

BY: Javid Lateef

As I pen this, the 1st test has just finished. A good battle between bat and ball and yes, you can throw in the sledging and gamesmanship that seems to exist between these two cricketing nations.

I am not going too much into the details of the match as I am sure most of you have already been following it, but to sum it up in a nut shell ... Oz made a good score thanks to tons by the skipper, *Ponting* and *Mike Hussey*. India was struggling and thanks to some wonderfully enterprising batting by *Harbhajan* and *Zaheer Khan*, they got back in the game. The Aussies batted for a bit in the 2nd innings, made a sporting declaration and there were a few anxious moments for the Indian team when *Sehwag* and *Gambhir* got out, but *Ganguly* and *Laxman* saw it through till the end. *Sachin* fell on 49, 17 short of being the highest run-getter in Test match cricket, a record that is held by *Brian Lara*.

The Indian middle order has been the topic of discussion for many moons now, and it will still continue as the "fab four" definitely do not look like themselves anymore. *Tendulkar*, I believe, should not have been picked for this game. He has had no match practice, has been out of cricket for months now, but the BCCI's golden child makes his own rules, I guess. *Dravid*, made a decent score, but he lacks that solidity that he has shown before. I

still prefer him to the other three, when it's a test match situation. *Laxman* seems to have lost that languid style that we have seen in the past and *Sourav* has already announced his retirement at the end of this series. Like I said in my previous article, there are some great youngsters knocking on the door and it would behoove these stalwarts of Indian cricket to start thinking about exit strategies.

I think that Indian and Pakistani cricket is different from that of the rest of the world! There are always controversies swirling around, ex-cricketers taking jabs at present players and vice versa

The Indian middle order has been the topic of discussion for many moons now, and it will still continue as the "fab four" definitely do not look like themselves anymore.

and a media that is relentlessly looking for some new drama to fixate upon. We have on the plate now *Ganguly's* retirement and a statement he made to a Bengali Daily stating that *Vengsarkar* and the previous selectors treated him like a redheaded stepchild and we have *Asif*, who is contesting the findings of an independent drug testing facility in Switzerland. He is looking at a certain ban for life from the way things stand right now (well almost, but it is the Pakistan board and strange things happen there just as they do in India!) *Mohammed Yousuf*, after regaining favor with the Pakistani board, finds himself

on a 20/20 squad and immediately issues a statement saying that he is good enough for this format (Sorry, you just aren't ... that is the truth). This is where it gets interesting. The tourney is in Canada and while everyone else in the squad gets the visa to Canada, *Mr. Yousuf's* passport was held back for further 'investigation'. The squad leaves for Canada and *Yousuf* is still in Pakistan! What is very strange is that apparently the board did not push the consulate at all. They appeased him by picking him but I think they were glad he didn't get the visa.

I was recently reading about the cars that our present Cricket stars own and I am amazed, truly amazed. *Sachin* has a Ferrari, *Yuvraj* has a Porsche (which was gifted to him by *Lalit Modi* for hitting those six 6s in the 20/20 World Cup), and the list goes on. They are truly living life large with endorsements reaching into the crores, but what is nice to hear is that the Indian ODI captain, *Dhoni*, who probably is the advertising media's favorite right now, has decided to go back to school to get a college degree. Eventually, the game will come to an end for all of these individuals and it is nice to see a young man thinking that far ahead.

On a final note, thanks to all you readers for putting up with my musings for the last 3 years, and hearty congrats to the editors ... here's wishing them continued success.

