

KS NARAYANAN | ORATION ■ Gower wants MSD & Kohli to talk on the importance of Test cricket

'REINVENT TEST CRICKET'

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CHENNAI, JAN. 30

One of the proud possessions in David Gower's trophy cabinet, as he revealed, is a silverware that he got from a British newspaper on his farewell. The inscription on the trophy reads 'for fun, style and excellence.' These three words aptly summed up the Englishman's lecture at the inaugural KS Narayanan Oration on Saturday. It was a nostalgic evening for the select crowd, the invitees of Sanmar to commemorate the group's 50-year association with Jolly Rovers club. Gower captivated the audience with interesting anecdotes.

He also recalled the famous mid-match getaway — hopping on a Tiger Moth aircraft and persuading the pilot to fly low over the field of action — that cost him dear in the summer of 1991 in Australia.

"In the next match, I walked out to bat and I could feel the pressure in the eyes of Graham Gooch from the other end. The PA guy didn't make it any easier as he played the 'Magnificent men from flying machines'," said Gower who stressed the importance of playing cricket with a bit of fun.

Gower also spoke on various issues in an interaction.

Excerpts:

TO KEEP INTEREST IN TEST CRICKET ALIVE

We have to do something to reinvent Test cricket. To make it more broadly appealing, one of the things we need to do now is ask our superstars such as MS Dhoni and Virat Kohli to talk about the importance of Test cricket. And if MS says that it's important and then the country will believe it. The previous generation, for example Sunil Gavaskar, was a strong advocate of Test cricket. And now, it's the responsibility of the current generation to pass it on. We have to think of how to make it more interesting. The day-night Test in Adelaide was the perfect example.

ICC A CLUB IN A CLOUD

When you see Chris Gayle, Kieron Pollard, Dwayne Bravo



David Gower at KS Narayanan Oration on Saturday. — E.K. SANJAY

and Andre Russell playing Big Bash League in Australia, you think why aren't they in the West Indies squad? The Windies were in Australia the same time and being hammered. I won't say Pollard is West Indies' answer to Test cricket. He is certainly better than some of them in the team. Politics in West Indies cricket is remarkable, in terms of shooting oneself in the foot. In some way, they have to equalise the remunerations. The cost of running a Test series in the Caribbean is ridiculous. The West Indies needs money and South Africa is in danger of turning itself into a poor country. That's political as well as cricketing statement. ICC is just a club in a cloud. It doesn't have influence enough to necessarily effect the change. But the moves that are coming out from Shashank Manohar, if they are true and implemented, part of the issues

can be addressed.

HAPPY WITH DRS

I think the DRS is good. Even if it's not foolproof, the statistics that ICC gives us suggest that there is an improvement in decision making. In the same time, I also want umpires to be fully involved. I don't want them to be reduced spectators within the field. I accept that DRS is not 100 per cent, but certain people are trying to improve that.

HELMETS IMPROVED ART OF BATTING

Someone like Ricky Ponting would not have been played the way he wanted if he wasn't using a helmet. People became brave with the headgear. From my experience, I can tell you it's not a good feeling to get hit on the head. Without helmet, I can't imagine someone going on one knee and playing a scoop or a

ramp shot. It's like suicide, without helmet. In my days, I think I played the reverse-sweep just once. Now, if you can't play reverse, you are not a cricketer.

KP SAGA A FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP

I agree up to a point that it was a failure of leadership. For instance, Mike Brearley, Illingworth or Ian Chappell would have taken KP by the neck a little earlier. And try and suppress his anger. There was a chance to keep him under control. There is no denying the fact that KP is an extraordinary talent. With the T20 World Cup coming up, a lot of English fans are prepared to adapt him as proper English and would want to see him play. May be a strong leader could have grounded him a five-six years ago. I don't want to be rude, but the thing with Kevin is that he is not very bright. He can easily be manip-

ulated. People who are making more money than him say to him that 'you can easily make more money'. Even though he is not playing for England any more, he is not financially doing badly. He is a privileged individual. He has to separate himself from the temptation. Kevin was misled. Sadly for him, whatever he did with those infamous text messages about Andrew Strauss and whatever he did subsequently when they went to Australia...there is never been a proper smoking gun. There is no major incident. At the end of the tour, had Cook as a captain told ECB that 'KP was needed in the team because he was good'. He would have got his way. And the 800-page resignation letter that is the book he wrote nine months later, there was not much coming from that.

EDUCATE ON CORRUPTION

Let's be truthful, even with the highest standard of social behaviour, every society has crime. We all think we are good parents, but we are not. There is always temptation. And it comes from circumstances which are unique. The players need to be educated from age-group cricket. In UK, county players given the talk every year. Policing is very hard and there is always scope for someone to indulge in malpractice. I have certain sympathy for Mohammed Amir, because he was very young. He was influenced by the captain.