

THE HINDU

INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

www.thehindu.in • Weekly Edition • Regd. TN/ARD/68/2012-2014 • RNI No. 1019/1957 • ISSN 0971-751X • Vol. 139 • No. 5 • CITY EDITION • 44 Pages • Rs. 5.00

Printed at Chennai, Coimbatore, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Madurai, Noida, Visakhapatnam, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Vijayawada, Mangaluru, Tiruchirapalli, Kolkata, Hubballi, Mohali, Allahabad, Malappuram and Mumbai

CHENNAI

THE HINDU • SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2016

SPORT

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K.S. NARAYANAN ORATION

Give each member of team responsibility: Gower

S. DINAKAR

CHENNAI: There were times when the effortless David Gower only seemed to caress the sphere at the crease but the ball would speed away to the fence. During his K.S. Narayanan Oration here on Saturday, the Englishman was often light-hearted with his words but his points came across forcefully.

In a speech rich in humour and depth, Gower held the audience spell-bound at the Crowne Plaza Hotel at an event to celebrate the Sanmar family's 50-year association with the Jolly Rovers Cricket Club. Talking about 'Lessons from the Cricket Field,' Gower dwelt on captaincy and leadership. He said, "Give each and every member of the team responsibility, create the right atmosphere and get everyone involved during team meetings and on the field. Trust is very important."

Naming Mike Brearley and Raymond Illingworth as captains who made a huge impact on him, Gower said his contemporary Mike Gatting got the mix right as captain during a triumphant Ashes campaign



Sanmar Group chairman N. Sankar presents a memento to David Gower in Chennai on Saturday. — PHOTO. M. MOORTHY

Down Under in the mid-80s because he got the balance of "treating the senior and junior players, absolutely right."

At the other end of the spectrum was a regimental Graham Gooch. He also said a captain had to be himself and observed that Alastair Cook could not impress as captain in his early tenure because he tried to be like Andrew Strauss. It was on-

ly when he developed his own methods that Cook became successful.

Then, in a question-answer session with former India opener Aakash Chopra, Gower felt that for Test cricket to be followed by the next generation, top cricketers such as Virat Kohli would have to speak about the virtues of the five-day format and champion its

cause. Although, there could be contrary views on the umpire's call vis-a-vis marginal decisions, he said the DRS was essentially good for the game.

Asked about the 'domination of the big three', Gower said the ICC had to ensure funds were more evenly distributed so that there is development of cricket all around. "You have to get the poorer schools up with the best," he said and added the ICC was moving in the right direction under Shashank Manohar.

KP easily manipulated

Asked whether England should have handled the gifted but temperamental Kevin Pietersen differently to get the best out of him, Gower said, "Brearley or Illingworth would have caught (Pietersen) by the neck early and straightened him. Outstanding talent no doubt, but he could be easily manipulated."

Earlier, historian V. Sriram spoke about the stellar qualities of the late K.S. Narayanan, former chairman emeritus, Sanmar group. Gower had the last say when he stressed the need for cricketers to play for "fun, style and excellence."