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'Oz commentary biased'

Gayle Episode A Misjudgment And Not A Hanging Offence, Says Gower

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Chennai: Former England captain David Gower is just as smooth an operator with the mike as he was with the willow when he used to caress the fastest bowlers on both sides of the wicket. Gower was candid in his views while delivering the inaugural KS Narayanan lecture on Saturday and while interacting with the media on Sunday. He spoke on a range of issues — from preparing for a commentary stint to the irony of Djokovic not being loved as much as Federer. Excerpts: **As a player-turned commentator, does on-field rivalry against a particular team have an impact when you go on air?**

Well, there are two things I try all the time. Firstly, I try to be honest because as a player

there are certain mistakes you would have made, and when someone on the field does it, you understand it and give an honest assessment of the game. Second, there are two teams playing it. We live in a modern era where the broadcast is for a broader audience, and I am well aware of that. When you listen to Australian commentary, you know it is beyond doubt one-sided.

Your take on Steve Smith conversing with commentators in the middle of play and the backlash Chris Gayle faced for his comment to a female anchor at the recently-concluded Big Bash?

I think the Gayle episode was silly. I am sure he would prefer revisiting that issue and it's not a cricketing issue. It's just a misjudgment and not



CANDID VIEWS:
David Gower

a hanging offence. The Steve Smith saga is part of making the game attractive to the television audience. The same thing happened to me many years ago. I was in Australia working for Channel Nine, and they put a game in Sydney Cricket Ground which was a charity game. While batting, I was chatting via a microphone to the great Richie Benaud as Mike Whitney came in to bowl.

I was fine and concentrating on the ball. As luck would have it, I missed a good yorker and was bowled. I could argue that though it was rather unusual talking to commentators under those circumstances, it didn't make any difference. Having said that, I wouldn't employ that (on-field chat with players) in the highest form of the game.

You cited the example of Fe-

derer and Djokovic during your oration. Who's your favourite?

I am a big fan of Federer. I have a lot of sympathy for Djokovic since he plays the most glorious tennis and yet for some reason, people don't seem to like him. On the other hand, Federer is someone who is liked by all. Effortless is the word to describe Federer. I remember watching a Djokovic-Federer match at the Australian Open some years ago which was won by Djokovic. But Federer played some of the most extraordinary shots and just those moments were enough for me to say that he is an absolute genius.

Do you think Federer can win another Grand Slam?

I think it's still possible. Federer is in his mid-30s and obviously you know that at this age things aren't as they were say when he was 27 or 28. But he is a sublime player and still has it in him to win another Slam.