



Wozniacki defends ranking despite lack of slam success

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The untold story

By S.R. Pathiravithana

This is the narration of how it all began. It is also the story of a man whose mission, vision and management skill reshaped Sri Lanka Cricket and it was never the same again. Former President of the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka, Ana Punchihewa, never played any form of competitive cricket yet he loved the game as much as the sport that he once so keenly took part in – Golf. We all know that Sri Lanka won the Cricket World Cup in 1996 under the presidency of Punchihewa, but this is the story of what really transpired behind the scenes to enable the marauding Lankan cricketers to conquer the world. Punchihewa began, "I took over as President in 1994. Then I made that controversial statement – 'The best cricketing nation by the year 2000'. There was a reason behind that statement. I knew that our cricketers were as good as any other cricketers in any Test playing nation, but what they only lacked was the self confidence and I wanted to change that. I wanted them to believe in themselves."

He then explained that he took over when Sri Lankan cricket was not doing well. In three series they had once gone down to India in a 3-0 in a controversial series where they lost all their matches by an innings. Then they lost to Pakistan at home 2-0 and then failed to beat new entrants Zimbabwe 0-0 in a three match series. It was against this backdrop that Sri Lanka toured New Zealand under his presidency in early March of 1994. "Within a month since I took over I managed to change their thinking pattern. At the very first committee meeting I told my team 'let's plan like we will be here only for one year and do what is right for cricket, if not we will never be elected again.'" (With a rye smile he added that he was there only for one term). Coming back to his point he said that there was only a little time left for his team to get the boys mentally prepared for the tour of New Zealand and the theme was passion and before the tour the team was hosted in a Colombo hotel with their families and given a mental boost with the slogan 'We are the champions'. Punchihewa came out with some behind the scene anecdotes about what transpired during the New Zealand tour. "The first Test was played in a small town – Napier. At that time the Cricket Board did not have money. I remember telling the boys that if they won the match each member of the team will get a pair of sunglasses out of my own funds and later I had to keep to my word at the end of the game – with a small price restriction added to it." Then he added, "On my return from Hawaii, where I attended a Coca Cola workshop, I was entering New Zealand. At emigration in New Zealand I was treated just like any other Asian but when I was leaving there was a different attitude. Everyone began to recognise us after we had beaten New Zealand at home, winning an overseas assignment for the first time. However the Hawaii workshop also helped me in my endeavour. The workshop was on the 'inner game of management' and later I used it very effectively." He also added that during that time Sri Lanka was only known in New Zealand for its internal strife, but after the win the attitude changed and that meant a lot for the Sri Lankans who were living in that country too.

Enter Whatmore

When Punchihewa took over, the BCCSL kitty had nearly Rs. 300,000 and that was not sufficient to meet their day to day needs. Upon his return Punchihewa was convinced that Sri Lanka needed the services of a foreign coach. He added, "I was not of the opinion that the Lankan coaches were lesser in their cricketing skills, but at that time they were not up to date on the latest coaching methods and techniques. So we were searching and we got applications even from the Borders and the Bothams but we

could not afford them. Then the Australians had sent Davnell Whatmore's CV along with some others. However when I saw his CV I knew that Sri Lanka had the man Sri Lanka needed. I knew I had the best of both worlds considering the fact that he belonged to the same clan as the famous Lankan Wendy Whatmore. He as an Australian had all the latest methods of coaching and at heart he was a Sri Lankan." Meanwhile, spurred by the New Zealand success Sri Lanka for the first time got into the final of an ODI tournament in Sharjah and beat Pakistan in Pakistan. This was done while Sri Lanka was at the bottom of the table in the ICC rankings.

Sri Lanka was the second team in the World to employ an overseas cricket coach, after South Africa. Ana did mention that when he was the Vice President he had an idea of recommending Bob Woolmer to take over Sri Lanka cricket as he had read about Woolmer showing interest in that job, but South Africa beat him to it. Davnell Whatmore took over the Lankan reins as coach and at the same time Punchihewa decided that Duleep Mendis should take over as Chairman of the Selection Committee as well as the Manager of the Sri Lankan team for one year. He explained, "Having the Chairman of Selectors close to the team, he would know the requirements of the players, their plans and their feedback. At the same time in that duel capacity, Duleep would also know about the strengths and weaknesses of the players involved. Then I got Dav, Duleep and Arjuna together and said 'You tell me your requirements the Cricket Board will not interfere with your programme – you play your cricket we will give you the back up. All what we need in return are results'."

"The Pakistan tour was the first that Whatmore went on as coach. Sri Lanka lost the first match and I heard someone saying 'what more' could we expect. But when Sri Lanka won the next two matches and the series there were no more comments. Not stopping at that we also won the One-Day series 2-1." Punchihewa added, "So I thought, 'We now have a vision and we need a plan to back it'. We had a 4-5 day workshop in a Down South hotel to which the majority of the country's cricketing brains belonging to past cricketers and administrators, contributed. From the players we had Arjuna and Aravinda. The gathering also consisted of Michael Tissera, Ranjit Fernando, Sidath Wettimuny, Daham Wimalasena, K.T. Francis etc. So we had a plan – a short term and long term vision and mission, everything was in place."

Punchihewa explained what transpired during the famous 1995 Australian tour. "I think this was the tour that really cemented their mental attitude. I remember when Whatmore took over he said 'Ana I cannot teach these Arjunas and Aravindas how to bat. They know how to do it. What I can teach them is how to play the game in the mind. Ninety per cent of the game is played there.'"

Funds

"Then after about a month he came back and said that he needed a good physio. He recommended Alex Kountouris. Yet my problem was money. Paying one hundred thousand dollars a year to Whatmore was beyond our means. I went to Dr. Quintus de Silva, our Australian representative, to help us out. I asked if he could take the hat around Australia and raise some money to sustain our plan. Time went by and there was no money and we at this end were helpless. "One day Dr. Quintus returned my call and said that he had found a sponsor. When I asked who it was he said that it was the Australian Cricket Board. How they did it was according to the agreement the Australian Cricket Board was to give a 100,000 US\$ guarantee for Sri

Name: Rangana Herath
Born: March 19, 1978, Kurunegala
Age: 32 years
Major teams: Sri Lanka, Hampshire, Kurunegala Youth Cricket Club, Moors Sports Club, Sri Lanka A, Surrey, Wayamba
Playing role: Bowler
Bowling style: style: Slow left-arm orthodox

Bowling averages in ODI						
Mat	Inns	Balls	Runs	Wkts	BBI	
9	7	336	215	9	3/28	
BBM	Ave	Econ	SR	4w	5w	10
3/28	23.88	3.83	37.3	0	0	0

Bowling averages in Twenty20						
Mat	Inns	Balls	Runs	Wkts	BBI	
24	22	481	444	30	3/14	
BBM	Ave	Econ	SR	4w	5w	10
3/14	14.80	5.53	16.0	0	0	0



Lankans In 2011

Name: Lasith Malinga
Born: August 28, 1983, Galle
Age: 27 years
Major teams: Sri Lanka, Kent, Galle Cricket Club, Mumbai Indians, Nondescripts Cricket Club, Ruhuna, BCCSL Academy XI.
Playing role: Bowler
Bowling style: style: Right-arm fast

Bowling averages in ODI						
Mat	Inns	Balls	Runs	Wkts	BBI	
75	72	3636	3000	108	5/34	
BBM	Ave	Econ	SR	4w	5w	10
5/34	27.77	4.95	33.6	5	1	0

Bowling averages in T20I						
Mat	Inns	Balls	Runs	Wkts	BBI	
29	29	588	728	35	3/12	
BBM	Ave	Econ	SR	4w	5w	10
3/12	20.80	7.42	16.8	0	0	0



Lanka's tour of Australia. Now they were going to double it in a bid to help us. But this was made under an oath of secrecy. Then Kountouris was going to cost us 80,000 US\$, but Dr. Quintus managed to raise this money from the Sri Lankan Association in New South Wales. We must be thankful to them."

Road to World Cup



WORLD CUP 1996-2011

Everything was now in place for Punchihewa and his team of officials. All sections of the cricketing community were at their respective jobs.

"The Australian tour was another episode. The first Test was about the ball tampering. We wanted an apology as they did not have any proof that we did so. The same ball was used till lunch time. The correct thing would have been to replace the tampered ball if it had happened."

"Though we were reported for ball tampering to the ICC, we negotiated with Clyde Walcott and convinced him we did not do any ball tampering and we wanted an apology for saying we were cheats. Somehow we got the apology, if not we were not going to play the second Test. We got the apology on Christmas Eve."

Murali's woes

Then Punchihewa explained how Muralitharan was called for chucking in the second Test. "I was in the hospital in Australia with high fever and I did not see the match on the first day. Then Arjuna and the crowd were in front of me saying 'Sir, we have a problem. Murali has been called for chucking etc. I couldn't even think. Then I told the captain, the coach and the manager to continue with the game'. The next question for Sri Lankan was whether Murali would be able to play in the World Cup. Punchihewa explained, "Initially selectors took the risk and Arjuna backed it and Murali was

selected into the squad. I remember coming back from the opening ceremony in Calcutta, I was seated next to South African Umpire C J. Mitchely who was going to stand in our game against Kenya, which was the first game. I was going to ask him and if he said 'No Murali would not be called' then he was going to be okay for the tournament because if he was not going to be called in the first game it was very unlikely that he would be called again during the tournament. I was seated next to him and thinking about how to bring up this subject. Then I used all my courage and popped the question and he said no, he did not see any wrong in Murali's action. Then I knew that we were through where Murali was concerned."

Earning four points

Then he spoke of how he tackled the Australian and the West Indian issue initially after they had refused to play in Sri Lanka. "In Calcutta, Australia and the West Indies had said that they were not coming to Sri Lanka. At the ICC meeting the day before the opening they said that Australia and Sri Lanka would get one point each and West Indies and Sri Lanka would get one point each. Then I pointed out that it was not fair. We said that they must play and if they did not want to play Sri Lanka had to be awarded two points each for the two matches. Then they took a vote and we lost. Anura, the BCCSL Secretary and Hillary Marceline, another ex-co member, were there and we went to all the delegates who voted against us and explained matters. Then we managed to get the ICC Chairman to take the matter up in the agenda again the next morning. After a lot of canvassing I counted the numbers and yet I knew we were one vote short as one of the members refused to tow our line. When we got to the meeting I realized that particular country was not there at the meeting, maybe because it was held at 7.30 in the morning. I promptly signaled to Sir Clyde Walcott to start the meeting and then he took the vote and we had won by one vote. Then I kept fooling Arjuna saying that I was the only president that never went on to the field but got four points for the country."

"Then the World Cup proper came and the rest is cricketing history." Ana said, concluding his enthralling narration.

Lankans In 2011

Name: Ajantha Mendis
Born: March 11, 1985, Moratuwa
Age: 25 years
Major teams: Sri Lanka, Hampshire, Kolkata Knight Riders, Sri Lanka Army, Sri Lanka Board President's XI, Wayamba
Playing role: Bowler
Bowling style: Right-arm offbreak, Legbreak

Bowling averages in ODI						
Mat	Inns	Balls	Runs	Wkts	BBI	
44	42	2073	1511	78	6/13	
BBM	Ave	Econ	SR	4w	5w	10
6/13	19.37	4.37	26.5	3	3	0

Bowling averages in T20I						
Mat	Inns	Balls	Runs	Wkts	BBI	
19	19	432	409	33	4/15	
BBM	Ave	Econ	SR	4w	5w	10
4/15	12.39	5.68	13.0	2	0	0

