

How a Day Taught Us More Than a Lifetime of Lessons

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Abstract- 19th November 2023 is an important and unforgettable date in the history of Indian and World Cricket. The Indian Men's Cricket Team lost to Australia by 6 wickets in the final of the Cricket ODI World Cup in Ahmedabad on this date, hence missing a chance to lift the trophy for a 3rd time. Till date, there are talks around the reasons, consequences and the depth of the pain of the loss, but it is equally important to be taking away a few heartfelt lessons from the match, the loss and this date altogether. These are a few things that even a non-Cricket fan would understand, since learnings and universal and for all.

Index Terms- Cricket, Indian Cricket Team, IND v AUS, World Cup

As a School Student and an avid Cricket fan, I think there is no competition between Studies and Cricket, in the context of which has taught me more. *Cricket definitely wins* :). Talking further about the impact of Cricket on my life, there is ONE DATE that I will remember till my last breath, and that is, the 19th OF NOVEMBER. I share the pain that this date carries with it, with a million other Indian Cricket lovers. Yet it doesn't seem to be any lesser than it actually is. As I pen down my thoughts on the evening of 19th, I am reminded of the destruction Australia was inflicting on Indian Players at the overly crowded Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad EXACTLY a year ago (I. T. S. Desk, 2023).

Well, why the pain, though? The Indian team had a dream run from the 8th of October (Game 1) to the 15th of November (Semifinal) in the ICC Men's ODI Cricket World Cup, INDIA 2023, winning all the 9 league stage games and then the Semi Final, quite smoothly. It was such a phase of my life that I could pay any amount of money or give up any present valuable possession to go back to live it all over again. Maybe, there are others like me. Maybe, a few just find me immature, when I say this. But such are actually my feelings when I look back.

Players and fans woke up on the bright Sunday morning of the 19th with a sense of comfort and assurance. I clearly remember the eve of the final,

scrolling through social media and articles, reading & seeing memes discussing the celebrations that the nation awaits just a few hours later. Because....who knew? The public walked into the stands of the biggest cricket stadium in the world in Ahmedabad as if going to watch a formality. There was not a single expert questioning the abilities of this Indian Team not being able to lift that trophy. There were not even jokes between common people and fans as to what would happen if India lost. Again...because...who had expected it? Throughout the league stage and Semi-Final, all the 14 players that wore that jersey did so much justice to it and performed with such determination that even the thought of not making it till the end- seemed trivial. There was a common dream on the morning of the 19th: Lifting that prestigious trophy after 12 long years of hard work, heartbreak and game-spirit.

Noon arrived. Streaming begins.... social media wakes up.... the buildup heats up further. There are memes, analysis, banter, trolling- everything happening until it is time for the Toss and finally the 2 captains, Rohit Sharma and Pat Cummins, walk into the middle. India loses the toss and is sent in to bat (Sportstar, 2023), but still there is no reduction in the kind of assurance the fans have went in with.

But as it is said, *sometimes what you fear the most, comes to you eventually*. Despite a good start in both the innings, it was somehow Australia's determination, teamwork and perseverance on that day that provided them the edge and made them silence the whole country in a matter of few hours. Chasing a small target of 241 with an explosive batting line-up, Australia, after a certain point in the game, seemed to have no plans to even slow down the chase or give Indian even 1% of hope. (Staff, 2024) Each boundary, six and even single that Australia hit, broke a small section of each Indian's heart. After a point, it was done & dusted. All of us knew.

As Australian No.6 batter Glenn Maxwell hit the final winning runs at around 8:30 P.M. (*India Vs Australia*,

Final, Nov 19, ICC Cricket World Cup 2023, n.d.-b) there was ABSOLUTE SILENCE. Tears rolled down the eyes of legends like Rohit, Kohli and KL Rahul, while fans present at the stadium walked out in despair. Hearts were broken, experts & fanatics silenced, and the country came to a standstill. While it was easy for the Aussies to leave the country and celebrate their momentous victory over the best cricketing nation, the grief that they left is VERY DIFFICULT for any Indian to be parting ways from. *And 19th November - 2024 and for each year to come- is an apt reminder for that.*

But what do we learn from this? Do we just let the match be, the date just come by each year and let it deject us? As someone who's always believed in the continuous process of learning and one who always tries to look at the positive side of any situation, I try to extract a handful of lessons from the match & date and hope to spread the same to fellow fans and readers.

First, HAPPINESS IS TRANSIENT. Personally, and I also speak for each & every cricket fan out there, that the distress caused by one single day easily overpowers the joy that we all experienced over October & early November. As I have stated earlier that I would do anything that it takes to go back to that singular phase of my life, but likewise, I will do anything also to never let someone take me back to that day or evening when the match happened. The darkness that the day carries with it is etched in my heart and till when, I am not sure. Maybe, it was just my thoughts and emotions of the days & weeks leading up to the 19th that somehow made this date a nightmare for me? Maybe, I just wasn't ready to be facing and accepting such an event? It is, therefore, important to remind ourselves that there are always ups and downs in life and one must learn to accept & embrace them.

Second, THERE IS NEVER A GUARANTEE for anything. It is important to reiterate the fact that no one and literally, no one had predicted this Indian playing XI to lose the final match and not be able to end the World Cup on a winning note. The same fans, experts and watchers were left dumbfounded by the late evening of the 19th. As a result, Always and always expect the unexpected in life. Never take too much comfort or liberty in any of your actions, decisions or paths. God always has other plans ready for you.

Third, YOU ALWAYS START FROM ZERO on a new day, against a new competition. The high-quality Cricket that India played for the previous 10 outings,

had no value when Australian Batters were toying with our bowlers and fielders. The Final was a new setting altogether, where both teams, regardless of history, rankings and stature, played from ZERO. Once you come to analyze the result of the match, you do realize certain things that happened from where Australia did take the game away from us. Be it high-quality fielding, putting pressure on the new batter or sensible chasing- Australia ticked all those boxes when it came to winning a high-pressure Final at the most crucial stage (Cricket.com, 2023) Not that India did not give its best, but it was just the fact, that the winner is one who plays better ON THAT PARTICULAR DAY. Hence, treat each day as NEW DAY, A NEW CHALLENGE and A NEW OPPORTUNITY.

Fourth, THE POWER OF CONFIDENCE. Let us talk from the Australian point of view. Yes, they did come into the Finals with 8 consecutive wins and a solid XI, but there were major odds against them. India playing at their home ground, having earlier beat them both in the league stage and the 3-match series before that- and a lot of other factors made the Team look shaky from outside and indirectly, added to India's winning probabilities. Not to forget, Australia's biggest challenge was not something like facing Bumrah's Yorkers or getting Kohli out once he is set.... but only to not lose calm and focus when 1 Lakh Indians at the Narendra Modi stadium cheer for and shout "INDIA...INDIA" in sync and in their loudest voices. But what does their captain, Pat Cummins, a gun all-rounder too, have to say just a day prior to the game? He confidently turns up to the ultimate press conference of the World Cup 2023 and on being asked his thoughts on the upcoming final clash, answers with an evil smile- "There's nothing more SATISFYING than seeing a big crowd go silent". And HE MEANT IT. There is no doubt that the captain disseminated & radiated the same kind of confidence and motivation in the whole team and ultimately, THAT won against our prayers, because that is exactly what mattered on the FIELD! So, Even if all odds are against us, or even if the world writes us off- it is necessary to keep ourselves upright and always ready to battle all challenges on any given day!

I can go on & on, BUT TO GIVE IT A CONCLUSION I only have one thing to say- *"It is not the goodbye that hurts, but the flashback that follows"*. Although there is a lot of pain deep down that rests in the heart even today, there is also a sense of closure that was required. The closure leads to both fond memories and lessons. Do everything with all your

will & might and leave NO REGRETS. Give it your all till the very end and conquer the world! Even if there are setbacks, try to look at the optimistic side of it and always strive for success through continuous learning, improvement and corrections. Just how India came back with a T20 World Cup Trophy 8 months post 19th November, learn to always bounce back in life and never ever give up!

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