

SACHIN TENDULKAR

Playing It My Way

My Autobiography



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with Boria Majumdar


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To all my fellow Indians.

The author's proceeds from this book will be used to support two charitable causes: the alleviation of malnutrition in children and the provision of clean water to the underprivileged.



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Who do I acknowledge first and how do I acknowledge the millions of cricket supporters who have stood by me throughout my career? My simple answer is to dedicate this book to those fans for their unwavering support and encouragement.

The others who need to be thanked profoundly must quite obviously start with Anjali, my devoted wife and partner in everything, who felt I could and should tell my story for posterity. My readers will know if I have managed to do so well enough.

Sincere thanks must also go to the following:

Ajit, who grew up with me and made me the cricketer I was, and who shared my passion for telling my story. Thanks to him for reading and commenting on the drafts.

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PROLOGUE

On 16 November 2013, my cricketing journey finally came to an end at the Wankhede Stadium. After somehow managing to complete my farewell speech, I was having a conversation with my family, trying to soak in every moment, when my team-mate Virat Kohli walked up to me. He said, '*Paaji aapne kaha tha aap ko yaad dilane ke liye ki aapko pitch pe jana hain.*' (You asked me to remind you that you had to go to the pitch one final time.) To be honest, I hadn't forgotten; I was just trying to put the moment off for a little longer. It was to be my final visit to the 22 yards that had nurtured and cared for me for so long.

As I walked across the outfield I knew so well, my mind was a complete blank. A lump was forming in my throat as I reached the pitch to pay my final regards. I was there for barely fifteen seconds and all I said was, 'Thank you for taking care of me.' As I headed back to the pavilion for the last time, my mind was suddenly a muddle of memories. In a matter of seconds I had traversed the entire twenty-four-year journey of my career – from my first net session with my coach Ramakant Achrekar, to getting out for 74 in my final Test innings against the West Indies.

It seems to me that no autobiography can claim to document every detail of the author's life. That's impossible. There are bound to be issues that can't be written about for one reason or another, events that are too personal or perhaps too sensitive. Yet I have set out to make this account of my career as close to the full story as I can. Many of the events I describe are, of course, well-known to cricket fans, but I have also tried to talk about a number of things I have not addressed in public before, some of them a little embarrassing, and I hope that readers will find plenty to interest them.

Before starting this book, I had to think long and hard about whether it was the right thing to do. It wasn't an easy decision. I am not in the habit of being sensational for the sake of it or saying things to ruffle feathers. That's just not me. However, I knew that if I agreed to write my story, I would have to be completely honest, as that's the way I have always played the game.

So here I am, at the end of my final innings, having taken that last walk back to the pavilion, ready to recount as many incidents as I can remember from a career in which I was lucky enough to be able to spend my time Playing It My Way.

CHILDHOOD

‘Son, life is like a book. It has numerous chapters. It also has many a lesson in it. It is made up of a wide variety of experiences and resembles a pendulum where success and failure, joy and sorrow are merely extremes of the central reality. The lessons to be learnt from success and failure are equally important. More often than not, failure and sorrow are bigger teachers than success and happiness. You are a cricketer and sportsman. You are fortunate to be representing your country, and that is a great honour. But never forget that this too is just another chapter in the book. Typically, let’s say a person lives for seventy or eighty years or so. How many years will you play sport? Twenty years; if you are very good, maybe even twenty-five years. Even by that yardstick, you will live the majority of your years outside the sphere of professional sport. This clearly means that there is more to life than cricket. I am asking you, son, to keep a pleasant disposition and maintain a balanced nature. Do not allow success to breed arrogance in you. If you remain humble, people will give you love and respect even after you have finished with the game. As a parent, I would be happier hearing people say, “Sachin is a good human being” than “Sachin is a great cricketer” any day.’

My father’s words, which I often heard while growing up, encapsulate my life’s philosophy.

I was born to a very close-knit Maharashtrian family in Mumbai’s Bandra East and lived in the Sahitya Sahawas colony, a residential co-operative for writers. I am one of four children, with two brothers and a sister. Nitin, Ajit and Savita are all older than me, and not only am I the youngest in the family but I was also the worst behaved.

My father, Ramesh Tendulkar, was an acclaimed Marathi poet, critic and professor, while my mother, Rajani, worked for the Life Insurance Corporation of India. Humility and modesty were their hallmarks and I owe a lot of my personality to my upbringing. Despite all my unreasonableness and all the embarrassments I caused them, my parents never gave up on me. In fact, I have often wondered just how they managed to cope with such a naughty child. Though he must have been pushed to the limits sometimes, my father would never shout at me and was always patient when dealing with my mischief. This added to my respect for my father as I grew older. Losing him during the 1999 World Cup in England remains one of the most traumatic moments of my life and I will forever remain indebted to him for helping me become the human being that I am.

My mother, the best cook in the world for me, will do anything to see a smile on my face. She used to make the most delicious fish and prawn curry, *baigan bharta* and *varan bhaat* (lentils and rice) for us at home, and I owe my appetite and love of food to her. I fondly remember lying on her lap after eating delicious home-cooked meals, as she sang the most beautiful songs while trying to get me off to sleep. Listening to her while dozing off at the end of the day instilled in me a love for music that has remained with me to this day.

My brothers, Nitin and Ajit, have always backed me in my endeavours and, on the cricket side, I owe a lot to Ajit, who is ten years older than me and was a good club cricketer himself but decided to