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CHENNAI

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## 'Some modern-day line-ups lack the resilience to bat through tough conditions'

S. DINAKAR

**CHENNAI:** Fresh from delivering a stirring K.S. Narayanan Oration here on Saturday, David Gower did not hold back his punches during his conversation with *The Hindu* here on Sunday.

**India toured Australia last year and, save Brisbane, the pitches were very batsmen friendly. In the recent ODI and Twenty20 series down under the surfaces were incredibly flat. Isn't the trend of even Australia, where the pitches are normally lively, preparing tracks like these disturbing?**

This has been a tendency around the world. Part of the problem could be drop-in pitches. Even at Lord's during the Ashes, the pitch was very flat.

At Nottingham there was more life, and we saw an Australian collapse. Some of the modern-day line-ups lack the resilience to bat through tough conditions.

**So we have plenty of flat track bullies these days.**

There are many of them. But

some of them are good enough to make runs in difficult conditions too, such as Kane Williamson, Joe Root, Steven Smith and AB de Villiers.

**Muttiah Muralitharan once said that the broadcasters were to be blamed for making such tracks because they stood to lose money if a Test match ended too soon.**

Interesting. But actually the broadcasters are assured of the income for a Test irrespective of when the match concludes. Actually, it helps them if the match finishes early because the production cost is reduced.

It is the ground authorities who stand to lose more through loss of gate money.

**Are bigger bats and shorter boundaries making the contests even more lop-sided?**

The bats these days might look bigger but some of them in my time were a lot heavier.

It's not just the bats these days. The bat-speed and the sheer physicality of the players can send the ball a long way.



David Gower.

— PHOTO. M. MOORTHY

**You said 'physicality'?**

Yes, some of the boys today are so big! Modern-day training is more dedicated to improving the physicality of the cricketers.

**Yet, somewhere along the line the subtlety could be lost. Is footwork a casualty?**

In some cases. On pitches that do something, you need footwork, technique and brain. Back-foot play is very important.

But you still have someone like

Williamson who moves beautifully back and forth. Root used to hang back a lot, now he has improved his front foot play. These are quality players.

**Are you for four-day Tests?**

No. But I cannot be selfish and say because crowds still come to watch Tests in England, it should be the same everywhere else.

I also realise that one needs to take Test cricket to the next generation.

**But, say, a team batting first scores 450 for one in the allotted 100 overs of the first innings and the other side makes 460 for nine during the same period, how will it be fair on the side batting first?**

That is one of the concerns. The captains will have to change the way they set fields. And if you talk about day/night Tests, they may not work in all venues.

**Your take on the Chris Gayle incident?**

Gayle would surely like to revisit the issue. It was an error of judgment. But it's not the worst crime committed by a cricketer.