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14

PLAY

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Bowling in Decline: Gower

by Ashok Venugopal

Chennai: Former England captain David Gower, in a navy blue striped T-shirt with matching peach cargo shorts and slip-ons, looks every bit the 'Debonair' cricketer that he was. Two months short of 59, he can still charm with his grace.

Widely acknowledged as one of the most elegant batsmen of all time, the former left-hander rues that the advent of shorter formats has led to the extinction of artists. *Excerpts...*

Why don't we see grace these days?

In recent times, Mahela Jayawardene was one touch player. He retired from Test cricket and it must have something to do with requirements of the modern game. Players are stronger and playing all formats. People like to come and see players like David Warner, Chris Gayle who are all power. You see them clear the boundary. So you tend to have more of them.

Does India badly need a quality leg-spinner?

Why just India, everyone would like to have a quality



David Gower

leg-spinner. We saw Abdul Qadir, Shane Warne set benchmarks. You have to get a good mixture of bowlers. A leg-spinner will always be handy.

What is special about a leg-spinner?

Leg-spinners have always been special because of the skill and variety they have to offer. Anything that has mystery, anything clever is obviously useful for the team.

Kohli has been compared to Viv Richards.

Viv is on another page. Virat is undoubtedly talented. Comparisons are difficult, different eras, different performances. Viv played for the West Indies team of the 80s and Virat is a brilliant player now. He is playing all three formats and Viv played in two. It will be safe to say Viv would have been brilliant in Twenty 20s.

Should Kohli be made skipper for all formats?

India can continue with the current arrangement. Different countries have different captains over formats, England too. If you have a captain capable of captaining and playing effectively in all formats, you will be lucky.

You said with Ricky Ponting's example that helmets have helped players improve shot selection and score heavily. Has the quality of bowling too declined?

You are right. World over, the real quality of bowling has declined, compared to previous times. There have been some high quality performances, but the overall standard has come down.

Being a purist, would you have enjoyed playing IPL?

I would have. In my career, my interest in shorter formats diminished as time went on. So if towards the end of my career someone offers me money to play 20-over games, I might play, because money is a big incentive!