelief; the King had fallen. Some observers swore that Kapil smiled as he prepared for the plummeting cricket ball of history.

India were ecstatic, West Indies in disarray - such disarray that they collapsed feebly to defeat. The Caribbean empire had fallen, and an Asian giant was awake.

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No. 18 **Siva gets Javed stumped**

The World Championship final, 1985: Miandad was wily, LS even more so

R Mohan

Melbourne, 10 March 1985

Picking the young legspinner Laxman Sivaramakrishnan for the World Championship of Cricket was the most inspired gamble made by one of India's finest selection committees. They reckoned the large Australian grounds would suit Siva.

Right through the tournament the young man with the names of the three gods bowled superbly, never afraid to give the ball air - though it must be said that he was lucky to see a few dipping full-tosses hit to catchers in the deep, as batsmen failed to clear the 95-metre boundaries.

His spell in the final - billed disparagingly as "bus conductors versus tram drivers" - was awe-inspiring. Kapil Dev's early wickets had pushed Pakistan on to the back foot and the situation was just right for some spin to tease the two senior batsmen at the crease, Javed Miandad and Imran Khan, with. Good as those two were at picking spin, they just could not afford to lash out.

In the manner of a bowler who becomes more creative when he sees respect in the batsman's eyes, Siva tormented the pair. So shackled did the two soon feel that there was a mix-up that led to Imran being run out.

And then came this tempting, well-flighted legbreak on leg stump. Miandad could not resist stepping out. To his dismay he soon stood rooted as the ball dipped in to his feet and snapped, breaking across to the top of off stump to set up another flashy stumping for young Sadanand Viswanath. Shane Warne would have been proud to have bowled such a ball.

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No. 19 **Miandad seals it with a six**

The shot that rang out around the world

Kamran Abbasi

Sharjah, 18 April 1986

Sharjah had become a hotbed of India-Pakistan rivalry, its stands crammed full of expats and its executive boxes jam-packed with celebrities. Television had begun to cast its mesmeric spell upon the people of South Asia, and the combatants were rising in stature on the world stage, flexing their pulling power.

Pakistan had never really won any tournament of significance, and even the imaginatively titled AustralAsia Cup looked beyond them as Javed Miandad orchestrated a faltering run-chase. Even down to the last over, India were in command, Javed's battling century futile.

A boundary was required off the last ball, with one wicket in hand. Pakistan's premier batsman took what seemed an eternity to survey the outfield, at one point looking as if he was counting the number of fielders.

Chetan Sharma knew what to do: a yorker would seal Pakistan's fate, and another victory over the old enemy. The thinking was perfect but the execution flawed. Sharma's yorker emerged as a low full-toss that Javed propelled with savagery over midwicket. Even before it cleared the boundary, Javed had raised his arms, sprinting off the pitch in celebration.

With one shot he became a national hero. Gifts were lavished upon him. And Pakistan began a run of success against India that was attributed to the psychological power of that six.

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No. 20 **Harper runs out Gooch**

A burst of athleticism in the MCC bicentenary Test makes Lord's gasp

Rob Steen

London, 20 August 1987

Lord's, 1987, and the MCC Bicentenary celebrations are in full swing. MCC v Rest of the World, a Who's Who of contemporary titans lacking only Ian Botham, Martin Crowe, and Viv Richards. National loyalties, for once, are lowermost: Malcolm Marshall dismisses Jeff Dujon; Ravi Shastri ejects Sunny Gavaskar. A strictly festive "Test", Wisden would describe it as "a game rather than a contest". Full houses revel

Before rain ruins the final day, the G-Men reign: Graham Gooch, Gordon Greenidge, Mike Gatting, and Gavaskar all make centuries. It is a piece of fielding legerdemain by the least celebrated participant, though, that glues itself most indelibly to the memory.

Moustache snarling, Gooch, on 117, faces up to a flighted offbreak from Roger Harper, the lofty Guyanese who has already pulled off a blinding catch to unseat Greenidge. That, though, was merely the appetiser.

Gooch moves a couple of paces down the track, driving crisp and straight. In a single, feline movement, typical of a cat-man to whom fielding is as natural as thinking, Harper gathers and fires the ball back. Carried by momentum, Gooch is still out of his crease, has not even considered reclaiming it, when leather topples timber. The gallery is momentarily confused (did we really see what we think we just saw?), then takes a collective deep breath, and roars in awe. Even the victim smiles. Has an England batsman's exit at HQ ever inspired such hometown pleasure?

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No. 21 **Tendulkar serves notice**

With a flurry of sixes against Qadir, the maestro announces himself

Suresh Menon

Peshawar, 16 December 1989

The crowd was huge, and some of them even had tickets. Many took advantage of the general spirit of friendliness and sat anywhere they could. It is easy to see why the forefathers of the security men at Peshawar could not control the Khyber Pass. Amid the confusion, a legend was born there 20 years ago.

He was 16, had almost curly hair, curiosity in his eyes, and steel in his wrists. His treatment of Abdul Qadir is part of folklore now. Sachin Tendulkar played only because it was not an official one-day match, and Kapil Dev was nursing a stiff neck. At that stage there was no plan to play Tendulkar in the one-day tournament at all. But after that he couldn't be denied.

Eighteen deliveries changed everything. In that time he made 53 (unbeaten), hitting Mushtaq Ahmed for two huge sixes, and then Abdul Qadir for 27 runs in a single over, with three sixes in a row. There was no wild slogging. When Qadir dropped one short as Tendulkar stepped out, the batsman had the arrogance to go through with his shot anyway. The bat made a lovely arc, and for all we know the ball is still travelling - no one could find it.

At the other end was the captain, Kris Srikkanth, no slouch himself. Later that evening he said, referring to the one-day series, "The little bugger must play now." The little bugger has been playing ever since.

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No. 22 **Akram nails two in two**

Wasim's World Cup ripper of rippers came with a sequel hot on its heels

Tim de Lisle

Melbourne, 25 March 1992

The first World Cup final to be played under lights, the only one to take place in Australia, and the last one not to feature the Australian team. The two finalists are the team that did best in the group stage - England, astonishingly - and the one that came roaring into form just in time - Pakistan.

The game ebbs and flows nicely. Derek Pringle's tidy outswing puts England on top before two grizzled maestros, Imran Khan and Javed Miandad, fight back with a stand of 139. With a fluent 40 from their latest discovery Inzamam-ul-Haq, and a buccaneering 33 from Wasim Akram, Pakistan set a target of 250.

England stumble to 69 for 4 in the twilight, but then Neil Fairbrother and Allan Lamb drag them back into it. They put on 72 and Imran is forced to turn to his sole spearhead, Wasim (Imran himself is bowling with a bad shoulder, and Waqar Younis has missed the whole tournament). Wasim has to find something special. It helps that his speciality is reverse swing at high pace. He ambles in to Lamb, round the wicket, and fires one in towards his pads. It shapes in, then darts away, beating Lamb's baffled prod and taking out the off stump.

Chris Lewis comes in at No.7. Wasim goes wider on the crease and greets him with what appears to be an off-side wide, but it curls back wickedly late and takes out the off stump again. Wasim went on to play one-day international cricket for longer than any other bowler - 18 years, 356 games, 502 wickets - but he never bettered those two balls.

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No. 23 **The ball of the century**

Pitch outside leg, take off stump, easy as pie

Steven Lynch

Manchester, 3 June 1993

As a legspinner, of much more modest pretensions, it was with special interest that I watched Shane Warne's first ball in a Test against England. He was bowling to Mike Gatting, the former England captain and a batsman famous for his ability against spin. There was a certain amount of field adjustment between Warne and Allan Border, his captain - long enough for onlookers to prepare themselves for this much-heralded blond bloke's first delivery in an Ashes Test.

He shuffled up: unprepossessing three- or four-pace run-up, nice sideways position, right arm snapping over in an exciting whirl. As the ball looped down, my first feeling was one of disappointment: it was headed down the leg side, a harmless start. Gatting obviously thought so too, and stretched forward slightly without quite getting to the pitch. The ball drifted even further down leg... and then it hit the turf. It fizzed back across Gatting - no mean feat - and clipped the top of off stump.

Gatt looked completely shocked; the wicketkeeper, Ian Healy, was half-amazed, fully elated; the crowd gasped, gobsmacked. And Warne looked as if he'd planned it that way all along. It was the ball that did the most to revive the fading art of legspin, and truly the Ball of the Century.

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No. 24 **Rhodes takes five**

Not a bird, not a plane, it's Jonty on fire

Neil Manthorp

Bombay, 14 November 1993

A wicketkeeper might be lucky enough to receive three or four "regulation" catches in the course of an innings, but any more than that will inevitably include a couple of classic grabs. For an outfielder to take five catches in an innings involves a skill so special, it remains a unique record almost a decade and a half after Jonty Rhodes set it.

Having displayed his talent to the world 18 months earlier at the 1992 World Cup by running out Inzamam-ul-Haq with a horizontal dive from backward point, Rhodes' reputation as a fielder had burgeoned.

But unlike batting and bowling records, there was no yardstick by which fielders could be measured. Hosts of competent slipsmen had taken three or four catches before, and brilliant point fielders like Colin Bland never had their run-outs and saved runs officially credited or recorded.

Rhodes changed all that at the Brabourne Stadium. Brian Lara began the show by splicing a pull shot harmlessly into the air barely five yards away towards square leg. The Rhodes sprint from backward point was so committed that, having clutched the ball, he landed and slid so far on his belly, he ended up close to the shocked batsman's feet.

Phil Simmons was looking ominous when Rhodes dived to his left at short midwicket to take an "impossible", one-handed catch. Jimmy Adams then clipped Pat Symcox to Rhodes at midwicket, before Anderson Cummins fell to a catch that was not so much impossible as absurd. A slashed cut shot against Allan Donald was flying towards third man when Rhodes leapt skyward, twisting backwards as he did so, and stuck out his right hand to take the catch behind the rest of his body.

Opener Desmond Haynes, having retired hurt earlier in the innings, returned to provide South Africa's young talisman a regulation offering to end the innings. The record catch may not have been special, but the moment was as magical as they come.

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No. 25 **Sachin ties 'em down**

Six needed off the last over? Not on my life. Tendulkar bowls the perfect last over

Dileep Premachandran

Calcutta, 24 November 1993

Sachin Tendulkar had provided evidence of his steely nerve two years earlier at the WACA, picking up the final wicket against West Indies to give India the most improbable of ties. Now, when Brian McMillan's bold hitting threatened to silence a large crowd at the Eden Gardens, it was once again Tendulkar whom Mohammad Azharuddin turned to. For South Africa the match had appeared lost when Anil Kumble and Ajay Jadeja precipitated a slide to 145 for 7, but then McMillan and Dave Richardson added 44 to leave South Africa needing just six from the final over.

Two seasons earlier, at the same venue, on South Africa's return to the international game, Tendulkar had hit a brilliant half-century to thwart an inspired Allan Donald-led defence of a low total. But this afternoon, he had done little with the bat, making just 15.

Azhar's unexpected gambit perplexed many, but it also got the crowd buzzing. Richardson had been run out in the previous over, but South Africa didn't learn any lessons. With Tendulkar bowling seam-up, McMillan attempted two off the opening delivery. Fanie de Villiers was run out going for the second, which brought in Donald to face a baying crowd and an excited Tendulkar.

de Villiers' skill with the ball didn't quite extend to willow-wielding, and with Vijay Yadav providing plenty of advice and encouragement from behind the stumps, Tendulkar reeled off three successive dot-balls. Donald managed to scamper a single off the penultimate delivery, and McMillan was left needing to wallop four for victory. Azhar took his time setting the field, and with the noise building to an ear-splitting crescendo, Tendulkar gambolled in. McMillan had an almighty heave but didn't connect cleanly, and though the batsmen ran a single - McMillan chastising himself furiously - it was the Indians who raised the roof.

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No. 26 **Donald bowls Border**

de Villiers was on fire; then White Lightning came to the party

Trevor Chesterfield

Sydney, 6 January 1994

When they recall events of South Africa's great victory over Australia in Sydney in 1994, it is the image of Fanie de Villiers and his bowling, and of how his 6 for 43 became the architect of that impossible five-run conquest.

All too often forgotten, however, is how Allan Donald initially played the more important role on that final morning of omnipresent midsummer heat, sweating players, and struggling firefighters against the backdrop of a smoke-smudged horizon. As bushfires ringed the city and 16,000 were given free access to the SCG, Allan Border, on 7, stood four-square in defiance: 54 runs adrift of the 117 needed to win, and Australia resuming at 63 for 4. The crowd buzzed, confident Border and Mark Waugh would deliver them an expected 1-0 series lead.

Kepler Wessels, nursing an injured knee and broken finger, and his deputy Hansie Cronje, had that final morning discussed with Donald a strategy of how to combat Border's threat. Wessels had once played in the Australian team and knew a trick or two.

Donald pounded in to deliver the second ball of the morning. Expecting an away-going delivery, Border padded up, lifting his bat - only, the ball sliced back off the seam with enough bounce to whip off the off-stump bail; little wonder Border stood transfixed and disbelieving. For the South Africans there were scenes of elation and a whooping, excited arm-waving Donald. The stark impact of Border's dismissal lifted South Africa's adrenalin and fractured Australia's dressing-room psyche.

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No. 27 **Athers falls to Ambrose**

West Indies had a small total to defend. They also had Ambi

BC Pires

Port-of-Spain, 30 March 1994

West Indies were defending a paltry 193 runs with three sessions to play on the last day. England had a point to prove and their resolve appeared strong. In the press box, English cricket writer and erstwhile Somerset captain Peter Roebuck said, "This ought to be England's game". I nodded.

And then Richie Richardson handed Curtly Ambrose the ball. These were the days when West Indian crowds still understood and loved Test cricket, even preferred it to the one-day game, and the Oval went absolutely silent as the ground focused on Ambi's long, loping run-up. With every breath held, every pair of eyes checked to see if Ambrose's back foot fell behind the line, if the ball pitched between wicket and wicket, at what length - it was the last point of "good" before "full" - and we all watched the ball as it skidded, at an incredible pace, into the England captain's pad with a thud heard plainly before the cries went up, first from the fielders, appealing, and then from the crowd, cheering. The ball was so fast, so deadly, the crowd did not need the umpire's finger to begin celebrating raucously.

I turned to Roebuck and said, "I think I have to watch this in the ground." It's not considered polite to scream in the press box.

England were all out for 46, still one run fewer than West Indies' lowest score against them, and the seven extras Ambrose and Courtney Walsh allowed in 19.1 overs outscored every English batsman bar Alec Stewart.

Anyone present at that ground could tell you that the English defeat was secured not with the last ball but with the first. If that was not a magic moment, brother, the word "magic" may as well be stricken from the dictionary.

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No. 28 **Slats socks it to England**

Begin as you mean to go on? Michael Slater invented the dictum

Christian Ryan

Brisbane, 25 November 1994

During backyard Tests in the late 1970s, out back of 17 Hardy Avenue, Wagga Wagga, Michael Slater would imagine himself to be Viv Richards. He'd chew gum, he'd hoist, and then sway his Slazenger 5 Star high above his head to loosen up, and he'd impersonate Richards' across-the-line technique, knowing that if he connected with the pot-plant holder, his reward would be 10 runs. At 10am on 25 November 1994, he performed a similar routine. The key difference on this occasion was there was no compulsion to hit across the line. Phillip DeFreitas' first ball of the first over of the 1994-95 Ashes series was slow, short, crooked, and Slater square-cut it for four.

By over's end, aided by a characteristic Philip Tufnell misfield, Slater had cuffed another four, and Mike Atherton's England had had its fill of Phils. After nearly three hours, the sole "howzat" had reportedly emanated from the children's lunchtime Kanga Cricket demonstration. At stumps Australia were 329 for 4 - the first 300-plus Ashes opening day since Keith Stackpole's happy hookathon of November 1970.

Slater did not curtsy to tradition or expectation. And every Ashes summer since, his name has been invoked and his example whispered in proverb: beginnings are everything. In 2001 Slater himself banged 4nb-4-0-4-nb-0-0-4 off Darren Gough; in 2002-03 Nasser Hussain elected to field till eternity; in 2005 Steve Harmison wounded three men in an hour. In the latest instalment, least plausibly of all, Harmison's timorous cobweb-clearer materialised in second slip's hands. One imagines Slater, peering down from Channel 9's commentary box, might have been chewing his gum and smiling his smile a fraction harder and wider just at that moment.

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No. 29 **Hollioake stands up to McGrath**

An English teenager makes a startling debut against the old enemy

Tim de Lisle

London, 25 May 1997

Ben Hollioake did things young. He played Test cricket as a teenager, which is unheard of in England. He made his debut in a one-day international at Lord's against Australia in 1997, alongside his brother Adam. Mike Atherton decided to send Ben, a seam-bowling allrounder, in at No. 3 as a pinch hitter - so called because the members pinched themselves when they saw his hitting.

Third ball, he straight-drove Glenn McGrath for four. Soon he was clipping him into the Tavern for six, causing delirium. When Shane Warne came on, he swept him for four. The nonchalance was irresistible.

The Lord's pavilion is full of old men, because the waiting list to become a member is 18 years long, and when this 19-year-old was out, for 63 off only 48 balls, they rose creakily from their benches and stood to acclaim him. It was an intensely moving sight. Here at last was an England cricketer who could bat, bowl, field, and shine on the big stage. Alec Stewart said he was the most gifted cricketer he had played alongside.

That first fine careless rapture was never to be repeated. While Ben produced similar pieces of magic for Surrey, two of them in Lord's finals, his first-class form was patchy and his England progress fitful. The fickle selection that had brought him into the team soon squeezed him out: he played only 20 of a possible 84 one-dayers, and just two Tests. In 2002, he died, aged 24, in a car accident in Perth. So he stays, in cricket's folk memory, forever young, and when you think of him, you think of that day at Lord's.

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No. 30 **Walsh lends Lara a shoulder**

Another big gesture from a big man famous for them

Vaneisa Baksh

Kingston, 29 January 1998

Size matters in some things, especially in spirit, and true grandeur uplifts all in its precincts.

It couldn't have been an easy decision for Courtney Walsh to continue after he was replaced by Brian Lara in January 1998. After a week of reflection, he admitted his disappointment, but said the game was bigger and that he would support his new captain.

Jamaicans were not ready for such magnanimity, not after Walsh's curt dismissal, triggered it was felt, by Lara's jostling for the captaincy. Newspapers reported that plans were afoot to boo the new captain at Sabina Park, and that an anti-Lara campaign had been devised.

Things were warm as the team prepared for the match. The region was already severely divided by this shift in the captaincy; it could get very hot if mismanaged. Walsh rose magnificently to the occasion. Literally and figuratively towering above Lara, he strode out onto the field, arm almost protectively curled around the captain's shoulder. It evoked the sense of a mother gently leading her son toward the watering hole with predators watching hungrily. Walsh had taken guard.

Who could not have felt the bigness of this gesture? As a Jamaican hero, Walsh knew what he could telegraph in that moment, and he chose to endorse the new captain and to soothe chafing egos. It was true generosity of spirit, and it reinforced the link that has too often casually been made between cricket and gentlemen.

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No. 31 **Tendulkar goes after Warne**

Two titans at the height of their powers come up against each other

Boria Majumdar

Sharjah, 22 April 1998

Cricket is perhaps the most individual of all team sports. What would it be, shorn of the drama of one-against-one contests?

In this particular case, both actors had etched themselves into cricketing folklore. Both were legends who had little but their egos at stake. And when skill, will, determination and effort all pad up to defend ego, it makes for fascinating viewing.

Shane Warne, injured shoulder ignored, round the wicket to Sachin Tendulkar on a Sharjah track offering some assistance was one such intriguing contest. Before the ball could come down and do its trick, Tendulkar had got to the pitch of it. And once the ball had been reached and the spin smothered, up came the heavy bat with lightning-quick speed to send it straight into the billboards at long-on. Warne had been conquered, Warne had been decimated. And he had been left with a vision that continued to haunt him.

Warne, wiping the sweat off his face in frustration, desperation, or bewilderment and appreciation, perhaps. The great Shane Warne, for once in his life, had thrown in the towel. Tendulkar had well and truly won the contest of the titans. And soon, India the Coca-Cola Cup.

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No. 32 **Chennai applauds Pakistan**

It was heartbreak for India, but the crowd at the Chidambaram Stadium saw it differently

Sambit Bal

Chennai, 31 January 1999

Every once in a while, there are moments in sport that transcend the action on the field and yet help establish the very essence of sport by carrying it beyond the confines of nationalism, and indeed victory and defeat. By all standards the first Test of the 1998-99 series between India and Pakistan was going to be remembered as a classic even without the final touch.

It see-sawed for four days: bowled out for 238 on the first day, Pakistan struck back, restricting India to 254. Then Shahid Afridi threatened to take the match beyond India's pale with a violent 141 before Venkatesh Prasad engineered the most sensational of collapses, which sunk Pakistan from 275 for 4 to 286 all out. But at 82 for 5 before lunch on the fourth day, it all seemed over for India - barring Sachin Tendulkar, of course. With stubborn support from Nayan Mongia, Tendulkar chipped away at the target, initially nudging and pushing, and then with a flurry of dazzling strokes.

Mongia lost his head, and his wicket, when India were 53 short, but it was the dismissal of a visibly tired Tendulkar, struggling with a back injury, that swung the match for Pakistan. They claimed the last four wickets for four runs and won by 12 runs.

The series had begun under a cloud of uncertainty, with Indian fundamentalists threatening to disrupt Pakistan's first tour to India in 12 years. Diplomatic relations between the two countries had been prickly at best, and all it needed was a small incident for the tour to be called off. But just as the security forces were getting in to position to tackle any unpleasantness that may have arisen, the crowd in Chennai, stunned at first by the turn of events, rose to their feet and began to clap.

It wasn't delirious or frenzied, but measured and sustained. The Pakistan team immediately took their cue and ran a victory lap around the ground. For anyone with any experience of India-Pakistan cricket, this was a deeply moving, even seminal, moment. Five years later the echoes were still being heard - in the National Stadium in Karachi.

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No. 33 **Shoaib strikes twice**

India get hit midships by the Rawalpindi Express

Osman Samiuddin

Kolkata, 17 February 1999

Session breaks are tricky things to negotiate. Many batsmen, even the best-set, succumb to its distractions. Precisely midway through the second day of the inaugural game of the Asian Test Championship, between Pakistan and India in Kolkata in February 1999, Rahul Dravid and Sadagoppan Ramesh were grinding India into Pakistan's measly first innings 185. At 147 for 2, drinks were taken.

Immediately after, Shoaib Akhtar sprinted in to Dravid, who was then still placing bricks into the wall he eventually became. For nearly two hours and 92 balls, he had stood resolute.

The ball began its 51st over of duty a low full-toss, then ducked suddenly, two-thirds of the way down towards toenails - sensing the bat perhaps - and curved. By the time Dravid slapped his bat down to his feet, it was beyond him and clattering leg stump. Hello, what's this?

In strolled the best batsman in the world, a tsunami of noise with him. A hop and a crouch, a quick scan of fielders, elbow protection nudged and guard taken. Still only one slip in place, and in raced Shoaib. This one was a low full-toss; it dipped and swerved less, but seemed even quicker. As opposed to Dravid, feet rooted in beaten defence, Tendulkar shifted his back foot across to cover an off stump line and on-drove. He was beaten, by pace or swing who knows, but truly beaten, middle stump unluckier than its mates either side. Hello, this was magic.

Shoaib continued, on to his knees, head skywards, arms outstretched like some Jesus Christ Superstar. Did he know this was only the second golden duck of Tendulkar's career? Did he sense that vacancies for the toughest job in Pakistan cricket, as Wasim Akram got older and Waqar Younis less effective, existed? He wasn't yet the most notorious cricketer on the planet, just a monstrously quick bowler - leaner than now, more hair, different action. We'd heard about his speed. Now we saw it. We also peeked at the nose for theatre that was to simultaneously blight and light up his career forever after.

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No. 34 **Dravid gets a hundred at Eden**

India's go-to guy steps up and answers the doubters

Boria Majumdar

Kolkata, 14 March 2001

For some, like Sachin Tendulkar, greatness comes naturally. For others, like Rahul Dravid, who have it in them to aspire to greatness, it is a peak, which when scaled has a fairytale quality to it. Dravid's aggressive yet anxious waving of his bat in the direction of the media box located at the top of the Eden Gardens club house was one such.

He had been dropped to No. 6 in the batting order, severely criticised for failing against Steve Waugh's mighty Australians, and was suffering cramps and dehydration. The innings was one best described as effort and toil personified.

It all came together in that one moment: both hands went up in triumph, but soon the bat went straight up for the media box. The face, which said nothing, said it all. It announced the maturing of Dravid the team man - one who can certainly aspire to the position of India's best and most dependable batsman of all time.

It was a moment that encapsulated his cricketing philosophy - nothing comes easy, but when it does, it is deeply satisfying, for it is a product of much hard work. It is a moment little remembered for it was overshadowed by other feats. It was vintage Dravid - unassuming but forthright.

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No. 35 **A win in the dark**

Thorpe steers the ship home in the gloom

Andrew Miller

Karachi, 11 December 2000

The azaan had already sounded, and the sun had sunk far beneath the Karachi horizon, when Graham Thorpe played the chinese cut off Saqlain Mushtaq, triggering mass jubilation from England's cricketers, not to mention the small knot of fans - all 12 of them - who had clung on in the fast-fading light.

It had been an astonishing sprint to the finish, in a series that England - under the emotional, attritional leadership of Nasser Hussain - had paced to perfection. With the side in a transitional phase after the serial failures of the 1990s, Hussain's mantra was "stay in the contest at all costs". He realised that, before England could learn how to win, they first had to learn how to not lose.

Consequently the series was a drudge for 14 days out of 15. Thorpe epitomised England's approach with a century in Lahore, which contained just two boundaries, but their refusal to buckle put the pressure back on the hosts. On the final morning in Karachi they capitulated, losing their last seven wickets for 80, leaving England needing 176 to win in a minimum of 44 overs.

Pakistan, however, scoffed at the prospect of defeat. Moin Khan slowed the over-rate to a crawl, knowing how swiftly the light would fade, but the umpires, Steve Bucknor and Mohammad Nazir, refused to bow to such antics.

As Waqar Younis hurtled through the gloom, a young Matthew Hoggard manned the sightscreen at the pavilion end, to speed the game along as Thorpe and Graeme Hick went about adding 91 in 21 overs. England's win was their first in Pakistan for 39 years, and it was Pakistan's first defeat in Karachi.

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No. 36 **Kumble bowls with a broken jaw**

Lionheart grits his teeth and shoulders the load

Suresh Menon

St John's, 12 May 2002

The sight of Anil Kumble emerging from the pavilion, ready to bowl, his face bandaged, in the Antigua Test of 2002, is one of cricket's most inspiring.

Kumble sent down 14 consecutive overs and became the first bowler to dismiss Brian Lara while bowling with a broken jaw. He was due to fly back to Bangalore the following day for surgery, and as he said, "At least I can now go home with the thought that I tried my best.

"It was one of the bravest things I've seen on the field of play," said Viv Richards later.

Batting at No. 7 (Ajay Ratra at No. 8 made a century), Kumble was hit by Merv Dillon. He spat out blood but batted on for another 20 minutes. The series was poised 1-1 and this was the fourth Test. India declared at 513 for 9.

Lesser acts have become legends in the game. Colin Cowdrey's coming out with a broken hand against West Indies in 1963, for example. He didn't have to face a ball, as his partner saved the Test. But it is cited for bravery even ahead of Australian Rick McCosker's batting at No. 10 with a broken jaw, which contributed to his team's victory in the Centenary Test.

Kumble's Test was drawn, West Indies declaring at 629 for 9. His reason for returning to bowl: "I didn't want to sit around" is as fine an example of the self-effacing statement as you will find in cricket.

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No. 37 **Ganguly takes his shirt off**

A brattish upstart brings the tone of Lord's down a notch or two

Siddhartha Vaidyanathan

London, 13 July 2002

I remember it vividly. Mum was woken from her sleep, dad was going ballistic in his rocking chair, and I was prancing between hall, kitchen and mid-air. All of a sudden, one glance at the television and there was Sourav Ganguly baring his torso, swinging his India shirt, hurling invective, making quite a spectacle of himself.

The camera moved to Freddie Flintoff, a destroyed bowler, squatting on the pitch after conceding the winning run. The same Flintoff who'd charged topless around the Wankhede Stadium a few months earlier. Ganguly, standing on the Lord's balcony, was delivering the mother of all tit-for-tats, and it took some time before we could grasp the enormity of the defiance. Headquarters of cricket, the MCC's sanctum sanctorum, egg-and-bacon ties... and here was a scene out of Kolkata's Salt Lake Stadium after a local derby.

An extraordinary match got its perfect climax - hero extracting revenge and indulging in a war dance. The Wankhede and Lord's would be treated equally. We needed no further vindication that this Indian team was playing an inspired brand of cricket, not only with bat and ball but also with the head, and that it would wear its heart on its sleeve.

Dad, who grew up on tales of Ken Barrington, was a little shocked when he witnessed the scenes, and we ended up having a silly argument over the "spirit of the game". I simply loved it, mostly because it was the one moment where the essence of Ganguly was plain to see, the one moment we related perfectly to. Dada taught us several things on the cricket field; that day, he taught us how to celebrate.

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No. 38 **Waugh gets a last-ball hundred**

Against the old enemy, the old buzzard times it to a nicety

Sambit Bal

Sydney, 3 January 2003

As a cricketer who forsook extravagance for grit and bloody-mindedness early in his playing career, Steve Waugh's name is not normally associated with magic. Two Waugh moments that spring to mind immediately are not strictly batting-related: of him standing eyeball-to-eyeball with Curtly Ambrose in Jamaica in 1995, and sprawled on the ground at The Oval in 2001, where he scored a hundred on one leg virtually. But off the last ball of the second day's play in the final Ashes Test in Sydney in 2003, he produced a stroke that completed, in his own words, "the Cinderella story".

The Ashes had already been won, but Waugh's place in the side was being questioned. The selectors had gone public saying they could offer him no guarantee, and he had done little in the series till then apart from making two fifties. But at 56 for 3 chasing 362, he walked in to a situation tailor-made for Steve Waugh, and batting serenely he reached 47 at the final drinks break of the day.

The last hour brought a flurry of boundaries, and soon a Waugh century became an outside possibility. The final over of the day, he found himself facing the gentle offspin of Richard Dawson, with five to get. The first three balls were patted back, and when Waugh turned to run a third off the fourth ball, it seemed he had given up the chase. But as he would say later, he was hoping to run four. Adam Gilchrist found the single, though.

Nasser Hussain then spent minutes setting the field and chatting with the bowler. It was a flat, quick ball outside the off stump; Waugh swung through the line with the quick arm movement that had been a feature of his strokeplay, and the ball sped to the cover boundary. It left no one who was watching - including his opponents - unmoved. Australia went on to lose the Test, but it was an innings that let Waugh decide the terms of his own retirement.

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No. 39 **Tendulkar smacks Shoaib around**

First came a six, then a four, then divine magic

Rahul Bhattacharya

Centurion, 1 March 2003

Sachin Tendulkar has never batted better than in the World Cup of 2003, and during it never better than for three famous deliveries against Shoaib Akhtar in Centurion.

This was a match Tendulkar said he was compelled to live a year in advance. Everywhere he went, people reminded him about the 1st of March, the fixture against Pakistan. Consequently he did not sleep properly for 12 nights leading up.

Facing a handsome target, Tendulkar shed his pent-up anxiety with three strokes in Shoaib's opening over to jumpstart a classic innings. The first of them - reaching out (were he not so pumped up, he would have surely let it pass for a wide), at once cutting and tipping, very high over the square third-man boundary - would become an icon, for cricketing merit; its sheer thrill, and nationalist symbolism, a sort of belated rebuff to the Miandad six.

The second stroke was his lovely trademark - back in the crease and with swirling wrists diverting a reasonable delivery to square leg. But the third shot - the third shot.

A little trot across to off stump, block, down the ground to the on, four. No back-lift, no follow-through: none needed. I have never seen such a concisely expressed cricket stroke. He simply met the ball and the entire execution began there and finished there. And by now the crowd, the most vividly alive of the tournament, had gone quite wild. Visually it was like a cinematic special effect: everything moved in a blur - flags, roars, horns, waves, the ball, Shoaib - and amid it Sachin and his pure stroke appeared magically frozen.

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No. 40 **Gilchrist walks**

An Australian giving his wicket away? At the World Cup? Truth is often stranger than fiction

John Stern

Port Elizabeth, 18 March 2003

Australians only walk when their car has run out of petrol. But in the 2003 World Cup, Adam Gilchrist disproved that theory with an act of sportsmanship that generated almost universal approval along cricket supporters, and general bemusement, not to say disquiet, in the Australian dressing room.

It was the semi-final, and Gilchrist attempted to sweep the offspin of Aravinda de Silva, got a thin edge onto his pad and was caught behind. Rudi Koertzen, the umpire, did not respond to Sri Lanka's appeals but Gilchrist did. He paused, waited for the umpire's decision - or non-decision - then turned and headed for the pavilion.

It was an astonishing moment, partly because it was an Australian, partly because it was such an important game, and partly because the nature of that type of dismissal is rarely clear-cut.

Gilchrist's decision had no bearing on the result - Australia won comfortably - but it seemed to be a symbol of a more enlightened, free-spirited approach in the post-Waugh era. Of course, under duress these good intentions can go out of the window; there weren't many Australians walking in the 2005 Ashes.

There were some dissenting voices about Gilchrist's action. Some, like Angus Fraser, objected to him being canonised simply for not cheating. Others thought that he walked almost by accident; that having played his shot he overbalanced in the direction of the pavilion and simply carried on going. Both are harsh judgments. It was a remarkable occurrence, and one that should be held as an example to all cricketers.

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No. 41 **Dravid conquers Adelaide**

With a perfect square-cut, an epic is sealed

Dileep Premachandran

Adelaide, 16 December 2003

When Rahul Dravid walked out to bat less than half an hour into the final morning at the Adelaide Oval, he knew that India were on the threshold of something special. Ajit Agarkar's unexpected six-wicket haul the previous afternoon had set up a target of 230 runs, and by the time Dravid emerged to rapturous applause from the Indian support, Aakash Chopra and Virender Sehwag had already whittled off 48.

Dravid had scripted an epic 233 in the first innings, adding 303 with VVS Laxman, but he needed a kiss from Dame Fortune to get going on the final day. Brad Williams had injured his left shoulder, but he toiled heroically, and when Dravid had made just 9, a perfectly pitched delivery on off stump flew off the edge. Adam Gilchrist grassed the chance, and though Williams continued to trouble him with reverse-swing, Dravid wasn't to be denied. He added 70 with Sachin Tendulkar, and as nails were being bitten to the quick, Laxman came out and caressed a lovely 32-run cameo. Simon Katich's left-arm spin induced a couple more flutters, but fittingly the last act was to feature the two men who had done so much to ease the path to victory.

As Agarkar watched from the non-striker's end, Dravid cut a Stuart MacGill delivery through point. There was a yell of delight and a clenched fist, and Steve Waugh made it a point to pick the ball out of the gutter and hand it over to a man who embodied the warrior spirit that he himself personified.

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No. 42 **Ntini takes 10 at Lord's**

At the home of cricket, a young South African makes a statement

Neil Manthorp

London, 3 August 2003

Every touring team that visits Lord's is moved and inspired by the honours board in the pavilion, but the South Africans of 2003 were a little different. It is probably fair to say they were fixated by it. The desire to put their names on it was no dreamy ambition; it was a driving, relentless obsession.

By the time the Test match finished in South Africa's favour on the fourth day, three of them had done it. The captain, Graeme Smith, scored 259. The senior pro, Gary Kirsten, shed a tear or two after his 108 on what he believed would be his last tour before retirement.

But Makhaya Ntini beat both of them to it by taking 5 for 75 on the first day as England were bundled out for a paltry 173. He repeated the dose in the second innings with 5 for 145 to become the first South African to take 10 wickets at the home of cricket.

In a moment of the purest, most poignant theatre, he lowered himself to his knees and kissed the pitch. "There was a lot of emotion," he said afterwards. "Relief, enjoyment and a lot of pride. All I could think about was the fact that the name 'Ntini' would forever sit in the place they call the home of cricket. I thought of my children seeing their name on the wall one day, and then I thought of all the young black boys who would know that anything is possible. But I was just glad to put a South African name up there because I wanted every South African to share my pride."

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No. 43 **West Indies win the Champions Trophy**

In the creeping dark, a miracle spreads radiance

Vaneisa Baksh

London, 25 September 2004

Victories had become so rare that even when the West Indies team made it to the final of the Champions Trophy in 2004, coming up against England at The Oval on a gloomy September day, hope, springing eternal, did not really blossom.

England planted the seeds, surrendering for 217 in 49.4, but then threw cold water rather than fertiliser on West Indies. Wickets were falling so fast that by the time Brian Lara went, it was 72 for 4 in the 17th over. I couldn't sit still as they continued falling, so that by the time Shivnarine Chanderpaul went with the score on 147 for 8, I had sat on every chair in my living room, and felt the calm of resignation.

From the floor I watched Courtney Browne and Ian Bradshaw settling in doggedly, reminding me that they had both been Barbados captains, and were disciplined, patient batsmen. As they got to the 50-partnership, hope began sprouting audaciously; but in that awful gloom, with what little light there was fading so fast, one mistake would be all England needed.

Like a plant groping towards the light, they inched past 200, and I swear I had stopped breathing. Bradshaw's four to take them within five left me whooping and the four that ended the match made me hoarse. A West Indies harvest had finally come. At the bleak Oval, it felt like a determined tendril had burst into the light, and suddenly it was spring.

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No. 44 **Bangladesh beat Australia**

With a shot for six over midwicket, the most improbable scoreline in cricket comes to pass

Andrew Miller

Cardiff, 18 June 2005

"It's only Bangladesh," thought Andrew Symonds, as he embarked on an ill-advised bender through the streets of Cardiff that ended at 8am on the morning of Australia's first match of the 2005 NatWest Series. Symonds was instantly dropped, but his indiscretion was the first sign of the tremors to come.

Seeking a big statement to launch their Ashes summer, Adam Gilchrist and Ricky Ponting instead managed just one run between them, and thereafter the innings stuttered. Damien Martyn and Michael Clarke steadied the ship, and Michael Hussey and Simon Katich added late momentum, but a target of 250 was by no means out of reach.

Certainly not with Mohammad Ashraful on hand to play the innings of his life. Short of stature but big in ticker, he lambasted an Australian attack that was already showing the first signs of the rust that England would capitalise on later in the summer. His brilliantly paced 100, from 101 balls, kept Bangladesh on course throughout, as word spread across the globe that something truly remarkable was afoot.

The coup de grace, however, was delivered by Aftab Ahmed. With seven needed for victory, it had all come down to the final over, delivered by Jason Gillespie. One blow put the contest beyond doubt - a mighty smear sailed clean over midwicket for six, to cue the most crazy scenes of jubilation ever witnessed at Sophia Gardens. Bangladesh had earned the respect of the cricketing world, and Australia's aura of invincibility was shattered.

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No. 45 **Flintoff consoles Lee**

In the heat of battle, Fred shows he cares

Peter Roebuck

Birmingham, 7 August 2005

No series had been more eagerly awaited than the 2005 Ashes. After years of painful defeat, England had raised a strong side and a close contest was anticipated. And so it proved, with the ancient foes fighting for the spoils like a pair of enraged bulls. Roared on by passionate crowds, urged on by an entire nation, the hosts relentlessly attacked an opponent desperately trying to find breathing space.

After 22 days of fierce struggle, amid scenes of wild rejoicing, and by the narrowest of margins, England recaptured the urn. Thereafter the players were feted and almost knighted. Meanwhile the Australians went home to lick their wounds.

Yet the abiding memory of the series was not of violences or close finishes or even nationalistic fervour. Sport provides man with an opportunity to rise above himself. Throughout, Andrew Flintoff was a towering figure, a great warrior in his element. In Birmingham, though, he showed the gentlest of touches. In the most frantic of finishes, Australia's tailenders had taken their team to within two runs of a stunning victory only to fall agonisingly short.

As all England celebrated, so Flintoff went across to console the valiant but vanquished. He put an arm around Brett Lee and the two pugilists embraced in the aftermath of battle.

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No. 46 **Malinga takes four**

World Cup 2007: the wild-haired slinger nearly does a coasting South Africa in

Telford Vice

Providence (Guyana), 28 March 2007

Providence Stadium wasn't a patch on the dear old Bourda, we decided as we stewed in the former's glassed in press box. On South Africa's 2005 tour, for instance, a stark white face glowed out of the deep darkness of the verandah opposite the Bourda's airy, open press box. A gander through the binocs confirmed the stupendous: Mick bloody Jagger himself!

And here we are two years later, suffering the stupidity of this half-built, half-baked sterile new stadium. Can't get no satisfaction, indeed.

Now if South Africa could only get the last four runs, we could find some unboiled air. Come on, Lasith Malinga, bowl the last two balls of the 45th over already.

A slower delivery, straight and true, sends Shaun Pollock's leg stump jumping jack flash into the air. Next ball, Andrew Hall digs out a yorker - straight into the hands of the man in the covers. The 46th over yields a single, and puts Jacques Kallis on strike to face Malinga's hat-trick ball.

Surely Kallis, rocksteady as Table Mountain itself, on 86, will end it. Here comes Malinga... and there goes Kallis, square-driving an edge to the wicketkeeper. Malinga rockets into the sky with a yawp, mad pom-pom of hair all abounce as he does so.

Makhaya Ntini doesn't really know what's going on until he's doing the Harlem shuffle all the way back to the hut, yorked by Malinga's next delivery.

Four in four. Nine down. Still three to get. Chaminda Vaas bowls a maiden. Some of us succumb to a 19th nervous breakdown.

Malinga's in to Robin Peterson, who looks like he's been woken by a bright light. He swings. He misses. Dot ball.

Here comes Malinga again. Peterson throws his bat at a ball pitched outside off stump as if he is trying very hard not to hit a hand grenade. But he does - only just, and the edge scoots to the third man ropes for four. Emotional rescue.

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No. 47 **Rajasthan Royals win the first IPL**

With a wave of the wand, Warne takes his boys home

Dileep Premachandran

Mumbai, June 1, 2008

After six weeks of criss-crossing India, it had come down to this. The Rajasthan Royals, the most consistent team of the tournament, needed 12 runs from seven balls to clinch the inaugural Indian Premier League.

Makhaya Ntini had bowled a beautiful spell for the Chennai Super Kings, and as Shane Warne took guard, he faced the prospect that his carefully nurtured side of experienced campaigners and no-name youngsters might fall just short when it mattered most.

Before the tournament began, with Warne pushing 39 and few other stars in the ranks, the Royals had been many people's picks to bring up the basement. But after being thrashed out of sight by the Delhi Daredevils in their opening game, they had rallied superbly, stitching together two sequences of five wins on their way to topping the table.

Even a tragic bomb blast in Jaipur hadn't stemmed the momentum, with the team returning four days later to thump the Royal Challengers. There had been team-bonding trips to Goa, devastating new-ball spells from a little-known Pakistani, Sohail Tanvir, and supreme all-round displays from a man once more known for his injury woes and fear of ghosts, Shane Watson. But most of all there had been Warne's leadership, whether with the bat in Hyderabad or on umpteen occasions with the ball. By giving his wards nicknames like Pocket Rocket and Superstar, he inspired them to perform at a level that few thought them capable of.

As Ntini ran in, all of that was on the line. Warne saw it, sized it up, and a wristy twirl of those incredibly strong wrists sent the ball fizzing past cover for four. There were still eight needed, but there was a finality about the stroke that must have sunk Chennai hearts. He and Tanvir finished it with singles and a two, but when we look back, it's that Hollywood stroke we'll remember.

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No. 48 **Mendis arrives**

The man who made every ball compelling

Sidharth Monga

Colombo, 25 July 2008

I have never watched cricket more intently. Australia in India 2000-01, and the 2005 Ashes were both engrossing drama, but neither made me want to not miss any part of them as much as India in Sri Lanka, 2008, did. Sehwag played the innings of the year in Galle, Murali was his devious self, Jayawardene silken, the umpiring decision reviews had to be watched, Ishant bowled a rousing spell, but it was Ajantha Mendis who demanded every ball be watched.

And it was challenging, to watch every ball of long spells closely, trying to read from behind (I was watching on TV) what it would be - regulation offbreak, carrom ball breaking away, the two-fingered googly, or the non-spinning carrom ball. It was rewarding, too, for this was a bowler unlike any I had seen.

In July 2008, Mendis was a complete mystery. He didn't grow in the public eye, he spoke only Sinhala, his captain didn't talk a lot about him in public and admitted to not knowing - at times - what fields to set for Mendis because he didn't know what he was going to bowl.

The function of Mendis' left hand could not be overstated; it was like the final salute. Abdul Qadir used to hold it up in the air before he started to run in, Mendis' left came down with the index finger stuck out, ruling the batsman out even before he had bowled. When he beat the batsman, he grinned in a sinister manner; he knew a secret the batsman didn't.

The run-up was a letdown, innocuous-looking even: no angular run, no contortion, no getting the body into unnatural positions. He didn't impart much violence onto the ball, he seemed to merely caress it out of the hand as if sending a trained pet out to show the world another trick.

The arrival was perfect too: in his first four overs in Test cricket, he troubled Rahul Dravid with the carrom ball; in his fifth he had him bowled. It was a rare sight. Dravid stayed on the back foot, unsure of how much the ball would turn, jabbed at the wrong line, desperately tried to get his pad in line, but it was all a blur, the off stump was out, Mendis had arrived. Dravid's face, as captured in a photograph too, showed he hadn't seen anything like it before.

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No. 49 **Pakistan win the World Twenty20**

When it all came together, thrillingly, dangerously, solidly, for a team, a country, that needed it badly

Osman Samiuddin

London, 21 June 2009

There were so many things to admire in Pakistan's run to the World Twenty20 title. Foremost there were players excelling - Shahid Afridi, Saeed Aijmal, Umar Gul, Mohammad Aamer - in a way that you would not find anywhere else.

But there was also this beautiful sense of watching something quite special being put together, of random, disparate pieces coming together at just the right moment, doing just the right thing and moving on. It's a very Pakistani kind of momentum: they might not do all three disciplines well enough all the time, but sometimes, for periods, they excel in everything.

Just watching them build it was fascinating enough. At every moment it was doomed to failure as well: Afridi saying that he played every match as if it was his last was fitting, for the whole thing was always on edge, horrific, thrilling, fragile and solid at once.

Afridi's catch to dismiss Scott Styris - in itself a supremely primal and athletic feat - was the moment where it all turned; inconsistent before, Pakistan sniffed something. Afridi, Younis Khan, Abdul Razzaq, the old heads who had been on such rides before, took hold of the beast as best they could and rode it to the end. Of course in the broader context of what was happening in Pakistan, and also to its cricket, and that it came only a few months after the Lahore attacks, gave the win a worldlier meaning. This wasn't just a sporting victory.

Now, in hindsight, it feels like we were all watching one of those human-pyramid record attempts, where men climb up slowly and carefully, always in peril. They make it, but it's a fleeting image, to be snapped quickly to capture forever one pure moment of joy and elation, before it all inevitably comes apart again. Afridi standing at the Lord's non-striker's end, having completed the leg-bye to seal it, helmet in hand, sheathed in sweat, arms aloft and legs wide: here was that one image.

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No. 50 **Flintoff rocks Australia**

The old faithful cranks it up one last time

Andrew Miller

Lord's, 20 July 2009

When Andrew Flintoff chose the eve of the second Ashes Test, at Lord's, to announce his impending retirement from Test cricket, it was feared such a statement would detract from the forthcoming battle. Not in the slightest.

With all vestiges of reticence banished from Flintoff's mind, he was free to unleash himself once again, with not a jot of concern for the creaking knee that had hastened his decision. Sure enough, his favourite foes - Australia - suffered the consequences of his renewed recklessness.

Lord's was Australia's home from home in Ashes cricket. Not since 1934 had they been defeated at the venue, but by the fifth and final day their record was under siege. A fearful first innings had left them needing a world-record 522 for victory, but true to form they had rallied to 313 for 5, and it was England who slept fitfully.

Mind you, some slept more fitfully than others. As a rule, Flintoff never struggled to get enough zeds, and when he awoke refreshed and excitable on that memorable final morning, he sensed an opportunity to carve a niche in history. With a Botham-esque confidence, he duly informed his captain, Andrew Strauss, that he would be opening the bowling, and that the Pavilion End would be his domain until such time as the match had been wrapped up.

Such selfishness had been notably absent from Flintoff's mentality throughout much of his 11-year career. Often he was as happy for others to claim the glory, and a grand total of two five-wicket hauls was scant reward for the extent of his endeavours. This time, however, no one would stand in the way of his glory, Englishman or Aussie alike.

With a surging, crunching crescendo of arms and legs, Flintoff powered to the crease for 10 overs off the reel. It was double his recommended allowance per spell, but with the adrenaline coursing through his veins, his pace scarcely diminished from first ball to last. Brad Haddin edged to slip fourth ball, to end the only stand that truly threatened an upset, before Nathan Hauritz and Peter Siddle were extracted by unplayable inswingers. And as Flintoff dropped to his knees to milk the Kodak moment, the England staff in the dressing room prepared to tape a new honour to the board.

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