

# In sport and in life, Lord of all-rounders

DEBRAJ MITRA

Calcutta: An ace raconteur. A passionate philanthropist. Also, a champion cricketer.

Calcutta learnt why Ian Terence Botham is an all-rounder in every sense. Not just for his cricketing prowess but for a repertoire built out of passion, compassion, experience, wry wit and bluntness.

There could hardly have been a better speaker to celebrate arguably one of India's greatest "all-rounders", Mansoor Ali Khan "Tiger" Pataudi — dashing batsman, gun fielder, a captain who changed the way India played cricket, and a nawab who could charm the leading lady of Bollywood just like that.

"I thought he was very relaxed. But when you've spent time with him, you realise he had a game plan.... He was magnificent," Both-

am said at the 12th edition of the Tiger Pataudi Memorial Lecture, a joint initiative by The Bengal Club and The Telegraph, presented by the Bhawanipur Global Campus and powered by Eden.

Saif Ali Khan, Tiger's son and Bollywood star, was in the front row at the GD Birla Sabhaghar on Tuesday evening, listening in rapt attention and often breaking into laughter as "Lord Botham" lorded over the audience.

## Champ

More than 5,000 Test runs, 383 wickets, 27 five-wicket hauls, and 14 centuries. Yet, Botham's biggest achievement came outside cricket. The sport was a springboard for his ultimate achievement: his decades-long fundraising crusade for leukaemia treatment.

The world had known



Ian Botham delivers the Tiger Pataudi Memorial Lecture at the GD Birla Sabhaghar on Tuesday. Picture by Sanat Kr Sinha

him as a "naughty boy", something the 70-year-old Botham acknowledged. But few would know that as a young man beginning his journey to cricketing greatness, his heart had gone out to children caught in an unequal battle with death.

In 1977, at a hospital in Taunton, Botham, then a 21-year-old, newly capped Test cricketer nursing an

injured foot, had wandered into the children's ward and had had a chance encounter with four boys playing board games. They got chatting, and Botham promised to come back. He would have, but by the time he had healed, the boys had passed away.

These leukaemia deaths inspired Botham to dedicate his life to fundraising, even-

tually launching his famous charity walks in 1985. For nearly three decades, Ian "Beefy" Botham undertook a series of gruelling, long-distance charity walks across the UK.

Called "Beefy's Walks", the treks raised millions of pounds for leukaemia treatment and research.

"We have covered 10,500 miles, which is the distance from London to Sydney. Back when we began, the survival rate for kids with the most common form of leukaemia was 20 per cent. We were able to announce, just after the second wave of Covid, that there is now a 94 per cent chance of survival."

The audience broke into applause.

Just minutes earlier, Botham had been speaking about how cricket — "red-ball cricket" — mirrored life.

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# Lord of all-rounders

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"It was hard work. But it was the most satisfying thing I have done. I could do it because of what I achieved in cricket. It gave me a springboard," Botham said.

## Game knows game

The lecture was peppered with delightful anecdotes and a glimpse of the artful ferocity with which he surprised batsmen.

The man who was not scared of the fiercest West Indian fast bowlers was petrified by dogs. Botham said about someone he called "the complete player": Sunil Manohar Gavaskar.

Botham and Gavaskar were teammates at the Somerset County Cricket Club.

Gavaskar had once entered a phone booth to make a call. He stayed inside for 45 minutes. Not because he kept talking, but because Botham had left his boxer right outside the booth. "It was a hot day. He was not amused," Botham said.

He mentioned how Gavaskar would keep measuring himself against Vishy — the iconic contest for who was the shortest cricketer in the world. Allan Lamb comes close, Botham said.

For the Little Master, Botham said he had "nothing but total respect".

"Twelve centuries against the West Indies... For me, he is the complete player."

Gavaskar actually has 13.

Viv Richards and Botham, celebrated for their formidable on-field rivalry and their legendary off-field friendship, have never addressed each other by their Christian names since their first meeting. It has always been Smoky and Beefy.

Richards and Botham first met and played together in an under-25 match in Bath. Richards could only manage a first-ball duck, his off stump "out of the ground". Botham managed to score a few runs but could not do much with the ball.

Richards then walked up to the captain. "Cappy, I can bowl," he volunteered. Botham called it "non-spinning off spin". But Richards picked up six wickets in the match.

"After the match, he told me 'Beefy, man, you get the runs, I take the wickets'. It didn't quite work out that way," said Botham.

## Ultimate test

"Believe me, as far as I am concerned, if we don't have Test



Ian Botham at the Tiger Pataudi Memorial Lecture at the GD Birla Sabhaghar on Tuesday. Picture by Sanat Kr Sinha

cricket, we don't have cricket as I know it," Botham said barely a minute and a half into his 45-minute talk. The audience, many perhaps seeking validation in the face of the T20 slam-bang, roared back their appreciation.

He called Indian cricket the "fastest growing, most explosive story" in modern sports.

"But it has its problems. You control the (cricket) world in many ways. Is that good? It is debatable. But at times, Test cricket is overlooked," Botham said before picking his side.

He loves how Virat Kohli

placed Test cricket above T20. Moments after winning his first IPL title, Kohli said that despite being a massive career milestone, the IPL trophy ranks "five levels below Test cricket".

"It is called 'Test' because it tests all your faculties... It is the ultimate proof of the pudding," Botham said.

## Equaliser

Botham's was a tough act to follow. But Saif did his charming best. He spoke about his "abba".

"He commanded as much respect in his house as he did on the field. Growing up, cricket was everywhere in our home. The gardeners, drivers, people who worked for us, everyone played. Cricket was a great equaliser and taught us to respect people from a very early age," Saif said.

The Bengal Club president, Partha Ranjan Das, asked Saif about Pataudi's passion for bridge. "He was a keen bridge player," Saif said.

They played for hours on end. But the best player in the house was his mother Sharmila Tagore's sister, who lived in Calcutta.

In that sporting household, talking cricket was forbidden, Saif said.

IN THE COURT OF THE LEARNED 1ST CIVIL JUDGE (SENIOR DIVISION) AT ALIPORE

District: South 24 Parganas

Title Suit No. 607 of 2026

NOTICE UNDER ORDER I RULE 8 OF THE CODE OF CIVIL PROCEDURE, 1908

Issued on behalf of the Plaintiff- Dalhousie Holdings Limited, pursuant to Order dated 30.04.2026 passed by the Learned 1st Civil Judge (Senior Division), 1st Court, Alipore, South 24 Parganas

Dalhousie Holdings Limited, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1913, having its registered office at 29, Netaji Subhas Road, Kolkata - 700001 and corporate office at 26, Belvedere Road, Kolkata-700027, West Bengal, within the Jurisdiction of this Learned Court;

...Plaintiff

-Versus-

- The Woodlands Syndicate, an unincorporated association of persons, having its office at 8/7, Alipore Road, Kolkata- 700 027, and also at 21, Hemanta Basu Sarani, Kolkata - 700 001, represented by its Chairman, and sued in a representative capacity on behalf of all its members and all persons claiming through or under it;
- PCBL Chemical Limited (formerly Known as PCBL Limited and prior thereto as Phillips Carbon Black Limited), a company incorporated under the Companies Act, having its registered office at 31, Netaji Subhas Road, Kolkata, West Bengal, India, 700001, bearing CIN No. L23109WB1960PLC024602;
- Set Square Estates Private Limited, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, having its registered office at S/O Madan Gopal Rawia, South Bawali, K P. Mondal Road, P.S. Nodakhali, Chak Kashipur, South 24 Parganas, Budge Budge - II, West Bengal, India, 743384, bearing CIN No. U68100WB2023PTC264309;
- JSW Dulux Limited (formerly known as Akzo Nobel India Limited and prior thereto as ICI India Limited), a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1913, having its registered office at 80/A, South City Business Park, 770, Anandapur, Eastern Metropolitan Bypass, Near Fortis Hospital, Kolkata - 700 107, bearing CIN No. L24292WB1954PLC021516;
- Al Champdany Industries Limited (formerly known as The Anglo India Jute Mills Co Limited), a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1913, having its registered office at 25, Prince Street, Kolkata - 700 072, bearing CIN No. L51909WB1917PLC002767;
- Braithwaite & Co. Limited, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1913, having its registered office at 5, Hide Road, Kolkata - 700 043, bearing CIN No. U74210WB197600GOI030798;
- Asimani Developers Limited, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, having its registered office at 4, India Exchange Place (ICC Towers) 2nd Floor, Kolkata, West Bengal, India, 700001, bearing CIN No. U70101WB1997PLC082838;
- Cesiro India Limited, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, having its registered office at Technopolis Knowledge Park, Mahakali Caves Road, Chakala, Andheri (East), Mumbai- 400 093, bearing CIN No. L23200MH1979PLC021359;
- Andrew Yule & Co. Limited, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, having its registered office at 8 Dr Rajendra Prasad Sarani, Kolkata-700 001, bearing CIN No. L63090WB1919GOI003229;
- Exide Industries Limited, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1913, having its registered office at Exide House, 59E, Chowringhee Road, Kolkata - 700 020, bearing CIN No. L31402WB1947PLC014919;