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Playing as an indivisible unit the reason behind Australia's success

Perfection, success and triumph are tricky things in a team sport. Personal success is only part of the greater picture, and a perfect, ideal team player is one who enjoys the success of his teammates as much as he does his own. Having been part of a team that won three World Cups and was the number one team in Test cricket, I can say that it was a team of different, diverse individuals. I would even go to the extent of saying that not all the players were fast friends, and yes, there were several superstars in the team as well.

However, when we went onto the field, we played as an indivisible unit, and that was the success of the Australian team. We had a truly exceptional motivator in John Buchanan who would challenge us in different ways. He ensured that we never rested on our laurels and was always finding ways of expanding our horizons. Steve Waugh and Ricky Ponting, too, were outstanding leaders and Australia had one streak each, of sixteen wins each, under these two captains. Both were strong personalities and ensured that our motivation never dipped during those winning streaks. It took exceptional performances (coincidentally, it was India on both occasions) to stop our streak.

Teamwork also makes the challenge of looking after one's own performance both a selfish and selfless enterprise. One factoid that gives me immense pleasure is the fact that I have fifty-plus scores in all of the three World Cup finals that I played in. I remember the 2007 final particularly well. I had not been satisfied with my batting and was hoping that I could contribute with the bat at least in the final. I remember the team trainer suggested that I use a squash ball in my glove to help my grip. It felt good and seemed to make a difference in my grip as well as my stroke play. I decided to go with it on the day of the final, against Sri Lanka, and it worked wonders. There are some innings that seem to be blessed and moments you feel truly invincible on the field and that was one such moment.

Cricket like any sport is full of setbacks and challenges. It is how we get past these and achieve success that really makes some moments special. The 2007 World Cup final is one such moment. A small, quirky adjustment made all the difference to how things went for me. The great joy was having Australia regain the World Cup. But the pleasure of having made a significant contribution in the win made it all the more special.