

Dear All,

England won a remarkable test match in Pakistan on Monday. The reason it is remarkable and the lessons from their captain are here in my learnings for the week.

Every leader has a vision or a statement of what he/she wants to achieve. I have seen very few leaders walk the talk and do exactly what they say they stand for. Leaders say they want innovation, but do little about it, leaders say they will drive customer/consumer focus but do little about it, leader say that portfolio transformation is their path and do nothing, leaders say they are cost conscious but are convenient about it. It is easy for business leaders to say something and not pursue it, it is more difficult for sports leaders to say something and not follow it.

Ben Stokes is one of England's celebrated cricketers. He became captain early this year. He said he wants England to play attractive cricket and bring crowds back to test match watching by playing attractive cricket. Here is the set of learnings:

1. First – England beat Pakistan in the test match with about 8 minutes left for darkness to stop the match.
2. England cricket team is playing in Pakistan after 17 years. None of the current players have ever played in Pakistan in a test match.
3. England has only won a test match twice before in Pakistan- under Ted Dexter in October 1961, the Naseer Hussain's team won a test match in December 2000. This is the third test match they have ever won. The English press called it the greatest England win outside England.
4. England players have never liked playing in Pakistan. The famous cricketer Ian Botham said "Pakistan is a place you should send your mother-in-law"
5. The cricket pitch in Rawalpindi was a dead pitch, but England decided to be positive.
6. England became the first team in the world to score 500 runs on a single day, never done before, they scored at more than 6 runs an over, like a T20 match, in the second innings they outdid themselves and score at 7 runs an over. No cricket team in the world has scored at that pace over 2 innings.
7. England bowled out Pakistan and then played aggressively in the second innings.
8. At tea on day 4, England were 343 runs ahead and Ben Stokes did the unthinkable, he declared and asked Pakistan to score 343 in four sessions. There were three ex England captains in Rawalpindi on Sunday and all of them said they would never have declared. It was a bold move since England won with 8 minutes to spare.
9. When he declared, Ben Stokes said "we have come to play positive cricket. "I am prepared to lose to win, I have not come here to play for a draw", brave words a day before the result.
10. England bowled their heart out on a dead wicket on day 5. Ben Stokes kept attacking even when Pakistan looked like winning. He had 7 people round the bat, he didn't defend, he kept attacking.
11. He stayed with the old ball and didn't take the new ball when he realized that light could run out and stop his bowlers.
12. He bowled non-stop for an hour in the afternoon heat, he led from the front and showed that he was willing to gamble.
13. His thinking about field placement, bowling changes etc. were all out of the box, in a way he was tearing up the 200-year-old cricket manual to reinvent the game for today's consumer.
14. He got everything right on all five days – because he had only one objective – to play attractive cricket and go for a win.

15. Inspirational leaders inspire committed people, they cannot motivate people who are not committed either to their craft or to improvement or to their team.

Ben Stokes and Brendon McCullum the coach makes a great team and are changing the game. It just shows what is possible when you have resolve and are not scared to lose on the path to win. I'd really like you to ask yourself, what are you willing to commit to publicly and then to go and do it, despite the odds.

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