Gavaskar’s picks of all time great cricketers

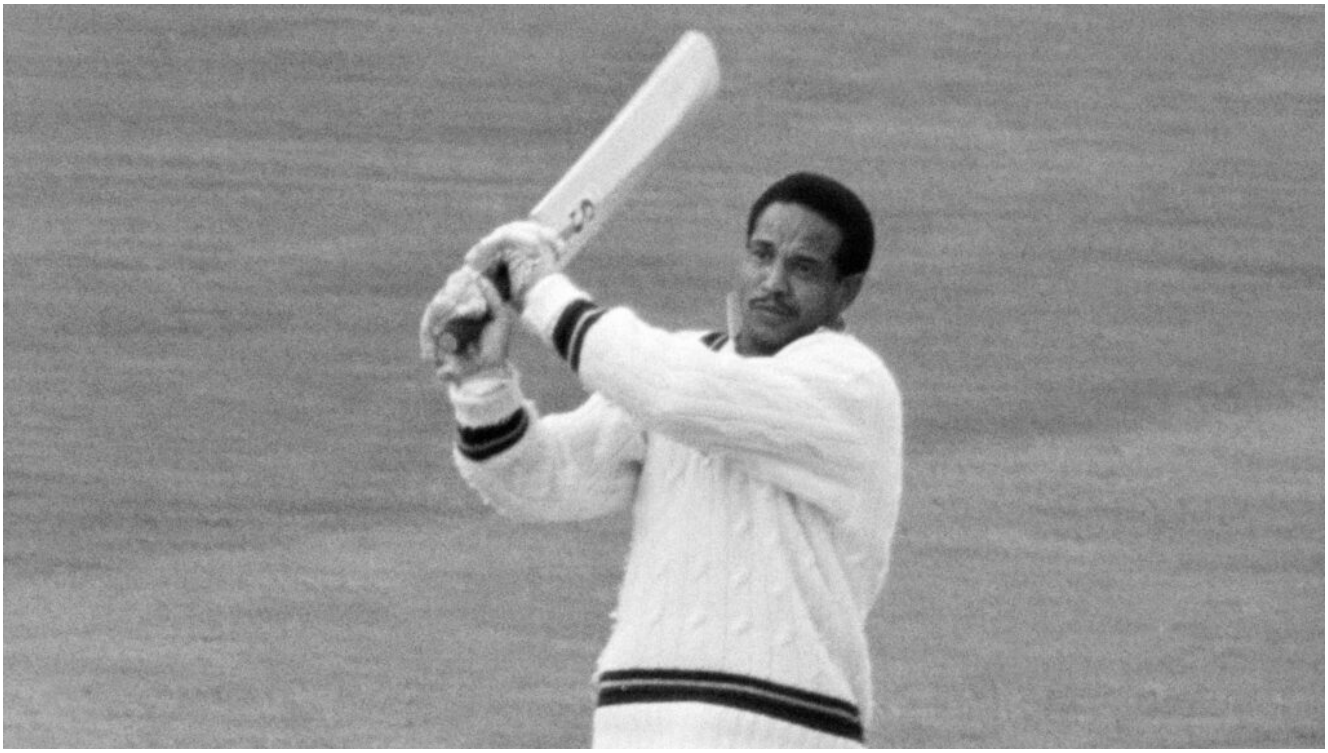
By **Sunil Sarpal**



Sunil Manohar Gavaskar the last word in cricket

India is a cricket crazy country and cricket is considered a religion here. The cricket stars are idolized and worshipped in India. Stadia chant the names of Sachin, Mahi and Virat whenever they appear on the ground. People just go crazy to witness the exploits of their stars. The followers derive some kind of energy to live their lives watching their idols.

Recently, in an interview, **Sunil Gavaskar** was asked to name three players who impressed him the most in life. Gavaskar named the following players :-



Sir Garfield Sobers

1) According to **Gavaskar**, first comes **Sir Garfield Sobers**. A SouthPaw, he could bowl spin and pace in equal measure. He could don the gloves behind the stumps too. Sobers was exceptionally athletic hence a smart fielder. He was a treat to watch with the bat.

2) **Gavaskar** rated **GR Vishwanath** as second in ranking. Vishu during his playing days scored centuries on difficult wickets. Gavaskar rates Vishu a much better batsman than him.



Kapil Dev and GR Vishwanath

3) Third in the ranking is **Kapil Dev**. Gavaskar opines that Kapil was a genuine swing bowler and could win matches of his own single handedly. He was a talented batsman too in attacking mode. He could win matches as a batsman too. Kapil was an extraordinary athlete and his fielding was of a very high class. In his illustrious career, he never missed a match due to injury. He was the India captain in 1983 when India lifted the One- day-cup.

Sunil Manohar Gavaskar has been a street smart cricketer, commentator and expert. His views are unbiased and should not be taken in a lighter vein. His cricketing assessment and class is unparalleled. He is an astute student of the game of cricket and a cricketing school unto himself.

This interview suggests that these three past cricketers need be given more responsibility either to run the cricket

academies or impart their valuable knowledge to budding cricketers thru lectures etc.

One can take a cue from the **Dennis Lillee** run **MRF Pace Academy**. This academy trains fast bowlers under the watchful eye of Aussie legend **Dennis Lillee**. MRF has produced a record number of International bowlers.

Recently, **Afghanistan** has performed exceptionally well in the just concluded ICC Trophy. Afghanistan has been able to do so because India's ex cricketer **Ajay Jadeja** is their coach.

The above three players were Gavaskar's picks. What are yours? Post your picks in the comment box below.

Hapless India lost to the Aussie assault in the World Cup '23 Finale

By Sunil Sarpal



Indian PM Narendra Modi and Australian Deputy PM, Richard Marles Congratulate Australian Captain Pat Cummins

It is not digestible that India lost to Aussies in the CWC ’23 finals while winning all 10 matches played on the trot. Even in the build up to the final, India beat Aussie comprehensively. But India’s performance in the final is not worth taking note of. Number of blemishes on the part of India are the cause of concern.

A paltry score of 240 runs was not a difficult target for opposition and that too Aussies.

The Ahmedabad pitch where the ball was not coming on to bat at rapid pace was not an easy pitch to bat on. The pitch too assisted spinners, as well. The life was not a cake walk for batters. In a situation like this, application was the key which Aussie’s Travis Head did to perfection. It was not easy

for Head in the middle but he stood his ground after being beaten invariably. He posted a resolute century for Aussie cause. Head turned out to be the difference between India's victory or defeat.



Travis Head – Match Winner

Team India definitely is a top class team but in key matches they are in total disarray.

Shubham Gill's shot was not on, playing an airy fairy shot at a crucial juncture was the first turning point of the match. That turned the tide in Australia's favour. Gill is the most important cog in indian line up. Aussies took full advantage with early in-roads and put a break on the run-rate.

Iyer too was undone by Cummins's special and India's ship was dismantled by these two important scalps.

Rohit, Kohli and Rahul were in good nick but could not extend their innings to centuries.

Surya looked the most vulnerable of the lot because his game

is stylized in T-20 mode. But this happens to be a situation when wickets were tumbling in regular intervals and Surya's stay in the middle became absolutely inevitable. He was always found in two-minds whether to go for his shots or play a restrained knock. Surya never looks at ease when in defensive mode.

Three players were primarily responsible for India's dismal game – GILL, IYER AND SURYA.



Heads Roll as AUSSIES Celebrate

Among Indian pacers, in particular, Bumrah was unlucky not to have gotten the edges of the bat. He was swinging the ball enormously but of not much avail.

Another disappointing factor was KL Rahul 's show behind the stumps.

There is a saying that the captain should not tinker with the winning ways. Rohit did this mistake by opting to open the attack with Bumrah and Shami and not with Bumrah and Siraj. Shami comes in as a first change. Pundits will not comment on

this change because Shami is the highest wicket taker in the tournament.

To conclude, Aussies is a team well equipped to play key matches in style which they did to perfection and lifted the ICC Trophy.

Indian Juggernaut beats New Zealand, thunders into ICC World Cup’23 finale against Australia

By **Sunil Sarpal**



How can you describe VIRAT KOHLI? He considers Sachin Tendulkar as his hero although he has surpassed Sachin’s record of 49 ODI tons. Virat Kohli stands tall with 50 ODI

tons and is supremely fit at the age of 35 yrs. Virat's approach to batting is monumental. He plays his game studded with sublime shots along the ground. He takes full measure of the proceedings which include pitch behaviour, movement or spin imparted by bowlers before launching for his shots. He brings in some kind of stability to the proceedings so that from the other end batters can bloom and maintain a healthy run rate. In other words, Virat is the backbone of Indian Cricket whose presence in the middle gives lot of confidence to other batters to express themselves.



Virat Kohli – Sky is not the limit for his sixers

In the on-going ICC tournament, India has knocked down all the teams so as to pave a berth in the finals.

In the semis, India was pitted against New Zealand considered to be one of the favourates to lift the trophy.

After winning the all-crucial toss, Rohit chose to bat first on a wicket where there was not much on offer for the bowlers.

Rohit, as an opener, launched a blistering attack on Kiwi bowlers and set the tone of the match with his trademark shots. Rohit's ability to see the ball early enables him to pull and hook the ball disdainly. Right from the word go, he

puts the opposition on backfoot, such is his class to command the proceedings. His brutal attack up-front leaves the bowlers a demoralized unit.

All Indian batters are in prime form, be it Gill, Iyer, Rahul or Jadeja.

The highlights of the match was contributions from two centurians – KOHLI and IYER, 80 by Gill and 47 by Rohit.

Iyer's 6-hitting ability enabled India to put up a mammoth total of 397 runs on board. A target such as this is in itself a daunting task for Kiwi batters.

in this tournament, India's basket of pace bowlers is over flowing. In Bumrah, Shami and Siraj, India cannot expect a better pace attack. Shami, in particular, makes in-roads when there is a sign of partnership build up. In this tournament, Shami has bagged 5 and above wicket haul three times. 5 wickets are considered equivalent to a century. In the semifinal he took an astounding 7 wicket haul.


BYJU'S
INDIA

Mohammad Shami who mesmerizes the batsmen with his bowling
From Kiwi's side, Mitchel and Williamson put up some kind of resistance to the proceedings and steadied the drowning Kiwi ship. (Mitchel 139 and Williamson 69). But this was not enough and Kiwis lost the match by a margin of 70 runs.

India has entered the finals and shall face Aussies for they beat Protos by three wickets in the second semis to get a berth in the finals. The ICC Trophy is just a match away from the hot favourates – INDIA.

Farewell Bishan Singh Bedi, your left-arm spin had left the batters mesmerised

By **Sunil Sarpal**



At one point in time, India’s cup for fast bowling was empty. At that time, the lone fast bowler representing India was Kapil Dev. During that time India introduced a 3-pronged spin quartet of Bedi, Prasanna and Chandrasekhar.

India also produced spin-friendly pitches so that they can thrive on the advantage against opposition.

During the same period, simultaneously Clive Lloyd of West Indies introduced a 4-pronged pace attack to ridicule the world. Those bowlers were all charged and raring-to-go in order to break the opposition into pieces. They were Malcolm Marshal, Joel Garner, Andy Roberts and Machiel Holding, with the bench strength of Colin Croft.

With the kind of attack India had at its disposal, they could not pose much of problems to opposition, especially West Indies.

But Bishan Singh Bedi’s left-arm spin left the batters mesmerised with subtle variations. He was one cog in the Indian armoury who never diminished.

Bedi is no more. At the age of 77 yrs, recently he passed away. Bedi was an out-spoken character. He single-handedly fought for the cause of players. He also imparted his art of spin bowling to budding cricketers. In fact Bedi was considered leader among three spinners.

After his playing days, Bedi also held the position of Manager for Team India. But his stint as Manager did not prove result oriented.

Now India’s cup of bowling is brimming with quality batsmen, spinners and seamers alike. India no more relies on spin-friendly pitches. Even quality players do not find a place in the side and have to cool their heels on the bench.

On the contrary, West Indies is no longer a team to reckon

with. They even could not qualify to play for the ICC World Cup. West indies athletes are not much interested in playing cricket and switched alliance towards basketball which is a comparatively much more lucrative sport.

It is heartening to note that India's graph in cricket is on the up-swing whereas West Indies is left far behind in the race.

In a nail biting finish, India beats New Zealand at ICC Worldcup '23

By **Sunil Sarpal**



It was a much awaited encounter because New Zealand is hailed as a well knit solid one day side. For this encounter, both India and New Zealand came with all wins under their belt.

Let me put it in explicit manner, Pandya is injury prone even though his skills as a batsman and bowler are admirable . He is no-where near Kapil Dev who played through out his career without any injury. Pandya had a long lay- off because of his back problem and now twisted his ankle. Pandya's body does not permit him to go over board which he often does and gets injured.

Watching Kohli bat, it looks as if he has descended from a different planet to enthrall cricket lovers. He is rock solid and mostly plays his shots along the ground to minimise the risk factor. He is always calm and composed and never unruffled by the seam movement and spin. The one time he erred as he lofted the ball to score his century and bring India victory, he got out at 95. It was left to Jadeja, the versatile player, to hit the winning boundary for India.

Both Bumrah and Siraj bowled a disciplined line and length with the new ball and never went berserk.

It was a nerve-wracking contest. From both sides, bowling, whether spin or pace, was spot on. However, it was a docile wicket and did not give any assistance to bowlers.

From New Zealand side, Ravinderan and Mitchel batted in tandem and New Zealand posted a score of 273 runs on the board.



A neck and neck battle

In the second essay, Rohit Sharma hit 48 runs in his usual manner. India’s ship was steadied by Kohli with 95 runs and Jadeja with 45 runs. Shami in particular bowled with a 5-wicket haul.

It was a see-saw battle and the match could drift towards any side but for unflappable Kohli, India won the match after a scare from New Zealand.

INDIA PRESENTS A FORMIDABLE COMBO AT ICC WORLD CUP 2023



By Sunil Sarpal

India takes on Bangladesh today. The on-going ICC World Cup, so far, has one and only hot favourate team i.e. INDIA. Others look pale and out of sorts when facing INDIA. At the moment, India is table toppers with 6 points from three wins. The teams which India beat were not minnos of the tournament but mighty stake holders for the trophy. It was Australia first then Afghanistan and recently Pakistan.

India is basking under the glory of their batters' performance. All the batters on view seem to leave their impression that they deserve their spots and are indispensable for the side, be it Rohit, Kohli, Rahul, Gill or Iyer. They look so confidant that the bowling looks mediocre, leaving the bowlers hapless and vulnerable.

Against Pakistan, Rohit single-handedly tore apart the attack, raining fours and sixes at will. He meted out the same treatment to Afghanistan too. His pull shot of fast bowlers is his swan song.

Kohli plays his game in his inimical fashion. His is the prized wicket that opposition looks forward to.

KL Rahul too making his presence felt with his all-round authoritative stroke play.

The batting line up is world class and in-form and presents a valid case to lift the trophy.

In Bumrah and Siraj, India has the luxury of the most lethal new ball attack, followed by equally versatile Pandya.

In spin deptt. both Kuldeep and Jadeja create in-roads during the middle overs.

India surely is fortunate to have two of the best all rounders in the world – Jadeja and Pandya.

Astonishingly, India has the bench strength of Shami, Ashwin and Surya Kr Yadav. But due to competition, they are not able to showcase their skills which are world class.

Since India ticks all the boxes, there is no room for opposition to sneak in. Opposition is often found scratching their head in disbelief.

ASIA CUP FINAL – India vs Sri

Lanka – Believe it or go Nuts!!

By **Sunil Sarpal**



It was a bizarre match – the Asia Cup Final held at Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 17th September, 2023. The super-duper star of the match was none other than our own pacer Mohd. Siraj. He single-handedly demolished Sri Lanka with a haul of 6 wickets. He set the tone of the match, scalping 4 Sri Lankan wickets in a single over. His incisive spell brought about the downfall of Sri Lankan innings and wickets started tumbling like nine pins. There was some juice on offer in the wicket and the need of the hour for the Sri Lankan batsmen to apply themselves, which they did not.

The first salvo was engineered by Ravinder Jadeja when he, driving to his right, produced a stunning diving catch inches from the ground, at point.

Mohd. Siraj was so charged up that he scalped four wickets in

a single over, leaving Sri Lanka completely shattered. From the other end, Bumrah too bowled beautifully and created pressure on batters in equal measure.

Sri Lanka could post only 50 runs on the board and folded their innings.

In the post match analysis, Indian veteran, Gautam Gambhir rightly pointed out that when the ball starts swinging viciously, it is imperative on the part of batsman to give due respect to bowlers and play defensively. But the batsmen were not found to be disciplined and went for their shots.

The contest between bat and ball never took off and it turned out to be a one sided affair, which, unbelievably, India won by 10 wickets. From Indian side, both Gill and Ishan Kishan were equal to the task and won the match for India. In a lighter vein, this match qualifies to be in **Ripley's Believe it or Not**

Mohd. Siraj was rightly declared Man of the Match because of his unimaginable heroics.



WHEN KAPIL’s DEVILS DETHRONED THE MIGHTY WEST INDIES

By **Sunil Sarpal**



It was 1983, the no-hopers or you may say the ‘under-dogs’ gave the all-crucial blow to West Indies cricket by beating them in one-dayers at Lords, England.

Before embarking upon the tournament at England, Indian Team did not expect any positive results from the World Cup. Their confidence level went a few notches up as the matches start unfolding. Early wins gave them the necessary confidence that they could also reach the play-offs. The confidence was given necessary boost by the captain Kapil Dev in a match against Zimbabwe when India was tottering with five top batsman having returned to the pavilion empty handed.

From then onwards, the pendlum shifted India’s way when Kapil

Dev arrived on the crease. He scored 175 runs, which was considered to be the best ever innings played in a one dayer. It was a difficult wicket to bat on, but Kapil being a genuine all-rounder in the world shone with the bat and changed the course of the match. His was the inning which brighten up India's stake to lift the trophy. Sunil Gavaskar admitted that in his life time he had not seen such an outstanding inning in one dayers, such was the master class of Kapil Dev as an explosive batsman. 4s and 6s rained from his blade in a magical show of batsmanship.
Unfortunately, the match could not be telecast on air due to technical hitches.

This inning was the turn-around of India's fortune in the world cup. People still remember this inning with a sigh of relief. With this inning, Kapil Dev became an overnight hero in the tournament. Kapil leading from the front and his exploits percolated on his team mates and gave them unbelievable self-belief.

Interestingly, Indian Team had in their ranks the luxury of multi-skilled players.

MOHINDER AMARNATH : A top order batsman and a military medium swing bowler.
KAPIL DEV : A genuine all-rounder
BALVINDER SINGH SANDHU : A genuine swing bowler who could bat a bit also.
ROGER BINNY : A medium pacer who could chip in with some runs too.
MADAN LAL : A fine medium pacer who could bat as well.

In fact, India succeeded in reaching the final on the basis of these all round performers because English conditions suited their bowling the most.

The final between the mighty West Indies and the underdogs India was scheduled to be played in the Mecca of Cricket ie.

Lords at England. But West Indies became over-confidant to lift upon being seeing that they are pitted up against the minnows India.

Batting first, India put up a paltry score of 180 odd runs on the board with Kris Srikant top scoring with 38 runs.

The first turning point of the match happened when Balvinder Singh Sandhu's delivery pitching outside off stump swung in viciously, leaving Gordan Greenidge bowled and bamboozled. With this wicket in pocket, Indian Team looked pumped up. The drama started to unfold when a rampaging Viv Richards hit a skyer of a Madan Lal delivery and Kapil Dev took a catch of the match running backwards. This was perhaps the second turning point of the match. These two dismissals turned the tide in India's favour.

Mohinder Amarnath's military medium did most of the damage and wisely declared Man of the Match.

The no-hopers turned heros and World Champs under the captain cool Kapil Dev. Kapil Dev's contribution was of immense value to the Team India. It was a herculean task for no-hopers but luck played a vital role for Team India. 1983 Indian Cricket Team members are written in golden letters in the history books.

WTC Final: India had to be content being a runners-up as

Australia steals the show



Image courtesy Twitter
By **Sunil Sarpal**

The WTC final cricket test match played between India and Australia at The Oval, England was a mouth-watering contest. There was juice on offer for fast bowlers and life for batters was not a cake-walk at all. Indian fast bowlers did not bowl at the right areas in the first outing, enabling Aussies to take early initiative and advantage in the match. Aussies amassed a mammoth 479 in the first innings. It was a daunting

task for India to take on 4-pronged pace attack of Australia. Of the 4, Boland was the most difficult to deal with. The first innings scalp of Gill by Boland was a treat to watch. The ball pitched well outside the off stump but jagged back and uprooted the stumps.

One particular noticiable factor was when once a batsman settles down after gauging the behaviour of the pitch, it becomes imperative on his part to play a disciplined knock and not over-indulge. Once india is in a precarious situation, batters going for expensive shots leads to their downfall. The most difficult corridor for a batsman is off stump and just outside off stump. Generally, it is the away going delivery which creates trouble for batters but when bowlers swing one in, it is absolutely nightmarish for the batters.

Batting on helpful tracks for batters call for a great deal of concentration, determination and application.

In the second essay, Indian batters Rohit, Pujara and Kohli all perished after making good start and making necessary adjustment.

For Aussie fast bowlers above 6 ft plus height get extra ordinary lift and bounce from the wicket. All Aussie fast bowlers are above 6 ft.

If we talk about Rohit Sharma’s batting, his batting involves lot of risk-taking shots. Pulls and hooks are his favourite shots but controlling these shots is equally important. He may get a lot of runs playing such shots but there is an element of risk involved. Anything misqued goes to waiting hands.

I think Gill has to make lot of adjustment in playing outside off stump line.

Pujara these days has changed his style of play. He need not be over enthusiastic in playing shots. Pujara of old was much more secure and stood like a wall for other batters to score

bulk of runs.

In this match, India badly missed the services of Bumrah because of injury. For India it was a testing time but Aussie is a class act. Let us hope with the recovery of Pant, India poses more solidarity to the side in the future.

CSK vs GT – a thrilling, nail-biting IPL final, down to the last ball

By **Sunil Sarpal**



Chennai Super Kings (CSK) led by MS Dhoni and Gujarat Titans (GT) led by Hardik Pandya were pitted against each other to play for IPL 2023 Final. The venue of the match was Ahmedabad

but the match on Sunday was washed out due to incessant rain and re-scheduled for play on Monday.

It was a belter of a pitch but for initial seam movement that provided little spin.

Dhoni, after winning the toss elected to bowl first, considering that in the event of intervening rain, the contest shall be reduced in target and number of overs. It will benefit the team batting second. In the ultimate analysis his prediction proved right and CSK lifted the IPL 2023 trophy for the 5th time.

A few salient features emerged from the match. They are enumerated below :-

1) The stumping effected by Dhoni of in-form Shubham Gill off the bowling of Ravinder Jadeja was a mercurial work behind the stump. Mind you Gill notched up 3 centuries on the trot before this match. and was a hot favourite facilitating GT to lift the trophy.

2) For Gujarat Titans the stand-out performers with the bat were Sai Sudershan and Saha. They both batted brilliantly and posted a formidable total of 200 +.

3) With the intervention of, rain after the first inning, the contest was limited by a reduction in overs and scaling down of the target.

4) The relatively disappointing factor was that the match could not be decided in a 20-over contest.

5) Even though MS Dhoni was not fully fit and one of his knees not taking the rigorous of running between the wicket, he has not called it quit from IPL and shall appear in the next year’s IPL too for CSK.

In conclusion, as per the post tournament analysis, some of the batters have performed exceptionally well.

1) To start with, Shubham Gill has notched up three tons.

2) Followed by Virat Kohli who posted two back to back hundreds with a fifty.

3) Batters like Ishan Kishan, Nitish Rana, Rinku Singh and Surya Kr Yadav stole the show exhibiting T-20 style of shots. They redefined the game of cricket by introducing the formula – throwing caution to the wind.

WHAT A TOURNAMENT CALLED IPL