

## Extracts from the diary of Simon Taufel



### Pakistan v Sri Lanka 2<sup>nd</sup> Test Lahore News

We had some trouble getting out of Karachi after the last match. We boarded the plane on time but sat there for almost an hour. I was asleep and quite comfortable when an announcement came over to say that there was a problem with the plane and we had to get off. It turned out that there was a fault with the landing gear and they put us on another plane a couple of hours later. I was happy they identified this type of problem before takeoff!

The couple of days leading up to the Test in Lahore were pretty quiet but our activities were limited given that many streets in the city were closed due to political demonstrations and protests. The joke over this time has been my struggle here at the hotel and a couple of restaurants to get a simple iced coffee. They've arrived as iced chocolate, iced coffee made with water, iced coffee made with hot milk etc! I've ended up making my own now and just asking for the ingredients.

### Day one – 1/3/09

The large security convoy left the hotel at 8.15am sharp, lots of police, guns at the ready and sirens going. We must not have been too popular making so much noise early on a Sunday morning with no one on the streets. Our van nearly took out a police motor cycle through a roundabout but he survived and so did his pillion police passenger on the back with machine gun at the ready – but maybe a change of underwear was required?

The weather was great today. Early 20°C and sunny. Pakistan won the toss (after some confusion it must be said from the calling captain and the commentator in charge. Just as well a referee was present!) and elected to bowl first. Sri Lanka lost two wickets in the 1<sup>st</sup> hour but also scored 60 runs.

Sangakkara (104) and Samaweera(133\*) then put on a 200 run partnership with both men scoring hundreds in contrasting styles. The latter being an aggressive one. Apart from a couple of political disturbances in the ground today, the only other disturbance worth noting was several blokes in orange T-shirts cheering and clapping for the umpires. Yes, the %Taufel Fan Club Lahore+was in full voice. The only thing worth noting here as I mentioned to Steve Davis on the radio was – at least after 5 years of coming here, he finally spelt my name right on the banner!

Bad light ended play a couple of overs early and we were happy to put our feet up after 6.5hrs on the field. Sri Lanka 4/317.

### **Day two – 2/3/09**

We took off from the hotel in convoy and sped through the local streets of Lahore at speeds close to 100km/hr. Steve and I just love our driver who seems to excel at giving us whiplash and crunching the gears . Steve has renamed him ~~%Bobby Brakehard+~~

The weather again today was ideal for cricket . not too hot and the sun shining. Sri Lanka pushed on their run scoring with Samaweera finally being run out for 214 and Dilshan playing a one day innings to score 145. Kaneria also brought up a century bowling for Pakistan 0/183 off his 40 odd overs. Umar Gul was the stand out bowler as bowled with very good pace and reverse swing on a flat track . 6/122 were impressive figures and well deserved. Sri Lanka were all out for 606.

The Sri Lankan batsmen weren't the only ones ducking bouncers though as the ICC General Manager of cricket, Dave Richardson was at the game and was invited into the commentary box for around half an hour. Lots of tough questions were bounced his way on topics like the referral system, location of Champions Trophy, how to play more cricket in Pakistan, etc. All questions no doubt were played with a straight bat!?

Pakistan had 24 overs to face and raced along to 0/110 until the last over when Salman Butt was burned by his partner's poor call for a single and was caught short by the smallest of margins. This pitch seems very hard for bowlers, so I doubt it will be an early finish and will be hard to produce a result.

### **Day Three – 3/3/09**

Today will be a day that the cricket world changed forever. For some of us it was a life changing experience, for others it was the end of their life.

We set off from the hotel just after 8.30am in a convoy behind the Sri Lankan team bus. All of us were thinking about the days play in front of us as we normally do and passing the time of day as we watched the onlookers on the side of the road watch us. We got to around 1km from the ground and entered the Liberty round about when I started to hear what sounded like fire crackers going off. The Sri Lankan bus stopped and so did we and then our van started to be hit by bullets. I later found out from talking to Dilshan who was sitting in the front of the Sri Lankan team bus that two cars had pulled in front of their bus and three men got out with machine guns and started to spray the side of their bus with bullets.

I was in the back seat next to Peter Manuel (regional umpires manager), Steve Davis was in front of us with Ahsan Raza (4<sup>th</sup> umpire), Chris Broad and Nadeem Ghouri (3<sup>rd</sup> umpire) were sitting behind the driver and Abdul, our liaison officer. We all got down on the floor and got as low as we could. There were loud explosions all around . the gunfire was getting stronger, our van was being hit in the front and on my side. The front window and the window on my side had been blown out and we were sprayed with shattered glass.

It sounded like a grenade had gone off outside and some of the hits to our van seemed larger than others . which may have just been larger caliber bullets, I'm not sure. I was crouched down on the floor next to Peter and I remember holding his arm pretty tight. For some strange reason I was very protective of my umpiring hat and perhaps could have got lower down but did not want to crush or damage it!? Bloody stupid thought I know, but this was a first for me.

Lots of thoughts were running through my head at this point . when would it stop? Would I get hit? When would help arrive? Who would be coming to help? I was never really worried about not seeing my family again as for some strange reason I had a belief we would get out of this . it just seemed too surreal to be that serious a situation.

As the gunfire kept going, I heard Chris shouting to get us out of here. What we didn't know at the time was that our driver had been shot in the head and was dead. I had wondered why the engine was revving so loud but we were not going anywhere . he must have died with his foot planted on the accelerator. Zaffir or Bobby Breakhard+lost his life by simply driving a transport van for us . we were shocked and saddened by the news. The back window was then shot out and I thought it was only a matter of time before I might get hit. After that a large bang hit the car next, we heard moaning and what seemed to be someone shouting out an Arabic prayer out aloud. I wasn't going to put my head up at this stage, or any stage for that matter, to see who had been hurt but it later turned out to be Ahsan Raza, our 4<sup>th</sup> umpire.

Soon after that the side door of the van opened up and I thought it was the police or security people to help get us to safety, but it was a policeman diving for cover and he tried to shut the door behind him but it opened again. At this point, I thought we were in serious trouble. The van continued to take bullet hits and I could smell the gun powder in the air and Chris demanded the liaison officer to drive us out of here, but as it turned out, he had been shot in the shoulder and was trying to reach help on his mobile phone. The policeman told Chris that he would have to get out and drive the car but Broadie was having none of that . eventually the policeman went outside, pulled Zaffir's body from the front seat and we sped off. We kept low and did not look out of the van at any point. They stopped our van outside the ground perimeter and would not let us in at first and my fear then was that perhaps the security forces would think we were part of the terrorist attack and still going after the Sri Lankan bus! There was lots of shouting and moaning in the bus, however there was a mood of controlled purpose.

We got to the ground a couple of minutes later and got them to open the gate and get us inside the forecourt. When I got up to get off the floor and exit the side of the van, I saw Ahsan lying on the floor of the van on his back . his white umpiring shirt was all bloody from waist to neck but he was conscious. They laid him on the pavement and we ran out of the van and into the safety of the pavilion and umpires room.

When we got in the room, we checked each other to see if all were ok . Chris's shirt was blood stained from trying to help stop Ahsan's bleeding. Peter, Nadeem and I were ok and Steve only had ripped trousers from the shattered glass. Our liaison officer was fine too despite his gunshot wound to the shoulder and he left us to go to hospital. We gave each other a hug and were just happy to get this far.

We did not feel like leaving the safety of the umpires room for some time and were just trying to gather our thoughts as to what just happened. In telling you, it must have been the longest 6 or 7 minutes of my life . we were stranded there, all alone like sitting ducks being hit by bullets. We did not know it at the time but the Sri Lankan bus driver had narrowly missed being killed too and managed to get his bus going again and he saved the lives of the Sri Lankan team - he is a hero.

I soon rang home and spoke to Helen to let her know that I was ok and not to worry about the reports she was just about to hear on TV. It was a difficult call and I started to cry when I told her of what happened and how not all of our team got out of it alive. My normal seat in the van was where Ahsan was sitting this morning and had Ahsan been earlier than me to the van parked outside the lobby, then I would be where he is right now . fighting for his life with bullet injuries to his lungs and spleen. All this for a game of cricket.

After about an hour in the umpires room, I went across to the Sri Lankan team dressing room to see how they were. About 6 of their players and staff were injured, ranging from a bullet in the leg to shrapnel lacerations. They were lucky their driver got them out of there as rockets and more grenades were later found at the scene and probably would have been used had the bus been stuck there.

Before we left the ground we had a look at the Sri Lankan team bus and ambulance that was hit in the convoy . there must have been around 25 bullet holes in the Sri Lankan bus. The ambulance has two shot out tires on one side, all windows shot out, oil pouring from the engine bay and many bullet holes, some so large that I could put my thumb into. We did not get to see the damage to our van as it was not safe to go outside the gate . I really wanted to see our van and get an appreciation for how lucky I thought we were . I was looking for that closure I suppose.

At around 11.30am we were driven out of the grounds in civilian cars with armed escort despite our requests not to (as we didn't want any more focus to be drawn to us) back to the hotel. We had to pack and leave for the airport and a 2.20pm flight to Abu Dhabi. The phone rang as soon as I got back to my room, the Australian High Commission was ringing from Islamabad to check on the welfare of Steve and myself . the Australian foreign minister was seeking an update and the staff in Islamabad were all relieved to hear that we got out unhurt. To their credit they kept in contact with me right up to boarding the flight to make sure we were safe and being looked after.

There was a lot of silence in the airport lounge as we watched the BBC news and realized what we had been through. So many thoughts, so many emotions. A sad day for Pakistan, the game of cricket and lives of so many involved.

It's one of those things that you really can't appreciate until you go through it . you never think it will happen and when it does, you don't believe it. Life is precious, life is short and all we were trying to do was get to the ground to play a game of cricket . what is this world coming to?

Steve, Chris, Peter and I flew to Abu Dhabi and were met by the Australian High Commission officials as we stepped off the plane and were taken to a lounge for a chat and debrief. They helped us get through customs and immigration smoothly and avoid most of the media interest. Outside, some staff from the ICC picked us up and drove us to our hotel in Dubai about 90 minutes away.

We checked in and went downstairs to cover the day's events with the ICC media manager, Brian Murgatroyd, ICC Cricket Manager David Richardson and Clive and Sarah who helped us get out of Lahore so quickly. We chatted amongst ourselves for a couple of hours before the ICC people left, leaving Chris, Steve and myself to reflect once more. We needed time together to just be there. No one really wanted to go to sleep or part company, but did that we had to. One last hug goodbye to Chris who was leaving early in the morning before us back to the UK.

I slept ok but woke early . there was no point trying to go back to sleep with so many thoughts in my mind. Steve and I had breakfast before we had to meet with another Australian consular official who was there to check on our wellbeing and ensure we got to the airport safely. As I put my travel uniform on which included the same pair of trousers I wore to the ground . I found a piece of shrapnel wedged in my hip just above the pocket . another souvenir to put with the bail collection I suppose.

Loud noises and sudden bangs still cause us to be jumpy and with the breakfast table party across the way dropping a spoon on the floor, we nearly went to the ground again . this may take some time.

Bound for Sydney now . I have a Test to officiate in New Zealand in a fortnight, not sure if I can up to it just yet but we'll give it a few days and see what happens.

In the meantime, dance like no one is looking, make the most of the present and be grateful for what you have.

Best wishes, Simon.