

W O N D E R Y E A R S

He knew when to give it his all: Kulkarni

Always Sharp

Sudheendra Tripathi | TNN

A day in the life of a normal 11-year-old will be something like this: Wake up at six, take a shower, gulp down breakfast, head to school, come back home, play for an hour or two, do homework, watch TV, have dinner and then hit the sack.

In Sachin Tendulkar's case, however, the routine was something like this: Wake up at six, scoot to Shivaji Park for practice, bat in five different nets for approximately three hours, then play a match at any one of city's sprawling maidans, hit the nets again after the match, knock for a while and finally call it a day.

Batting has always remained Tendulkar's passion, age of course was just incidental. Watching movies, play hide and seek, hang around with friends didn't have a place in the little master's life.

For him, it was the maidans and the time he spent there honing his skills, that has taken Tendulkar where he is today.

"The one thing that stands out about Sachin is his passion to bat," recalls Mayur Kadrekar, Tendulkar's first captain in school. "He used to bat in five different nets. And even after batting for three hours, he used to take throwdowns. The boys who threw balls at him used to tire, but he never got tired. Batting was his only love," Kadrekar adds.

With so much happening around them, youngsters can easily lose focus. The temptation to indulge can be a huge dampener. But batting was Tendulkar's only indulgence.

"He loved batting so much that he did not need any external drive or motivation. All he knew was to bat and he did not deviate one bit.

He was so focused about his batting that when I look back, it seems unreal. The other inborn quality that Sachin possessed was tremendous stamina. In those days, there were no scientific methods like today. But he did

not need any to enhance his fitness levels," Kadrekar recalls.

It is a well-known maxim that a person should give cent per cent in whatever he does. Mumbai coach Sulakshan Kulkarni reveals how Sachin focused on each delivery.

"What Sachin did right was that he knew exactly when to switch on and switch off. Sure, he trained hard and was extremely focused," Kulkarni says and cites an example. "If a bowler is on the top of his run up and takes about 15 strides to reach the popping crease, Sachin would give his 100 per cent attention when the bowler is about three steps away from delivering the ball. If you keep giving 100 per cent attention all the time, you tend to drain out fast. His match preparation is very scientific. He knows exactly what to do and when to do it. People keep wondering how he has managed to play for such a long time. I am convinced that Sachin has managed to keep going for such a long time because he knew when to give it his all. He used his resources judiciously."

"The fact that Sachin played so many matches helped him a great deal," recalls Mandar Phadke, former Ranji Trophy player and Tendulkar's bat chmate at Shardashram. "When we were 12 or 13, during the Diwali vacations, we played 24 matches in 24 days. It used to be very hot in October, but Achrekar sir insisted we play matches. So Sachin used to be at Shivaji Park one day, at Azad Maidan the other and at Matunga Gymkhana the following day. He has so many matches under his belt that he knows exactly what to do in a particular situation," Phadke notes.

Those close to Tendulkar stress on how sharp he is in the brain. Former opener Navjot Singh Siddhu, in fact, was quoted as saying: "His mind is like a computer. He stores data on bowlers and knows where they are going to pitch the ball."

Kadrekar who has played a lot of cricket with Tendulkar in his early days says: "Tendulkar has supreme cricketing acumen. He is a very good reader of situations. He knows exactly how to react," Kadrekar says.



15 YEARS
HUNDRED ON DEBUT
The age at which Tendulkar made his Ranji Trophy debut for Mumbai against Gujarat at Wankhede

Only difference now is that he speaks more

Not much has changed since Sachin's first video interview in 1988. He's a little more confident and speaks much more in front of the camera now, feels **Tom Alter**

In the middle of the year 1988, Sunil Gavaskar told me that the two best batsmen in Bombay were Dilip Vengsarkar and Sachin Tendulkar. I had never heard of a Sachin Tendulkar. So such praise from someone like Gavaskar had naturally stunned me. By the end of the year we were shooting a film overlook for sports. I was interviewing Vengsarkar and Sachin was practicing in the nets with the Bombay team. Vengsarkar took me over and introduced me to this 15-year-old who by that time had not only played Ranji for Bombay but had also scored his first century against Gujarat.

I clearly remember the interaction. It was his first video interview. I wouldn't say he was naive, but rather innocent and soft spoken. Though a little shy in front of the camera, the boy was very confident without being a show-off. We talked about his heroes — Sunil Gavaskar and Vivian Richards. When I asked him why they were his heroes, he said because that they play their natural game. Now, Gavaskar was very defensive while Richards was a very attacking player. If you look at Sachin's batting it



is a combination of both. The other thing he spoke about was facing fast bowling. He said he liked it as the ball came on the 'batt' not bat. The one word to describe him was charming.

I remember Vengsarkar telling me that this boy will soon play for India. He also mentioned that Sachin hit the ball too hard outside the off stump and he will be caught mostly on the off-side. Check his record and you will find what said Vengsarkar was right.

We were in the middle of the Hindu Gymkhana and the Islam Gymkhana and there was a match going. At the end of the match I saw his cricket kit was lying, so I asked him to pick it up and walk towards Marine Drive and he just said okay. The confidence with which

he did it most actors would take three or four takes for that. The next couple of times we met, we discussed the interview. He clearly remembered it.

One poignant memory about Sachin was in 2005, at his restaurant in Bombay. His partner Sanjay Narang was a student of Woodstock School, Mussoorie where I too had studied. The cricket coach for Woodstock for 33 years was Brij Lal, who had coached Sanjay too. So, when Brij came to see me, Sanjay very sweetly arranged an evening with Sachin. Brij being the typical small town cricketing hero from Allahabad couldn't contain his enthusiasm. Here is this man from Allahabad telling Sachin Tendulkar: "Woh jo tum World Cup me out ho gaye na 2003 mein Glen McGrath ki bowling par tumhe aisa shot nahi maarna chahiye tha."

So here was Brij Lal coaching Tendulkar in his own restaurant. Sachin just smiled and nodded did not say anything. I guess the only difference today is that he speaks a little more than he used to then. The style of speech has not changed at all in the last 25 years. He has gotten more confident and speaks much more in front of the camera, and seems to enjoy it. Through all these years of good and bad spells, it's amazing how he comes out a winner and a better human being who is grounded yet touching the skies. I just hope he gets the opportunity to finish his innings with a win.

(Tom Alter spoke with Maria Blikis)



THE SPECIAL MOMENTS
TOP: Sachin with brothers Ajit (left), Nitin and parents Rajni and Ramesh at Sahitya Sahawas, their Bandra East home. Centre: Coach Ramakant Achrekar works on the famous 'wrong' grip at Shivaji Park and arriving for a match in his first car — a Maruti 800

SACHIN JOY

Farewell To A Boy Wonder



MY IDOL

I want to imbibe Sachin's passion for the game



Prasad Ramasubramanian | TNN

INSPIRATION FOR ALL AGES
Baba Aparajith with Sachin Tendulkar before leaving for Australia to take part in the U-19 World Cup

Chennai: B Aparajith, one of the brightest talents in India at the moment, is among the countless cricketers to have been inspired by Sachin Tendulkar. The 19-year-old, who scored a double hundred on Duleep Trophy debut this season, has always followed the little master's game in his efforts to get better and better as a player.

"I can't single out a particular shot of Sachin that I admire. But Sachin's balance and the time he has to execute a shot are facets that I have tried to bring to my game," he said.

Aparajith is awestruck by Tendulkar's meticulous preparation before a match. "For someone who has achieved practically everything in the game, what stands out for me is the way Sachin prepares for a game.

"Even though he had announced his retirement he travelled all the way to Lahli for Ranji game to ready himself for the Tests against West Indies. That's preparation for you. You can't be playing top-notch cricket for this long if you are not determined and

disciplined as Sachin is," Aparajith said.

The Tamil Nadu all-rounder had the opportunity of interacting with the legend ahead of the Under-19 World Cup in Australia.

"Sachin spoke for about 40-45 minutes. He emphasized on the importance of giving our best on the field. The most important point of his speech was the insistence on playing as a team, and in making full use of the opportunity. Sachin's talk fired us up, and inspired the team to give our best shot," Aparajith said.

Aparajith hopes that he can also be as passionate about the game as Tendulkar is.

"What sets Sachin apart is the passion and respect he shows for the game. This is something every cricketer should learn...At the end of the day, it's all about the hunger," Aparajith said.

NUMBERS GAME

326*

The number of runs Sachin Tendulkar scored during his then World Record partnership of 664 with Vinod Kambli, while batting for Shardashram Vidyamandir against St Xavier's in a Harris Shield match in 1988.

DID YOU KNOW?

WHEN SACHIN WON Rs 101 AS M-O-M

Sachin Tendulkar, while captaining a team in the Sports Star trophy, ended up winning man of the match, not for his batting but bowling and that too in the final in 1987. Girish Patki, who was managing the team, recalls: "Our's wasn't exactly a strong team and Sachin was given the task of leading the side. He had struck three centuries leading into the final and we were up against a strong team that had the likes of Vinod Kambli, Jatin Paranjape and Kaushik Godbole. Looking at the strong batting line-up he came to me and said, 'Can I bowl?' I said, 'Yes you can'. Then he asked, 'What will the selectors say?' I assured him there wouldn't be a problem. He picked five wickets which eventually won us the game. He won Rs 101 as man-of-the match prize."

THEY SAID IT

"I saw him (Sachin) playing on television and was struck by his technique, so I asked my wife to come look at him. Now I never saw myself play, but I feel that this player is playing much the same as I used to play, and she looked at him on television and said yes, there is a similarity between the two."

—Sir Donald Bradman, THE AUSTRALIAN LEGEND WHO WAS MIGHTY IMPRESSED BY THE 'LITTLE BONZER' WHO REMINDED HIM OF HIMSELF

MY FAVOURITE STORY

Amazing to find my name next to his



Anil Kumble

We were playing an Under-17 zonal tournament together and both of us scored a century to see our side through. The next day, there was a headline in the newspaper that said 'Tendulkar, Kumble hit centuries to see their side

through'. Sachin was 14-and-a-half years old then but still it was amazing to find my name next to his in a headline that concerned batting and scoring runs. I should have that cutting somewhere with me. Back then, we all knew that this young boy was special but it was only with time that we realised how special he

was. Patience has been his most exceptional quality. It has allowed him to learn, to sustain and to give back to the game whatever it has given him. A very special cricketer and a champion at that.

Anil Kumble played in 122 Test matches and 245 ODIs with Tendulkar. He spoke to K Shrinivas Rao