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## COMPLETE CRICKET MADNESS

### Shahid Zia's RUN of LIFE

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#### Pakistan vs India

Ashburton Oval, Kaleen

26 January 2006



Nothing, not even the extraordinary matches in the history of Canberra Cricket could prepare anyone for a finish like this. In scenes of complete cricketing madness, the match between Pakistan and India resulted in one of the greatest matches of all times. As such, one nation was joyous, another heartbroken.

No limited-overs cricket match anywhere on the globe at any time can have matched the excruciating excitement of this game at Kaleen's Ashburton Oval where brilliance and heroism were mixed in equal doses with comic tragedy.

India won the toss and elected to bat on a dry sunny day in Canberra. It was the perfect opportunity for India to score a big total and put Pakistan under pressure. Indian captain, Chakra was optimistic before the game, as India had been losing to Pakistan since February 2005. The first game these two teams played each other was a thriller where India won the game with two wickets. That game last year set the tone for the coming seasons and since then, Pakistan had been victorious on all occasions, a winning streak of over 10 matches in total.

Indian batsman batted extremely well on a good wicket, which gave no assistance to the fast bowlers. Afzaal Anjum was at his best with the new ball with his great bowling, making the ball move both sides of the wicket. He bowled deliveries making Giyani jump around the wicket. Pakistan's efforts were not helped with the only no-ball of the innings bowled by Afzaal Anjum when he had Giyani caught at first slip by Khurram Butt. Fortunately Giyani couldn't carry on with his luck and was soon caught at the deep, again off the bowling of Afzaal Anjum. Gill was making his debut with the Indian team and was effective with his power hitting shots. He scored some quick runs and helped India reach a total of 177 runs in the allotted 30 overs. He was absolutely at his best on Haider hitting him for 22 runs in one over. A few more debutants also contributed as most of the regular Indian players were injured. Pakistan bowlers bowled well to restrict Indians to a score below the 200 mark. Indian captain was satisfied with the total score with the new look bowling attack led by Giyani. Requiring 178 to win in 30 overs was an easy task keeping in mind the strong batting lineup and an inexperienced bowling attack of the Indian team. With the inclusion of Sohail Akbar in the Pakistan batting lineup, Pakistan were dangerously poised for an easy victory on the Australia Day 2006.

On a beautiful Australian summer afternoon, the ground full of emotions, Khurram Butt and Atif Rafiq opened with confidence, which suggested 178 was a formality. Khurram Butt was in commanding form, and 38 runs were added in just 6 overs when Madhu got the wicket of Atif Rafiq. Then came in Syed Jaffry, the most consistent batsman in recent times, and Indian captain knew if they can get another wicket at this stage, they would really have a chance. The Indian captain brought himself to the attack and suddenly fired a bouncer at Syed Jaffry, Jaffry tried to pull, which clipped the helmet, and on the keeper for a comfortable catch appeal. Syed Jaffry ran for a single only to see the umpire's finger rising, the disappointment for being given out in a controversial manner was seen on Syed Jaffry's face. Chakra screamed at his team-mates, 'Come on!' charging their adrenalin while knowing he had to keep a hold on his own emotions. Chakra knew he had got the most crucial wicket and now India started to fancy their chances for a victory. The scoreboard read 43 runs for 2 wickets in 9 overs.

Sohail Akbar joined Khurram Butt and soon started to find the boundary with ease. His innings of 33 runs calmed things down for a moment and shifted the momentum back towards Pakistan. Sohail and Khurram added another 69 runs in 9 overs, before Sohail Akbar was caught at mid wicket boundary trying to slog another mighty six, the scoreboard at this stage was 112 runs for 3 wickets in 18 overs.

Needing another 66 runs for victory in 12 overs was an easy task with 7 wickets still remaining. But the 19<sup>th</sup> over of the innings produced an extra ordinary spell by Mahesh, claiming 3 important wickets of Khurram Butt, Irfan Yousaf and Nadir Khan. By this time the cricketing madness had begun, 3 wickets in one over that changed the complexion of the game. Now the pressure was back on Pakistan, the scoreboard reading 114 runs for 6 wickets in 19 overs, the Indians were enjoying.

Shahzad and Afzaal Anjum were in the middle facing the fury of Giyani and Mahesh. Shazad was troubled by the pressure. He struggled to give Afzaal the strike and dot balls were increasing the pressure. Both batsmen batted well to reach the score of 167 runs in 28 overs. The equation was getting difficult, as 11 runs were required in 12 balls. Shahzad lost his temper and tried to slog a perfect ball from Vijay and was caught. 11 runs in 11 balls with Waqas coming into bat in a difficult situation. Afzaal hit a six to ease things only to be under pressure again when Waqas attempted to run too quickly and was run out. The equation was 4 runs off 6 balls. Gill was handed the ball to bowl the last over and Shahid had to face the music. Shahid was beaten with pace on the first ball but took a single to give Afzaal the strike. The equation was getting tense with 4 required off 4 balls. Things would have been under control when Afzaal mistimed a pull shot and was dropped at the boundary, and was quick enough to come back for the second run. Now 2 runs required of 3 balls. Another pull shot straight to midwicket where Giyani dropped the catch of life, reminded the famous phrase 'you just dropped the world cup'. The field was in, the match was tied, with 1 run required in 2 balls. Gill bowled a fuller delivery, which Shahid managed to hit to mid-off, Afzaal and Shahid had a plan to run what ever the case will be. Shahid was stranded in the middle of the wicket when the throw came from the mid-off fielder, but Gill who picked the return throw nicely at the non-strikers end, couldn't manage to hit the stumps and Shahid was safely in, creating scenes of absolute madness, jumping with joy and tranquillity. Shahid and Afzaal ran towards the Pakistan dressing room to join his ecstatic team mates. Pakistan had won the game with one ball left.

There is astonishment, bewilderment, heart-break and uncontrolled joy, but thankfully no controversy. Pakistan danced off Ashburton oval together in celebration. Chakra and his team are shattered in disbelief. Indian dressing room tells the whole story of the greatest disappointment of the season.



#### Pakistan Scorecard

Khurram Butt	Caught bowled Mahesh	.....49
Atif Rafiq	Caught bowled Madhu	.....09
Syed Jaffry	Caught bowled Chakra	.....00
Sohail Akbar	Caught bowled Mahesh	.....33
Irfan Yousaf *	Caught bowled Mahesh	.....02
Nadir Khan	Caught bowled Mahesh	.....00
Shahzad	Caught bowled Vijay	.....16
<b>Afzaal Anjum</b>	<b>NOT OUT</b>	.....27
Waqas	Run Out	.....00
<b>Shahid Zia</b>	<b>NOT OUT</b>	.....01
Haider	DNB	
Extras		.....41
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>178</b>