

KOHLI IS NOT IN GOWER'S TOP FOUR

S. BAGAWATI PRASAD
CHENNAI, JAN. 31

Sunil Gavaskar may believe that Virat Kohli can bat at night without lights but former England skipper David Gower doesn't even include India's Test skipper in his list of world's four best batsmen at the moment. In a freewheeling interview to this newspaper on

Sunday, Gower made South Africa's AB de Villiers his top pick. "The most brilliant all-round batsman is de Villiers. Not far behind him are Steve Smith, Kane Williamson and Joe Root. The trio can be exceptional on their day," the Englishman added.

Kohli reared his head once again. Can the Delhi batsman match the benchmark set by Viv Richards? There was a look of disbelief on Gower's face before the 58-year-old player-turned-commentator came up with an emphatic "no way". He added: "Without a doubt Viv was a great. Kohli is, undeniably, very talented. Comparisons just fill space. They were from different eras and had different requirements. Virat is a brilliant player now.

"I don't know how he would have fared against the West Indies bowling attack of the 80s. Viv only played two formats. I think it's safe to say Viv would have been sensational in T20 as well."

David Gower feels there should be no comparisons between Virat Kohli and Vivian Richards.
—E.K. SANJAY

The amiable Gower, who has a legion of fans for his current work behind the microphone as he once did for his artistry in front of the wicket, opened up on a variety of subjects.

EXCERPTS

Q Do you think India should have only one captain for all the three formats?

It doesn't matter whether it's Kohli or Dhoni. Many countries, including England, have different captains for different versions of the game. If you have a captain who is capable of playing as well as leading the side effectively in all three formats, then you are very lucky.

Q BCCI doesn't allow its players to play county cricket regularly or send its players to take part in various T20 leagues. Do you think it's a big disadvantage for Indian cricketers?

India are a popular team across the globe. You can imagine the great demand for their players. It's all about balancing between every player wanting to make money, win and build his record. You have got to get out there to do it and but you have to be fresh enough to do it.

Q One of your famous quotes is "It's hard work making batting look effortless." Many people have compared Rohit Sharma to you. What is your take on the subject?

I would stay out of that argument. When you watch someone scoring runs easily it means they have got more time than others. At the moment, Rohit has the time and is in great form. It's a very good sign that Rohit is scoring runs in Australia. For someone like Rohit, whose talent is beyond doubt, I think it is long overdue. He was expected to score so many runs before.

Q English players are predominant among the players who have quit the game citing psychological concerns. Asian cricketers, on the other hand, don't quit all of a sudden. What do you think drives a player to call it quits?

It's a very complicated subject. Marcus (Trescothick) wrote a good book about his psychological issues and was brave enough to admit that a problem existed. I would be amazed if there were no cricketers from any other part of the world who never went through a confidence crisis. There are probably a lot of players out there

who might have some sort of issues lurking underneath but they won't admit them. The fact that people move away after an Ashes series (Jonathan Trott, Graeme Swann) is just a coincidence. Marcus never had an issue facing the Aussies on the field; it was more a fear of flying overseas. I don't want to be definitive about it.

Q Do you feel that a lot of modern day commentators don't abide by the golden rule laid down by the late Riche Benaud that "we" and "they" should never be used to refer to a team?

Speaking for myself as a commentator, I need to be honest on air and remember you are being heard across the globe and not just in one part. I'm well aware that some of my colleagues are undeniably jingoistic. If you listen to Australian commentary they are always one sided. It's even beyond that. They are looking at one side and one side only! (laughs)

Q What do you think about the Chris Gayle saga?

I think that was silly. It's not a cricketing issue; at the same time it's not a hanging offence either. It was a misjudgment.

'NO NEED FOR LIVE CHAT IN INTERNATIONAL MATCHES'

Ever since Steve Smith was sent off by Virat Kohli with a "chatterbox" gesture, a lot has been said about batsmen wired up for a chat when they are at the crease.

Senior commentator and former England skipper David Gower said it shouldn't happen in an international match.

Gower recalled an incident in which he found himself with an ear piece while he was batting 30

years ago. "I was in Australia working for Channel Nine. There was a charity game at the SCG. In a first of its kind, I was on the microphone, talking to the great Richie Benaud with Mike Whitney running in to bowl.

"I was fine and relaxed, concentrating on the ball. As luck would have it, he bowled a very good yorker and I was bowled. I carried on talking as I walked off. I would argue that although it's unusual for a batsman to talk to TV commentators while batting, it didn't make

any difference to me. I got a good ball and I missed," he said.

However, Gower stressed that he would not have opted to use a mike in a Test or an ODI.

"I wouldn't have done it even in a T20 international," he said.

"The live chat is an effort to make the game attractive to viewers. However, if someone says it's a game of the highest quality, then you wouldn't have a Djokovic speaking to commentators in the Australian Open," he added.

