The Chappell Way (A): A Case Study in Team Building and Group Dynamics

This case was written by Debapratim Purkayastha, under the direction of Rajiv Fernando, IBS Center for Management Research. It was compiled from published sources, and is intended to be used as a basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a management situation.
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“[…] if you’re worrying about the outcomes, about things you can’t control, then you’re going to get into trouble. We really focused on the areas that we can control and we’re focusing on getting good in those areas. We’re making sure that we engender the culture of creating successful habits.”


“We all will have a lot to say to the Board on him (Chappell). I have spoken because I have been under stress from the time the coach accused me of underperforming. There are many in the team who have been accused of poor attitude. They have suffered loss of confidence because of the coach’s attitude and the double standards he has adopted from the time he took over. It would not be wrong to say that the entire team has developed a sense of insecurity under this coach.”


“For us, building up team strength is vital. Not that we don’t care about the individual, but the individual is far less important here than the team. Chappell is clearly thinking on the same lines.”

– A senior manager of Hindustan Lever Ltd., in 2006.

TAKING INDIAN CRICKET TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

In June 2005, Greg Chappell (Chappell), the famous former Australian cricketer, joined as the coach of the Indian national cricket team. Though he did not have any experience in coaching a national side, he was chosen for the position ahead of other high profile contenders. The selection panel was impressed by his “Vision 2007” presentation that was a blueprint to take Indian cricket to the next level and make the Indian team top contenders for the 2007 World Cup. The fact that the captain of the Indian cricket team, Sourav Ganguly (Ganguly), lobbied to get him selected also helped clinch the job in his favor.

When Chappell took charge, the mood in the cricket crazy nation was optimistic. Since the new millennium, the fortunes of the team had seen a radical change under the leadership of Ganguly. India had become a more combative unit. In addition to world-class performers in the team, such as Sachin Tendulkar (Tendulkar), Rahul Dravid (Dravid), Anil Kumble (Kumble), etc., there was also a rich talent pool of cricketers including Virender Sehwag (Sehwag), Yuvraj Singh (Yuvraj), Harbhajan Singh (Harbhajan), and Zaheer Khan (Zaheer), who had been nurtured under Ganguly’s watchful eyes. The team was high on team spirit and very loyal to the captain. It had started

1 Siddhartha Vaidyanathan, “‘Dravid Will be One of India’s Better Captains’,” www.content-usa.cricinfo.com, November 14, 2005.
4 Hindustan Lever Ltd. is the leading fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) manufacturer and marketer in India.
5 The World Cup is the premier international championship of men’s One-Day International (ODI) cricket. It is a quadrannual event organized by the sport’s governing body, the International Cricket Council (ICC).
winning test matches away from home and had also reached most of the finals of major
tournaments, including the 2003 World Cup. However, in the 2004-2005 cricketing season the
team’s performance suffered a setback. This also coincided with a fall in Ganguly’s personal
batting performance. Ganguly’s captaincy as well as his place in the team became the subject of
intense debate.

Soon after taking over as coach, Chappell caught the attention of the Indian media with his use of
management jargon and candid quotes. His unconventional coaching methods too became a
talking point. Chappell had his own coaching philosophy, which he and his business partner Ian
Frazer (Frazer), a sports scientist, had personally researched and developed by observing past and
present greats in cricket as well as other sports, such as soccer, American football, and tennis. The
program called ‘The Chappell Way’ (Chappell Way) was offered to members online through a
website (ChappellWay.com.au). A two-week program in Australia was also offered. Experts felt
that the Chappell Way philosophy would help take India to the next level. Chappell introduced a
new approach to training which could best be called unconventional. In addition to training drills,
he also strove to bring about a change in the player’s mindset through lectures on “lateral thinking”
and other approaches generally used in management training.

Chappell’s emphasis was more on the process, than on the outcome. His process for a successful
cricket team called for inculcating fresh blood into the team and creating a large talent pool.
Ability in fielding, a good attitude, and commitment were non-negotiable issues in his process.
Since Ganguly was not performing well with the bat, and was also not a very good fielder,
Chappell felt that he had nothing more to offer Indian cricket. He was in favor of Dravid, the
team’s vice-captain, to take over as captain of the team. The relationship between the coach and
Ganguly deteriorated when Ganguly hinted at a press conference in Zimbabwe in September 2005
that Chappell had asked him to quit as captain. The issue soon snowballed into a major
controversy and took an ugly turn when an e-mail sent by Chappell to the Board of Control for
Cricket in India (BCCI), which was very critical of Ganguly, was leaked to the media.

There were indications of a rebellion in the team against Chappell as India’s ace spinner Harbhajan
Singh (Harbhajan) supported Ganguly and said that the team was not happy under Chappell. He
accused Chappell of creating a rift in the team and causing insecurity among the team members.
He said the other members of the team were ready to speak out against the coach. The BCCI
averted a major disaster by placing a gag order on the team. It brokered a compromise between
India’s most successful captain and the tough coach. However, with a change of guard in the BCCI
after the BCCI elections, the power soon shifted to the coach. Ganguly soon lost his captaincy and,
later, his place in the team.

With the new captain Dravid and chief selector, Kiran More (More), sharing his vision, Chappell
included new members in the team and also introduced a lot of flexibility in the team. The door to
the Indian team was shut to people like Ganguly, Zaheer, and Ashish Nehra. Some of Ganguly’s
staunch supporters such as Sehwag, Yuvraj, and Harbhajan, found themselves always on notice.

In the 2005-06 cricketing season, the Indian team had a fine run. It won an unprecedented number
of games while chasing. The side’s fielding also improved and the young players inducted into
the team showed promise. Almost all the “experimentations” tried by Chappell in that period bore
fruit. Chappell’s team building skills were widely appreciated. He got invitations from various
corporate houses to take sessions on team management. Corporate entities appreciated his rhetoric
of process and his emphasis on giving precedence to the team over individuals.

On the other hand, Chappell was criticized for his handling of the issues relating to Ganguly.
Experts felt that the situation could have been handled much better. Moreover, Chappell’s efforts
to malign Ganguly by making personal remarks about him in the press and by sending secret text
messages to the press were also criticized. In addition to this, Chappell had allegedly made an

6 The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is the apex governing body for cricket in India. As of
April 2007, it was the richest cricket board in the world.
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obscene finger gesture at a crowd that was protesting Ganguly’s ouster from the team and experts viewed this as evidence of his cultural insensitivity. They felt that taking such an attitude toward someone who was adored by members in the team would be detrimental to team spirit. The fact that Harbhajan had said that team members had strong feelings against the coach too called into question Chappell’s people management skills – skills which were essential for a coach to succeed. RR Nair, a Bangalore-based Organizational Development (OD) consultant, said, “He [Chappell] was too critical, opened his mouth too wide, causing bad blood to flow.” Some people also hinted that Chappell was using his position as coach to sell the Chappell Way program in Australia to Indian citizens in collaboration with more. This “office-of-profit crisis” had many conflict of interests, they felt.

Experts believed that it was too early to attribute the success of the team to Chappell’s methods. The nucleus of the team had already been built by Ganguly and Chappell’s predecessor John Wright (Wright). Moreover, the matches that the team had won were played in India and the subcontinent, where it had traditionally shown strong performance. One had to wait and see whether the team would succeed in replicating this success outside the subcontinent, they said. While some experts felt that Chappell had put India on course to becoming world-beaters, others felt that there were indications that all was not well within the team.

BACKGROUND NOTE

In 2000, Indian cricket was at its nadir. The match-fixing scandal had taken its toll with some senior players including former captain Mohammed Azharuddin and cricketer Ajay Jadeja being banned from cricket. The morale of the team was at an all-time low. The Indians, considered ‘tigers at home’, had just lost their first home series in many years to South Africa. Bitter from his previous experience as captain, Tendulkar declined to take over the office. By default, the captaincy came to Ganguly.

Ganguly and senior members of the team wanted a professional foreign coach and accordingly in November 2000, New Zealander John Wright joined the Indian team. Traditionally, the Indian team did not have the concept of a coach. It was only after seeing the amount of attention that expert coaches such as Bob Woolmer and Dave Whatmore received that India began thinking along those lines. Former captain Ajit Wadekar was appointed as the national team’s first coach. He was followed, among others, by Anshuman Gaekwad, Kapil Dev, Sandeep Patil, and Madan Lal (Refer to Exhibit I for a list of Chappell’s immediate predecessors). But then the public and the players started seeing the merits of a foreign coach. The players perceived that a foreign coach would be familiar with modern coaching techniques and be free of regional bias.

In 2000, Wright and Chappell were shortlisted for the coach’s position. Chappell had given a presentation to the selection panel that was considered “mind-blowing” by the then BCCI chief Raj Singh Dungarpur (Dungarpur). But the high remuneration package he demanded and the fact that the senior players including Ganguly preferred Wright went against Chappell.

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8 Match fixing in organized sports occurs when a match is played to a completely or partially pre-determined result.
9 Though Tendulkar was a great batsman, many believed that he was not a great team leader. His expectations of “superhuman efforts” from his team members were supposed to have alienated the team members. Tendulkar was also embittered due to the criticisms of his captaincy by the media, the team’s poor run, and the match-fixing controversy.
10 Bob Woolmer was a former English cricketer and professional coach. He was the coach of the South African cricket team from 1994 to 1999. During this period South Africa had one of the highest success rates in one day international (ODI) cricket.
11 Dave Whatmore, an Australian, was the coach of the Sri Lankan cricket team that won the 1996 World Cup.
Ganguly and Wright set about rebuilding the team. The aggressive Ganguly was the face of Indian cricket while the mild mannered Wright acted as the pacifier. There was no confusion as to who was the boss. Ganguly stood up for every decision – whether it was successful or unsuccessful. Under Ganguly’s leadership, various changes were brought about in the culture of the Indian team. Ganguly, who was a very aggressive player in the field, soon instilled aggression in the team and the team started performing well. The team members, especially the young crop of players that Ganguly had developed, were very loyal to the captain. The fact that Ganguly was considered the first Indian captain who was free from the ills of parochialism, and his courage to stand up to the powers-that-be in the interest of team members, endeared him to the team.

Under Ganguly, the team started winning away from home, something at which it had not been very good. The crowning glory of Ganguly’s career came in the 2003 World Cup when India played in the finals after 20 years. India was being viewed as the team that could challenge Australia as the leading team in world cricket. Ganguly was considered as the best Indian captain ever due to the good run the Indian team had under his leadership. However, his personal batting performance began to suffer in the mid-2000s. With the team too not doing too well from late 2004, calls for Ganguly being axed from the team started gaining ground in certain quarters. However, despite his personal batting form, his supporters in the team saw no reason for a change in leadership. The fact that BCCI bigwig Jagmohan Dalmiya (Dalmiya) was a staunch supporter of Ganguly also helped him retain captaincy.

However, by early 2005, the relationship between Ganguly and Wright had soured considerably and Ganguly managed to get Wright ousted. Ganguly also lobbied for getting Chappell, against the advice of the legendary former Australian captain Steve Waugh (Waugh) and some other players. Ganguly had developed a good relationship with Chappell during India’s tour of Australia in 2004, when the Australian had helped him in sorting out his batting problems and provided tips on how to play against the Australian team.

In May 2005, Chappell gave another superb presentation called, ‘Vision 2007’, in front of the selection panel consisting of BCCI president Ranbir Singh Mahendra, his predecessor Dalmiya, and former cricketers Sunil Gavaskar, Ravi Shastri, and S Venkataraghavan. His presentation skills and the vision he showed for Indian cricket’s future helped him get selected ahead of other contenders for the position such as former Indian cricketer Mohinder Amarnath, former West Indian opener Desmond Haynes, and former Australian all-rounder Tom Moody. Chappell joined as coach of the Indian cricket team in June 2005 for a reported fee of US$200,000 per year plus expenses. Before taking over as coach, Chappell had been running his own coaching website, ChappellWay.com.au, and working full-time with a telecommunications company in which he had a stake. Chappell had no previous experience in coaching an international side. He had had a stint with South Australia but apparently did not have much to show from that assignment. He had also acted as a consultant to the Pakistan’s national cricket academy in 2004.

THE CHAPPELL WAY

The Chappell Way, a patented mode of training in cricket, was personally researched by Chappell and his assistant Frazer, a former first class cricketer and sports scientist. The program was the result of extensive research in cricket as well as other sports that started in 2001. It was designed by study and analysis of footage of all the great batting and bowling performances over the years. Slow motions of the footage helped the trainee understand the secrets behind the success of great

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14 Jagmohan Dalmiya is a world renowned cricket administrator and businessman. He had served as the president of BCCI on numerous occasions. Between 1997 and 2000 he was the chairman of the ICC.
15 Andrew Fraser, “Chappell to Show India the Way,” www.bbc.co.uk, May, 2005.
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players. The duo researched coaching philosophies, scientific techniques, tactics, and theories from sports as diverse as soccer in Brazil, American football, and the German tennis program. “We observed a lot of success stories and tried to emulate them. We looked at successful people in sports and spoke to coaches of other sports too. We looked at swimming, we looked at tennis, we looked at baseball, we looked at basketball to find out what they are doing. We looked at the Dutch soccer team [...] We’ve looked at successful organizations from the New York Yankees to the Russian ice hockey team that won a gold in the Olympics. We looked at the German tennis programs that produced Boris Becker and Steffi Graf,” said Chappell.

The centerpiece of the Chappell Way philosophy was the Internet-based, internationally-acclaimed cricket development program by the same name (ChappellWay.com.au). Members could interact with Chappell through this website. Chappell answered queries from players, their parents, and coaches. According to Chappell, as of December 2004, the site had more than 3,000 members, recording about 100,000 hits a week.

Chappell also believed that learning related to cricket should be “shared globally, rather than hoarded locally.” So he took freelance assignments from time to time. For instance, in 2004, he went to Pakistan as a consultant when the Australian team was there on a tour. He felt that such freelance assignments were more fulfilling than a full-time coaching job. Chappell and Frazer also ran a two-week program that participants could attend to learn cricketing skills. The program also strove to inculcate a love for the game in the participants. The program provided need-based training to the participants depending on their individual strengths and weaknesses. In April 2005, the program was made open to boys in India between the ages 12 and 20 years. Melbourne-based company Odesa Global and India’s Percept D’Mark, organized a 14-day camp at Brisbane, Australia, at a cost of 4,500 Australian dollars per participant. When Chappell came to India on this business visit it was being widely speculated that he would succeed Wright. Chappell too showed an interest in the position. Experts felt that the Chappell Way philosophy would help the Indian cricket team reach the next level.

CHAPPELL’S SELECTION WELCOMED

Experts welcomed Chappell’s selection and some even opined that it was “the best thing that could happen to Indian cricket.” They felt that the tough Aussie, a legend himself, would command the respect of the star-studded Indian team (Refer to Exhibit II for Greg Chappell – A fact-file). His stature in the cricketing fraternity was much higher than that of his predecessor, Wright, and experts believed that this would help him stand up to any pressure from the BCCI as well.

Moreover, it was felt that the groundwork for building up a successful Indian cricket team had been done under Wright, and all that Chappell needed to do was to consolidate the gains made in the Wright-Ganguly era. Also, since the team had not played too well in the previous few months, experts did not expect Chappell to be under any immediate pressure in the initial few months. Many felt that Chappell, who had joined on a two-year contract that was scheduled to end after the 2007 World Cup, had ample time to prepare India for the tournament. After the 2003

22 Percept D’Mark is one of the largest entertainment, event and sports marketing companies in the Indian sub-continent.
24 Andrew Fraser, “Chappell to Show India the Way,” www.bbc.co.uk, May, 2005.
World Cup, it was widely believed that India were strong contenders for the 2007 World Cup as the youngsters who had flourished under Ganguly would have become much more mature cricketers by then, and the seniors such as Ganguly, Tendulkar, and Dravid were also expected to be around.

Many experts also said that the heavy pressure was part and parcel of this high profile job. The cricket frenzy in India was incomparable. Both adulation and criticism went to the extremes as emotions often ran high after each victory and defeat. Burning of effigies was also common after defeats. Experts felt that in addition to performance, Chappell had to also guard against being too cozy with the media.

Chappell took up his assignment amidst a lot of fanfare. The experts and the fans expected a lot from him. Soon after becoming coach, he said that “commitment to excellence” would be the buzz-word during his tenure as he intended to take Indian cricket to the next level, on par with teams like Australia. In doing so, he said, he would like to keep things simple. His statements like “cricket is not rocket science” were widely publicized in the media. His frequent rhetoric about process raised the expectation of the nation.

SOME CONTRIBUTIONS OF CHAPPELL

Chappell had the blend of vision, ability, and drive that was required for the challenging job of coaching the Indian cricket team. Moreover, he took pride in coaching India and felt that the passion for the game in India was stimulating. Unlike his predecessor, Chappell was a lot more pragmatic, and seldom allowed emotion and sentiment to get the better of him.

Vision

Chappell was considered as someone with a long-term vision. He had created an excellent blueprint for the Indian cricket team. He said that once he was short-listed for the position of coach, he and Frazer had made the presentation by a SWOT analysis of Indian cricket. The blueprint that they arrived at was presented as “Vision 2007” to the BCCI. Chappell said that he would not try to replicate the Australian way of playing in India, but develop something keeping in mind the mindset of Indians. “Every country and every culture is different. Every country has different personalities; each individual is a different personality. You can’t transplant one format that works in one country in another country and expect it to work exactly the same,” said Chappell.

Chappell believed in the value of youth and wanted in his own way to transform the system. During his SWOT analysis he felt that fielding was one of the weaknesses of the Indian cricket team. Inducing fresh legs was very important for the team to become more competitive, he felt. He also felt that there should be flexibility in the team and strategy. He hinted that he wanted a bigger say on selection issues. Sitting on the selection panel would give him an opportunity to discuss his “philosophy” with the selectors, he said.

Cultural Changes

Soon after taking over as coach, Chappell tried to bring about some changes in the culture of the team. He wanted the Indian players to inculcate a lateral thinking approach. He took sessions on Edward De Bono’s lateral thinking methods, such as the ‘six hats’ technique. Chappell

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27 SWOT Analysis is a strategic planning tool to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats in a business venture, or any other situation of an organization or individual requiring a decision.
30 The ‘six hats’ technique is a model propounded by management expert Edward de Bono, that can be used to explore different perspectives toward a complex situation or challenge.
explained, “The six-hats method is an alternative to traditional argument and has everybody thinking constructively in the same direction at the same time. It’s a tool that can add value to what we are doing as we need to look at certain issues differently. We’ll explore the method to expand our thinking, planning, and communication.”

Chappell’s emphasis on lateral thinking arose from his problem-solving approach to cricket. Chappell said, “The basic thing about cricket is finding solutions to problems. The bowlers create problems and the batsmen have to find a wide range of solutions. I learned all my lessons in life by playing cricket, not by education.”

**Team Building**

Chappell liked grooming young cricketers. He was good at spotting new talent. For instance, he spotted and groomed Suresh Raina (Raina) and Shanthakumaran Sreesanth (Sreesanth). He liked people who soaked up his knowledge and took personal attention in grooming them. Increasing the bench strength was one of his key agendas. He had individual sessions with each team member and helped them identify their strengths and weaknesses. He felt that informal areas like locker rooms and team buses were excellent places for individual and team discussions. Chappell said he did not believe in pointing out the mistakes of others and criticizing them. Rather, he believed in catching them doing something right and praising them for that.

To promote the team spirit, Chappell conducted various team activities. To instill the belief in each team member that each one of them could be world beaters and had no reason to be cowed down by the individual brilliance of players like Tendulkar, Chappell conducted activities that could have Tendulkar struggle. This according to Chappell, made the other team members feel that Tendulkar was human after all, and not much different from the other members of the team. In addition to making efforts toward building team spirit, Chappell also tried to project Dravid as the leader of the team, while he acted as a pillar of support for the captain. Chappell said, “It was very important that it became his team. It wasn’t my team but his team. I’ve said many times that the coach’s role is in helping prepare the team and in working with the captain and supporting the captain.”

**Table I**

**Team Building: The Chappell Way**

| **• Spend time with players, getting to know them and explaining to them their strengths and weaknesses.** |
| **• Teach players the principles of success by interacting with them in the locker room or on the field.** |
| **• Change the training program. Just practicing doesn’t help. Create obstacles for the players, which they have to overcome.** |
| **• Never tell players they are doing things incorrectly or do it like this. Instead, catch them doing something right. Encourage them to push themselves to do something they’ve never done before.** |
| **• Give the team enough rest time.** |
| **• Show team members that even the best can fail.** |

*Source: “GURU GREG - ‘The outcome is less important than the process’,” www.telegraphindia.com, April 02, 2006.*

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33 Andrew Fraser, “Chappell to Show India the Way,” www.news.bbc.co.uk, May 20, 2005.
34 Siddhartha Vaidyanathan, “‘Dravid Will be One of India’s Better Captains’,” www.content-usa.cricinfo.com, November 14, 2005.
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Arranging the Resources

Chappell came with his support staff consisting of Frazer, who also doubled up as an assistant coach. The support team also included Gregory Allen King (physical trainer), John Gloster (physio), Ramesh Mane (masseur), and Ramakrishnan (computer analyst). He believed that his business partner was the best sports scientist available in cricket. About Frazer, Chappell said, “Frazer has good ideas and knowledge in the areas of stimulating the nervous system to get the response and results. That’s been his area of concentration and, moreover, he has played first class cricket and so understands the requirements at this level.”

King and Gloster, who were there from Wright’s era, had to make adjustments to their routines to fit into Chappell’s scheme of things. In addition to this, Chappell was also open to enlisting the services of other specialists on a need-to-need basis. Chappell said, “I don’t claim to own all the wisdom about cricket. There are people who know more than me in certain areas. I will be wanting to tap into those people from time to time both in India and outside India.”

Emphasis on Process and Flexibility

Chappell believed that if the proper process were followed, the results would take care of themselves. He wanted the team to follow the process even though there could be initial hitches. Chappell felt that too much of a focus on the outcome put undue pressure on the individuals. Chappell said that attitude and commitment were two issues that were “non-negotiable” in his process. So was good fielding. Chappell’s process had no place for people who could bat or bowl well but were poor fielders.

Flexibility was another buzzword in Chappell’s process, and was called “experimentation” in the media. In contrast to what happened under Ganguly, Chappell wanted players to be flexible. While Ganguly wanted players to grow into their roles in the team and only used experimentation occasionally to surprise the opponent, Chappell wanted the team members to be ready to adopt multiple roles. The players were expected to bat at different positions, bowl at different times in the innings, field in different positions, etc.

The Desire to Win

During his playing days Chappell had always displayed a strong desire to succeed. But though this was a positive attribute, at times, his decisions seemed to walk the thin line between the acceptable and the unethical. For instance, when he was captain of Australia in a match against New Zealand, he ordered his younger brother Trevor Chappell to bowl the last ball of the match underarm to prevent New Zealand hitting a six to tie the match. Though underarm bowling was not illegal then, it was universally accepted that it was unethical. The issue led to a huge controversy and left a big blotch on an otherwise brilliant career. Chappell had since apologized for the fiasco and said that he was under tremendous mental pressure when he did that. But experts believed that the incident was not Chappell’s effort to jump the process but a steely determination to win at all costs.

New Approach to Training

When Chappell was selected as the coach, former Australian cricketer Greg Blewett, who had played for South Australia when Chappell was the coach, said that the Indian players could expect that the training routines that Chappell used would be “a bit outside the norm”. Chappell did not believe in training for the sake of training. He wanted the team to enjoy it. “We tell the players that we may ask them to do something that may seem strange to them. But we’d like you to accept that

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36 Greg Chappell, “I Don’t Own All the Wisdom,” www.outlookindia.com, June 18, 2005.
38 Andrew Fraser, “Chappell to Show India the Way,” www.bbc.co.uk, May, 2005.
though it might seem crazy, there may [be] a method to what we are doing," \(^{39}\) Chappell said. The players were given some obstacles that they had to overcome. For instance, one member of the team may be given the assignment of dressing another team member from the kit that would be laid out before him. The catch was that the person given the assignment was blind-folded and had to only rely on the guidance of the person being dressed to complete the assignment. The team undergoing commando training, rock climbing, and taking part in indigenous games such as *Kho kho* \(^{40}\) were also not uncommon.

**Hardworking, Candid Coach and Tough Task-Master**

Chappell used to sweat it out with the team members in practice sessions, which many considered as evidence of his commitment. He was also ready to commit 290 days a year to coaching the team. \(^{41}\) Moreover, he was very candid and had no qualms about speaking his mind. He was also a strict disciplinarian who made it clear to the team members that the members of the team had to either “perform or perish”. \(^{42}\) In a way, this philosophy was contrary to Ganguly’s philosophy which provided more security to team members and allowed them to play without a sword dangling over their heads.

Chappell was considered a tough task-master and it was universally known within the team that any lack of effort on the part of players could land them in a “career crisis”. \(^{43}\) However, Chappell denied that he was a “control freak” as he was being made out by certain quarters. \(^{44}\) He said that as long as the players were committed in the field, he did not bother what they did outside it.

**A Change Agent**

Coming from a culture of high achievers, Chappell was eager to bring about a change in Indian cricket, and quickly. \(^{45}\) He said that he knew “some feathers would be ruffled” as he would have to take some tough decisions. But doing the right things was essential. “I knew to make change was going to be difficult. To change the way people perceive things, the way people think, whether it is the players, the media, or general public takes time. Along the way there are bound to be some fluctuations. I cannot get involved in that and cannot get distracted by that,” \(^{46}\) said Chappell. He also made it clear that those who were not prepared to change would find themselves falling by the wayside. His philosophy was “You can’t teach anything to anyone who doesn’t want to be taught”. \(^{47}\) So such people had to be left out of the team.

**AN INAUSPICIOUS BEGINNING**

Soon after taking over, Chappell told the media that Tendulkar would not be the player he had been a couple of years earlier. But he soon realized that the Indian fans did not take kindly to any uncharitable comment on their biggest hero. \(^{48}\) When Chappell embarked on his first assignment as

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\(^{39}\) “GURU GREG - ‘The Outcome is Less Important than the Process’,” www.telegraphindia.com, April 2, 2006.

\(^{40}\) *Kho Kho* is an Indian sport played by teams of twelve players who try to avoid being touched by members of the opposing team.


\(^{42}\) S Ram Mahesh, “Patchy Patch-up – Will it last?” Sportstar, www.hinduonnet.com, October 08 - 14, 2005


\(^{44}\) “I’m Not a Control Freak; Chappell,” www.rediff.com, February 15, 2006.


\(^{46}\) “‘I Have an Unflinching Commitment to the Job’,” www.rediff.com, February 14, 2006.

\(^{47}\) Siddhartha Vaidyanathan, “‘Dravid Will be One of India’s Better Captains’,” www.content-usa.cricinfo.com, November 14, 2005.

coach he did not have Ganguly in the team as Ganguly was serving out an ICC ban. India’s slow over-rate in an ODI series in April, 2005, had led to a six ODI ban for Ganguly. Dalmiya used his clout in the ICC to get it reduced to four ODIs. Dravid was appointed as the stopgap captain for the IndianOil tri-series in Sri Lanka in August 2005. Ganguly’s reduced sentence meant that he had to play three matches under Dravid. Chappell said that playing under Dravid in the IndianOil tri-series presented Ganguly with the opportunity to strike form without the additional responsibility of leading the side.

Ganguly who was suffering from a lack of personal form made a solid comeback into the side, hitting a half-century and passing the coveted 10,000-run mark in ODIs. But India lost the series and Chappell hinted that some players in the Indian team might have deliberately under-performed to get Ganguly reinstated as the captain. Meanwhile, there were speculations in the media that Chappell would be more comfortable with Dravid as the captain.

The media debated the captaincy issue. Supporters of Dravid claimed that it was time he was given the captaincy. Ganguly’s critics felt that his poor run with the bat was impacting his intensity on the field as a captain. Cricket experts too felt that when a captain was not in prime form, his decision-making too became defensive. Moreover, the leader had to lead by example, and Ganguly was clearly not doing at that stage. His body language was also not as positive as it had been earlier. It was alleged that Ganguly was displaying a “politician-like desperation” to hold on to the captaincy. But Ganguly also had his fair share of supporters who felt that he deserved to be given a chance as the temporary setback experienced by the team was being exaggerated against the backdrop of the brilliant performance in 2002-04 in which India challenged the best teams including Australia. Moreover, they felt, Dravid was “too democratic, too diplomatic, and too nice to be an effective captain”.

Former Sri Lankan captain, Arjuna Ranatunga (Ranatunga), considered by many as one of the greatest leaders in cricket, said that replacing Ganguly would not be in the best interests of Indian cricket. He also advised the Indian media not to be guided by parochial feelings in such an important matter. “I have known him [Ganguly] for long and feel he is the best of the current lot in world cricket. He is imaginative and backs talented youngsters,” said Ranatunga.

Ranatunga also refused to believe that Ganguly was finished as a batsman. He pointed out that Ganguly had just completed 10,000 runs in ODIs, and was the youngest player to do so. In September 2005, Ganguly was re-appointed as captain for the tour of Zimbabwe. Many believed that the series could make or mar Ganguly’s future in cricket.

A CLASH OF PERSONALITIES

Chappell had some reservations against Ganguly’s ability to lead the side. He favored Dravid as the captain as he felt that in the current situation, Dravid was better placed to lead the team. Relations between Ganguly and Chappell reached a flashpoint during India’s tour of Zimbabwe in August-September 2005. Apparently, Ganguly had asked Chappell for an honest opinion about himself and Chappell had replied that he did not see any place for Ganguly in the side. This had irked Ganguly no end and he had decided to leave Zimbabwe. It was Dravid, reportedly, who had succeeded in dissuading him from doing so.

49 It was a significant milestone as Ganguly became only the third player to do so after Tendulkar and Pakistan’s Inzamam-ul Haq. He was also the youngest to get to that mark.
52 Arjuna Ranatunga was considered one of the greatest leaders in International cricket as he had transformed the Sri Lankan cricket team from minnow status to World Cup winners in 1996. The achievement was more significant as the resources in his hands were very meager.
In the game that followed at Bulawayo, Ganguly scored a determined century and India won the first test. After the match, at a media conference Ganguly was asked whether he had been asked by anyone to resign from the team. Ganguly answered in the affirmative but refrained from elaborating. This snowballed into a major controversy as the media speculated that there was a rift between the captain and the coach. The power of the coach via-a-vis the captain was widely debated, with many experts saying that the coach did not have the right to ask a captain to step down in the middle of a series. Unlike other sports like football, the power equation between the captain and the coach in cricket had traditionally been in favor of the captain.\(^54\) The coach had to use persuasion and other people skills to get his opinions heard, the experts felt.\(^55\) Following a BCCI directive, the duo arrived at a compromise before the media. Chappell said that he had a lot of respect for Ganguly and that he had used “reverse psychology”\(^56\) to bring out the best in Ganguly. However, by then, Chappell had already sent a very damning report against Ganguly by e-mail to the BCCI.

In the e-mail, Chappell clarified that he had not asked Ganguly to step down. He also expressed serious reservations about Ganguly’s ability to lead the side. “We have also developed parameters of batting, bowling, fielding, and captaincy that we believe embodies the ‘Commitment to Excellence’ theme that I espoused at my interview and Sourav falls well below the acceptable level in all areas. …As I said to you during our meeting in Colombo, I have serious reservations about the attitude of some players and about Sourav and his ability to take this team to a new high, and none of the things he has done since his reappointment has caused me to change my view,” wrote Chappell. He made various allegations against Ganguly, including issues such as how Ganguly was having a bad influence on the team and how his insecurity as a batsman was leading to his taking decisions which were not in the best interests of the team. He also questioned Ganguly’s work ethic and integrity (Refer to Exhibit for some of Chappell’s accusations against Ganguly). On September 17, 2005, in a separate text message to select journalists, Chappell called Ganguly and some of his followers such as Nehra, Zaheer, and Harbhajan, “cancers”.\(^58\) He also targeted other players like Sehwag and Yuvraj. Retrospectively, it was found that Tendulkar had also been a target.

To complicate matters further, the e-mail sent to the BCCI was leaked to the media. In the storm that followed, the fact that India had won its first test series away from the subcontinent in more than two decades took a backseat. Many experts felt that the e-mail had been deliberately leaked to the media by Dalmiya to deflect attention from the “murky politics” at BCCI.\(^59\) They felt that Ganguly was being made the fall guy in Dalmiya’s effort to win the BCCI elections against political bigwig Sharad Pawar\(^60\) (Pawar).

The team manager Amitabh Chowdhary supported Ganguly, saying that he had never skipped practice sessions as the coach had alleged. He also said that there was no truth in Chappell’s claim that Ganguly was faking injuries.\(^62\) In the spat with Chappell, Wright supported Ganguly and said that many of the allegations leveled against him were not true. He also said that it was unfair to single out Ganguly as a lazy fielder as the same could apply to some other players in the team as well.\(^63\)

\(^{56}\) Reverse psychology is the term that describes the outcome where advocacy of one course of action persuades another person to do the opposite.
\(^{59}\) S Ram Mahesh, “Patchy Patch-up – Will it last?” Sportstar, www.hinduonnet.com, October 08 - 14, 2005
\(^{60}\) Onkar Singh, “‘Both Ganguly, Chappell to Blame‘,” www.rediff.com, September 26, 2005.
\(^{61}\) Sharad Pawar is the president of the Nationalist Congress Party in India which he formed in 1999. As of April 2007, he was Food and Agriculture Union Minister, with additional charge of Consumer Affairs and the Public Distribution System. He became chairman of the BCCI in September 2005.
Many experts felt that this ugly situation could have been avoided. They blamed both Ganguly and Chappell for the controversy. Ganguly, in particular, was blamed as he had brought a dressing room secret out into the open. It was noted that throughout Ganguly’s reign, dressing room secrets had seldom come out in the open. This was the kind of hold Ganguly had on the team. Experts felt that it was ironic that Ganguly had himself broken the rule. Some cricket experts and administrators, including former captain Bishen Singh Bedi and former BCCI chief Dungarpur wanted Ganguly to be axed from the team.64

The spat was viewed as a clash between two strong personalities in which one would have to leave for the team to survive. In a way, it was also a clash between two philosophies. A three-member panel was formed consisting of former cricketers to listen to the versions of both the coach and the captain.65 Former cricketer and politician, Chetan Chauhan, said, “It would be [a] sad day for Indian cricket if either the coach or captain is asked to put in his papers. It would not only have repercussions on the team, but go beyond that.”66 A BCCI-brokered compromise followed.67 What took Chappell by total surprise was that at the meeting, Ganguly came armed with two e-mails that Chappell had sent to some journalists trying to project Ganguly in poor light.68 In any case, experts felt that Ganguly would come out of the episode unscathed as he was India’s most successful captain, having won 21 and lost just 13 of the 49 test matches.69 Moreover, it was believed that the team was still loyal to Ganguly.

REBELLION IN THE RANKS?

Some of Ganguly’s team-mates, most notably Harbhajan, stood by their captain. Harbhajan said that the allegations leveled against Ganguly were incorrect. He lauded Ganguly’s leadership saying, “There is no truth that the captain has created a rift between the players to protect his job. He has always been fair to each individual and I would give lot of credit to Sourav for building a strong team.”70 He said that many members of the team were disappointed and “scared” of the coach and wanted to have their say in favor of the captain and against the coach. He said that the team was discontented under Chappell, as Chappell had allegedly created insecurity among the team by his “double standards”. He also accused the coach of being “unprofessional” and creating a rift in the team.

Harbhajan also said that Chappell was trying to spoil his relationship with Dravid by alleging that he (Harbhajan) had deliberately underperformed under Dravid’s captaincy. He also accused Chappell of being hypocritical as he had professed respect for Ganguly before the media but had shot off a letter to the BCCI complaining against the captain, behind his back. He said that the team feared the coach and was afraid of approaching him as they did not know how Chappell would react to what they said.

To prevent more such disclosures, the BCCI quickly put a gag order on the players and slapped a show-cause notice on Harbhajan.

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BALANCE OF POWER SHIFTS TOWARD COACH

A stroke of luck shifted the power equation toward Chappell. In September 2005, Dalmiya was defeated by Pawar in the BCCI elections. On the day he won the elections, Pawar axed the selectors who were sympathetic to Ganguly. It was widely believed that Ganguly’s era was over. The More-led selection committee appointed Dravid as captain. In October 2005, Ganguly lost his place in the ODI team. In November 2005, he was sacked as the captain of the Indian test squad. After making scores of 40 and 39 against Sri Lanka in the second test match against Sri Lanka, Ganguly was dropped from the team in December 2005. It was speculated that his axing had more to do with politics than with cricketing matters. Ranatunga said that the hunger displayed by Ganguly in the series should be welcomed. He predicted that by not supporting Ganguly, Dravid could lose the respect of the team. “I would not like to be in Rahul Dravid’s shoes if I am the captain. In this entire Sourav Ganguly episode, his silence borders on complicity. He has every reason to seek the team he wants; but he also owes it to his men to be seen standing right next to them. At best he would miss out on the trust and loyalty of his mates, which allows a captain to ask for the impossible; at worst he would be very unpopular in the dressing-room.”

The Indian team had a good run in the ODI series against Sri Lanka and South Africa. It defeated Sri Lanka 6-1 and held South Africa to a 2-2 series draw. However, Chappell did not do his image any good by allegedly making an obscene finger gesture at a crowd in Kolkata who were protesting the unceremonious ouster of Ganguly in November 2005. Chappell’s gesture caught on camera, sparked national outrage.

Knowing fully well that he was being targeted due to BCCI politics, Ganguly made a visit to Pawar after which Pawar said he would see that the “injustice” done to Ganguly was corrected. Pawar denied reports that Ganguly had attitude problems and said that he was a perfect team man. Ganguly was chosen for the test series in Pakistan in January-February 2006. Many viewed this as being due to Pawar’s directives. Chappell was furious at Ganguly being selected as he felt that his presence in the dressing room would be detrimental to team spirit. In the third test at Karachi, Ganguly played two gutsy knocks of 34 and 37, which were good in the context of the match. However, he was dropped from the team. Many experts and cricket fans felt that Ganguly had done nothing in the series to justify his being axed. In March 2006, chief selector More made it clear that Ganguly was history as far as Indian cricket was concerned. In the days that followed, many team members such as Yuvraj, Sehwag, and Gautam Gambhir, were censured by the board for speaking in favor of Ganguly. Most notably, after the tour to Pakistan, Yuvraj Singh (the vice-captain) came out in support of his mentor Ganguly, saying that he deserved a place in the side.

While Ganguly was trying to win back his place in the side through performance in domestic matches, India was having a good run in the ODIs. The power equation in the team had changed in favor of the coach. Chappell became the new face of Indian cricket. The trio of chief selector-coach-captain was very clear that they did not want Ganguly back in the team.

Moreover, taking the personal tirade against Ganguly further, Chappell in an interview with The Guardian, said that he had wanted Ganguly to give up the captaincy but Ganguly had refused due to monetary reasons. “What I didn’t realise at that stage was how utterly important to his life and finances being captain was,” said Chappell. Ganguly threatened to sue Chappell and also lodged a complaint with the BCCI.

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72 Arjuna Ranatunga, “Ganguly’s Hunger is to be Welcomed,” www.content-uk.cricinfo.com, December 17, 2005.
Chappell’s comment was widely criticized as fans and cricketing experts viewed this as a personal vendetta against a person who had brought many glories to India. Chappell’s critics felt that though people criticized Ganguly for his faults, they also admired him as a captain. They said that Chappell was missing no opportunity to show Ganguly in bad light in public. They said that in the personal vendetta against Ganguly, Chappell was making some of Ganguly’s admirers in the dressing room uneasy. There were many players in the dressing room whose careers had been shaped by Ganguly and they adored him. It also made the players apprehensive that Chappell would treat them the same way if they fell out of favor with him. The BCCI too censured Chappell over the matter.

THE GURU HAS ARRIVED

Between September 2005 and April 2006, India won an unprecedented 16 consecutive ODIs while batting second. In test matches, it lost the series against archrivals Pakistan. The best part was that youngsters such as Raina and Sreesanth, who had been handpicked by Chappell, contributed to the team’s success. Players like MS Dhoni flourished and Yuvraj graduated to being the most consistent performer in the team. India was winning more consistently and fielding and running between wickets, which had been considered as the team’s weaknesses, improved significantly. The team had also made considerable progress in chasing down the opposing teams’ totals, something which had earlier been considered its weak spot. There was flexibility in the team as players could perform in different roles. It seemed that all of Chappell’s “experimentation” was finally bearing fruit.

Even Dravid attributed the change in the team’s fortune to the change in the attitude and approach of the team. Chappell said that India had a “happy and committed dressing room” with a “good blend of personalities, good blend of talent, youth and experience.” He believed that since the youngsters coming into the team were delivering, it had also reinvigorated the seniors in the squad.

Chappell soon became the toast of the season. He was referred to as ‘Guru Greg’ and his ‘process’ was also appreciated by many experts. Chappell won the admiration of corporate entities and business organizations. In addition, he was feted as a management guru. He was seen as a situational leader and a tough taskmaster: His frequent rhetoric of process being more important than outcome was lapped up by the management of corporate houses. He was invited to take sessions in team-building at various corporate houses including Hindustan Lever Ltd. People in the corporate world felt that Chappell would also make a good corporate leader. The priority that Chappell gave to the team over individuals was similar to that in any good organization, they said.

CRITICISMS

Critics felt that the spat with Ganguly and the fact that Harbhajan had lashed out at the coach called into question Chappell’s people management skills. Experts felt that communication was very important in coaching and a good rapport between the coach and the players was vital to the success of the coach and the team. Former coach Wright too criticized Chappell for getting involved in the spat with Ganguly and also for meddling in selection matters. He said that the job of a coach was to get the best out of the team he got from the selection panel. However, some

81 S Ram Mahesh, “Patchy Patch-up – Will it last?” Sportstar, www.hinduonnet.com, October 08 - 14, 2005
argued that rapport with the team members could not be built at the cost of performance. The Indian players’ work ethic – their ability to deliver results under a hard taskmaster – was questioned.

Some experts also criticized Chappell for his public spat with Ganguly. According to RR Nair, a Bangalore-based OD consultant, Chappell had handled the issue very badly. Chappell was clearly found wanting when it came to cultural sensitivity, he said. 83

Chappell also attracted severe criticism for not practicing what he preached. He was accused of being indisciplined while he demanded discipline from all other members of the team. Be it the obscene gesture to fans, or selective leaks to the press that showed Ganguly and a few members of the team in bad light, it showed rank indiscipline. Particularly when the team had been put under a gag order against saying anything in favor of Ganguly, Chappell had engaged in attempting to vilify him in the media. Chappell was criticized for taking the fight to a personal level. 84 This did not bode well for team spirit, the critics said. Chappell was also accused of ruling by instilling fear in the team members. Some experts felt that Chappell with his tough posturing, use of management jargon, and frequent experimentations was confusing the team members. 85

Some people were also concerned about conflicts of interests in Chappell’s relationship with More. There was no doubt that the duo saw eye-to eye on all issues related to Indian cricket. The concern was that there was a business arrangement between the two, through which trainees from More’s cricket academy became the first batch to be sent to Australia to attend the “Chappell Way” program. 86 It was felt that these conflicts of interests had prompted More to say that Ganguly would never be selected again even though the BCCI had said that Ganguly’s comeback would depend on his performance. The doors to the Indian team were also shut to players like Zaheer and Nehra, while there was a lot of pressure on players like Yuvraj, Sehwag, and Harbhajan. Moreover, since the Chappell Way program was being promoted by both the coach and chief selector, selling this dream to the Indian public had become that much easier. 87

ON THE RIGHT TRACK?

With the team hitting a purple patch, experts felt that there were indications that it was moving in the right direction. Chappell was praised for his contributions. However, they felt that it was too early to make any judgment on the methods and coaching style employed by Chappell. It would also be premature to say that a majority of the players in the team had bought into the ‘Commitment to Excellence’ espoused by Chappell. With the controversies behind him and the team performing on a consistent basis, Chappell revealed that there had been a time when he was considering his options; ultimately, his commitment to the job had prevented him from resigning.

“I have an unflinching commitment to the job. I am more committed today than I was the day I started, because I have seen what can be done; I have seen what can be achieved if we get the right people with the right commitment together,” 88 he said.

But at the same time, his critics, such as Kapil Dev, claimed that Chappell was riding on the team built up by Ganguly. And one had to wait for some more time to see the real contributions of Chappell. Cricket experts said that though India’s winning spree under the new regime was laudable, one should wait to see whether the same performance would be replicated on foreign

soil. Javagal Srinath, a former Indian cricketer and an international match referee, said, “The recent results will temporarily stand to testify that the current team is heading in the right direction. Some of the senior members would certainly endorse that the reality check could only be done when the team starts its campaign on foreign soil.” He also said that Ganguly-Wright had left behind a legacy that would be very difficult to match. 89

The doors were already shut to some of the people Chappell did not want in the team. The fact that the coach, captain, and chief selector saw eye-to-eye on all matters also helped. However, occasional problems surfaced when a team member had to be rapped on the knuckles for getting nostalgic about Ganguly’s era. Ganguly was also not making life any easier for Chappell by refusing to announce his retirement from cricket and continuing his efforts to win back a place in the team.

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Exhibit I

Some of Chappell’s Predecessors

**John Wright** (November 2000-April 2005) A former New Zealand cricketer. Got the job after coaching English county side Kent for four years. The highlights of Wright’s tenure with the Indian cricket team were the historic Test series victory in Pakistan and reaching the 2003 World Cup final.

**Anshuman Gaekwad** (October 1997-September 1999 and August 2000-October 2000) Former Indian cricketer. Gaekwad was at the helm during 1999 World Cup, when India finished bottom in the Super Six stage.

**Kapil Dev** (October 1999-August 2000) The former World Cup winning Indian captain. During his tenure, the team won only one test match. He resigned at the height of the match-fixing controversies in 2000 but was cleared of any involvement.

**Madan Lal** (September 1996-October 1997) Former Indian cricketer who was a part of the 1983 World Cup winning team. During his tenure, the team won only three of 14 Tests and 16 of 46 ODIs.

*Adapted from Christopher Martin-Jenkins, “Chappell Bows to Immense Pressure and Jumps India Ship Before He Can be Pushed,”* www.timesonline.co.uk, April 5, 2007.

Exhibit II

Greg Chappell – A Factfile

**NAME:** Gregory Stephen Chappell  
**BORN:** August 7, 1948 in Unley, South Australia.  
**AS A PLAYER:**  
**Tests:** 7,110 runs, average 53.86, 24x100, 31x50, highest score 247 not out v New Zealand 1974  
**ODIs:** 2,331 runs, average 40.18, 3x100, 14x50, highest score 138 not out v New Zealand 1980.  
**AS CAPTAIN:** Two stints as captain between 1975-1977 season and 1979-1983 season  
**Tests:** Played – 48, Won – 21, Lost – 13, Drew – 14  
**ODIs:** Played – 49, Won – 21, Lost - 25  
**AS COACH:** South Australia, Indian national team

*Compiled from various sources.*
### Exhibit III

**Chappell’s Accusations against Ganguly**

- Ganguly’s personal form was affecting his ability to lead the side.
- His mental state was fragile and he was not suitable for leading the side.
- His nervousness was affecting the team.
- Ganguly was dividing the team.
- The team has become fearful and distrustful due to Ganguly’s rumor-mongering and deceit.
- Ganguly was not committed to fitness and skipped fitness regimens.
- He feigned injuries.
- Everything he does is designed to maximize his chance of success and is usually detrimental to someone else’s chances.

*Adapted from Greg Chappell, “‘It is Time for Him to Move on,’” [www.outlookindia.com](http://www.outlookindia.com), 2005.*
### Exhibit IV

**Chappell's Performance: 2005-06**

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**Highlight:**
- A record 16 successive wins while chasing in ODIs in 2005-06.

*Adapted from Sportstar, April 14, 2007.*
References and Suggested Readings:

The Chappell Way (A): A Case Study in Team Building and…


44. Christopher Martin-Jenkins, “Chappell Bows to Immense Pressure and Jumps India Ship Before He Can be Pushed.” www.timesonline.co.uk, April 5, 2007.


