

# 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 favourite 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 minnows of the tournament but mighty stakeholders 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 confident 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.

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**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 pendulum 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-confident 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 Gordon 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 heroes 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.

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**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 noticeable 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 extraordinary 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.

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# 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

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## **ALSO RAN: VIRAT KOHLI – IN THE PINK OF FORM**

by Sunil Sarpal





## Virat Kohli

As we approach the final today, in the on-going IPL season, Virat Kohli belted out back to back centuries for his franchisee RCB. Virat stole the show but unfortunately his team RCB could not even find a place in the play-offs. Kohli leaves a solid impact on his followers with the kind of flourish seen in his knocks. He plays conventional cricketing shots all over the park in a commanding fashion that bowlers are left clueless where to pitch the ball and where not.

The behaviour of the pitch on which match is played plays a pivotal role in batting performance.

Indian pitches generally are spin friendly.

In Australia the bounce is waist high.

In England, the conditions provide more swing.

In New Zealand, there is more lift from the surface and

swing too.

In West Indies, the pitches provide low bounce and are on the slow side.

A batsman needs to adjust to conditions first and plan which shot should be played and which not.

Kohli with 76 International tons in his pocket in all formats has enormous experience and exposure to any given condition. He therefore is the backbone of Indian batting and other just revolve around him. Dislodging him therefore becomes next to impossible. He stands tall among his contemporaries.

People and his die-hard foes becomes so critical about his inclusion in the side when he goes thru patchy and lean periods. They immediately write him off but Kohli has in him to bounce back with vengeance.

Kohli proclaims; "As long as God so desires, I shall keep on playing for India.

He is a modern-day iconic figure and others just want to emulate his work ethics.

He stands tall among the legendary figures India has produced so far.

If he remains fit and rarin-to-go, he will set such high benchmarks that he will be hard to dislodge.



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# A Halla Gulla called IPL



By **Sunil Sarpal**

Indian Premier League will soon draw to a close for this season. Let's see what the Halla Gulla called IPL was all about

It happens once in a calender year and bring lot of fun and joy to cricket world. On every TV set in a home, this tussel between bat and ball is fought, providing great entertainment to the viewers of the game. The game is also a reminder that it belongs to young legs. Ageing has no room in this game which is on a fast lane.

Often viewers remember those that are no more, but were star cricketers during their playing days.

Dean Jones, Aussie

Malcom Marshal, WI

Martin Crow, NZ

Alas, cruel death ended their journey mid-way, depriving followers of their incredible presence and charisma.

IPL pays an astronomical amount of money to the players – thanks to IPL franchisees. On the basis of players' performance over a period of time, they are auctioned by franchisees at huge amounts. Even after the auctioned player loses his touch and his performance dips, he remains on the bench and still paid the committed amount.

It has become a joy to watch IPL matches because music is played in the background. It is full entertainment. These days commentators provide lot of stories, past experiences and also discuss spats between players. Such things bind the viewers to TV sets.

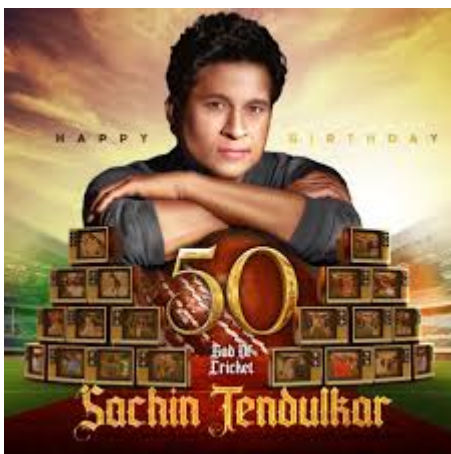
Young guns join shoulders with foreign players and get lot of international experience. Players like Nitish Rana, Ishaan Kishan and Rinku Singh are the stars in making. Cricket is in the blood of followers and they enjoy this soap opera much more than Saas and Bahu episodes on TV.





# WHAT MORE CAN YOU ACHIEVE IN SPORTS ?

By Sunil Sarpal



**God comes to bat for India at No. 4, said Mathew Hayden for Sachin Tendulkar**

**Sometimes somebody's achievements surpass all records and record books. That person becomes immortal during lifetime.**

**Be it Sachin Tendulkar in Cricket**

**or Mike Tyson in Boxing**

**or Maradona in Football**

**They are living legends in their chosen sport. Though they have retired from their**

sport, but they are remembered with 'awe' coming from the heart.

They are simply human being like others but they have 'Gift of the Gall from God'. Otherwise, they would not have achieved what they did. Their names are written with Golden letters. They always receive Red Carpet Welcome. Stadiums (stands) are named as Sachin Tendulkar Stand. Academies are run on their names.

People chant their names and

worship for their success.

West Indies legend Brian Lara has named his son as Sachin.

In football, Maradona beat all defenders single-handedly and scored too a goal in a World Cup match.

Mike Tyson's ability to knock down any boxer with one strike in any International match. Absolutely unbelievable feat.

They lived, they ruled and they scripted the history



books. In fact, they have re-written the history books. Their brilliance in their craft left the game gasping for breath. They took the game to altogether different and unexplored height and level.

Sachin Tendulkar from the sound of ball hitting his bat, could determine whether he is in-form or not.

God has created man in his own image but some of them over-whelmingly different and unique from the rest.

# SALUTE TO THEM.

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## Australia vs India at Wankhade Stadium Rahul and Jadeja rule the pitch

By Sunil Sarpal



Rahul and Jadeja seal victory for India

Yesterday's encounter, on 17th March 2023, between visiting Australia vs India at Wankhade Stadium proved a nightmare for the batters. It was a day-night one-day match. Australia upon winning the toss chose to make the first use of the pitch and elected to bat first. There was help on offer for the fast bowlers. The ball was moving in the air and off the pitch too. There is a saying – when the going gets tough, the tough gets going. For Mitchel Marsh who was an in-form batsman from Australia, the batting was to his liking. He hit some huge sixes and dominated the proceedings with his power hitting. On the other end, batters were struggling to cope up with movement. It was the golden arm of Ravinder Jadeja who undid the proceeding and took Marsh's scalp. There was no other

batsman who could settle down to post a formidable score on the board. Jadeja's made his presence felt in fielding when he took a diving catch and stalled the proceedings. Australia could post a paltry score of 188 runs in a 50 over encounter. Shami and Siraj were among the wickets. Jadeja too was economical and restrictive in bowling. His line and length were spot on and did not allow Aussis to freeze arm.

Indian batting started on a dismal note when the opener Ishan Kishan perished early to Mitchel Starc LBW. Kohli too was in all sorts of trouble against the moving ball and was not at all in his elements. He too perished early leaving Gill and Rahul to steady the ship. There were chances on offer in the slip cordon but Gill was lucky to survive and played some trade mark shots. He too could not trouble score board much and lost his scalp scoring just 20 runs. Surya came and left on the first ball, LBW to Starc – the most successful bowler from Australia.

Both Rahul and Jadeja provided stability to Indian innings. Both played disciplined knocks and took the Indian side to victory.

By no yardstick the pitch offered a run feast required in a 50 over encounter. It was a fast bowlers paradise. KL Rahul's grit and unflinching determination in the company of Jadeja proved handful for India and won the match for India. All credit for this win should go to the duo.

Lastly one thing I like to mention that Jadeja's graph as a genuine all-rounder – be it bowling spin, batting, especially fielding and catching is commendable. Although Rahul's discipline and score deserves man-of the match award but Jadeja's brilliance in all walks of the game deserve standing ovation from the followers of the game. Somebody even compared him to the legend Sir Gary Sobers.



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# Is Indian Cricket riddled with politics?

By Sunil Sarpal



As per media reports, the out-going Chief Selector of Cricket in India, Chetan Sharma, has made a shocking revelation during a string operation conducted by a channel that it is Saurav Ganguly, the then BCCI president, who was instrumental in removing Virat Kohli of his captaincy from Team India, because Saurav did not like him personally.

If true, this sums up the story of how politics has become an integral part of Indian Cricket which at one point of time was considered a gentleman's game.

It is alleged that, earlier, during Saurav Ganguly's tenure as BCCI President, he did not allow Shastri a third term as India coach. Though Ravi Shastri proved to be the most successful

Indian Coach under whose guidance Team India made big strides in International matches.

Saurav's removal of Virat Kohli as Captain could have had a debilitating effect on his performance as a batsman but timely regaining of his form saved him from the ignominy of an exit door.

There is no dearth of talent in India but it needs to be nurtured and channelised. But the opportunities are far and few to showcase the talent and represent Team India.

Take the case of Ravinder Jadeja, earlier he was considered a stop gap arrangement but now-a-days both his bowling and batting excelled so much that his position in the side has become indispensable.

To get to know the tricks of the trade, it calls for a great deal of perseverance.

BCCI is one of the richest body in the world and the selection process should be unbiased. Those at the helm of affairs should not be allowed to tinker with the careers of players.

A pool of players worthy to represent India should be made and from that pool, as per the rotation policy, the players should be picked up to play the game. This process will have a sobering effect on the mind of players. Any untoward favouratism or changing and chopping of players should be governed by an unbiased procedure especially adopted for this purpose so that the game is played in a fair manner.

India can only shine on world stage if there is unity and friendship among the playing eleven. Administration should be fool proof and just one person should not be empowered to dictate terms. Such arbitrariness should be abolished from the whole selection process.

The responsibility of the BCCI President is huge, as a result,



the most responsible and knowledgeable person should be given the charge to take the team forward. Favoritism, biased and negative narratives should have no place in the overall process.