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India and West Indies met for the first time on Australian soil on this day, 1991, at Perth.

And they produced one of the greatest ODIs of all time.

In those days the WACA pitch used to produce incredible pace and bounce (it still does, but not as much).
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So West Indies picked Marshall, Patterson, Ambrose, and Cummins.

India went in with Kapil, Prabhakar, Srinath, and debutant Subroto Banerjee.

Richardson opted to field, and Srikkanth was out caught in the fifth over.

Now Manjrekar joined Shastri.
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Both had scored hundreds on West Indian soil three seasons ago.

But while they did not throw it away, runs did not come either.

Manjrekar did not look particularly pleased when he was given out caught behind off Cummins. 35/2. 18th over.

Then Tendulkar was caught mid off.

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Then Shastri flicked Cummins for the first over of the match.

Ambrose had Azhar caught behind, but Shastri stepped out to drive Hooper straight for four.

I described the two fours because these were the only ones in the 284-ball Indian innings.
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Then one Brian Lara took a flying catch off a Shastri edge.

His 33 had taken Shastri 110 balls. It would remain the highest score of the match.

Kapil holed out to mid wicket, but Amre and Prabhakar added a crucial 23 for the seventh wicket.
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Then Amre dropped one close to his feet and ran. The ball rolled behind the stumps, and Williams – still trying to fill the giant shoes of Dujon – beat Prabhakar.

The last three wickets (including two more run outs) fell in no time.

India were bowled out for 126.
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They had defended 183 against the same opposition eight years ago, but surely this was too few?

They needed a start. Sandhu had done that in 1983. This time it was Kapil.

It took him one ball to get West Indies' most senior batsman out of the way.
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It pitched on leg and middle, curved away, took Haynes' edge, and went to More.

Meanwhile, Prabhakar kept cramping the batsmen for space. Wallace chopped one on to the stump.

Then Kapil produced another beauty.
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Richardson tried to not chase it, but the ball still took the edge.

25/3. India were in it now.

Once Kapil and Prabhakar were done, India's change bowlers rose to the challenge.

Hooper tried to leave one from Srinath, but the ball hit the bat and crashed on to the stumps.
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Arthurton was yorked next ball. 55/5.

All this drama, and it was only the 20th over.

Banerjee's turn. He responded with three wickets.

Lara first, caught behind.

Williams survived when a skier fell in front of Tendulkar and went for four overthrows.
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But Srikkanth, running backwards, took a well-judged catch to send him back.

Marshall batted for 36 balls before slashing and edging.

76/8. 29th over. Another 51. It was India's match to lose.

But West Indies were not going to cave in.
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Ambrose, donning a maroon cap, the feeble bat almost a toothpick in his hands, stood (literally) tall.

Along with him was a young, defiant Cummins.

Now Azhar had to take a call.

There were 21 overs left, but the pace quartet could bowl only 11 of them.

What should he do?
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Take a risk and make all of them bowl their full quota?

Or get Shastri or Tendulkar to bowl from one end?

Azhar chose the former.

Ambrose and Cummins did not wait for the 40th over. They took on the fast bowlers.
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Cummins cover-drove Banerjee for four and hit Srinath over point for three.

Ambrose lofted a no-ball from Kapil into the stands.

Cummins drove Srinath past mid off for four.

With 13 needed, Cummins hit one to Shastri to mid off and set off.

It was probably hit too hard.
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It was a direct throw.

Even those legs of Ambrose could not carry him fast enough.

But Patterson, who would finish with 44 runs in 20 ODI innings, suddenly showed some defiance.

Amidst all this, they reached the all-important 40-over mark.

The four fast bowlers bowled out.
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West Indies needed 6. Who would bowl the 41st over?

Azhar could have gone for the safe option of the senior man, Shastri.

Instead, he opted for the teenager.

Tendulkar bowled mostly seam in those days.

A few months ago, he had taken 4/34 at against the same team at Sharjah.

It was the first time India had beaten West Indies for the first time batting second in an ODI.

He conceded two off the first four balls.

Then Patterson had a hoick, the ball went past mid wicket, and they ran three.

The scores were tied.
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If Tendulkar could prevent Cummins from scoring a run, Shastri might have a go at Patterson at the other end.

Azhar brought the field in.

Tendulkar bowled outside off.

Cummins went for the shot, and the ball dipped rapidly as it travelled towards the slip cordon.
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It was dipping fast so fast that it was evident that it would never make it to second slip.

It was also to the left of the fielder.

But the second slip was Azhar, which reduced these "should not"s to irrelevance.

It was an outstanding catch even by his standards.
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Exactly how he got his hands under a ball so low boggles the mind, but he caught it and came up in one fluid motion.

It was as good a slip catch as they make them.

A fitting end to a classic.