

"ICC Festivities"

(A book on ICC awards)



- Saurabh Choudhary

Preface

This is a book on my commentaries on ICC awards. The ICC awards have been an affair of much fun, interest & excitement among both the cricket fraternity & general public ever since its inception in 2004. The awards were institutionalised as an idea of recognising the highest talent in the field & glorifying the superlatives & generating high fun in the sport as an entertainment. The awards were earlier given only for a year & then the awards of the decade were also introduced from 2020. The first awards were given for the year 2003-04. The ceremony was announced a few days before its conduction in June 2004 & was telecasted live on T.V. on 15 June. The cricket schedule was having an off at that time & hence all the teams were present there. The awards were later shifted to calendar year cycle & the awards were started being organised also on non-off periods as the seasons were so busy that some team or the other was always having a match. The jury is a 50-member panel with 25 former cricketers & 25 experts from areas like cricket journalists, administration etc.

I have decided to write this book as an expression for my appreciation & joy for this festivity & I have given it name of festivity as it is almost like a festival for me. & It is my favourite festival.

Hence, inking the book on my favourite festival & registering my expression for it -

"ICC Festivities"

"Dedicated to":

All the winners & nominees of the ICC awards in ICC festivities

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Chapter 1: Beginning

The beginning of ICC awards might, I think, have been devised from the idea of ranking & rating players which started in 2002. The players were ranked from backdate & the periods of topstay were calculated from the beginning. I think this idea might have come from that only that along with the ranking of players on continuous basis, yearly awards can also be given. The awards were categorised in three main classes - Player of the year, Test player of the year & One day player of the year. Then there was an award for emerging player who has played less than 5 tests & 10 One days. Apart, a team award for spirit of cricket. Test team of the year & ODI team of the year were declared comprising players from cross-teams & they were announced in batting order calling all members on stage to honour them. The Player of the year award was named 'Garry Sobers award for Player of the year' & the winner was presented a car. When the first award ceremony was announced, 3-4 months' break was going on of all teams & the announcement was made 15 days before the program which was organised in London. Players from all teams were invited there with suits in team jersey colour & Mark Nicolas was anchoring the function.

The air was done around 08:00 pm IST & cultural programs were conducted in the beginning of the program. The same year, in October 2004, BCCI hosted the Indian cricket awards on the pattern of it & it is running since then.

The nominations were made 5 in each category & an award for the umpire was also there. The spirit of cricket award was given for fair play, spirit of the game & sports spirit.

Some teams were very cool in their operation, & they didn't fall into any controversy ever. This award was given for that trait only.

Chapter 2: Inaugural year

The inaugural year was very exciting with interest around who will be the winner of the main three awards & what all happens in the presentation ceremony. Shakira had performed in the opening program. The period covering the awards was from 01-July-2003 to 30-June-2004 i.e. the 2003-04 season.

The year had been very good for India with excellent performance in many overseas Test series. Rahul Dravid was the star of the season with 1300 Test runs from 9 matches. His average in the season was close to 100. & He had shown example to perform to both in-mates & rivalmates. He was nominated in both categories - Test player of the year & Player of the year & was a frontrunner to win the race in both cases. He was the only nominee from India in both these awards. Ricky Ponting, Matthew Hayden & Mutaiya Murlidharan were some other nominees in the test category, Adam Gilchrist in ODI (For his performance in VB series).

Finally when the announcements were made, Rahul Dravid topped the charts with being the winners in both Test player & best player groups. He was much ahead of all others in both these classes & had starred his performance with three double centuries in the season. His top test score of 270 also came in this season. When he had struck the first double century of this season against New Zealand in 2003, he was stated as the most stable batsman of India. He was the man of the series in BGT 2003-04 with 619 runs & won a Hyundai Accent in the Garry Sobers award. Andrew Flintoff was the winner of the ODI player of the year with his aggressive all round performances in the ODI season. The emerging player had been won by Irfan Pathan for his impressive performance on debut in Australia

series & till the Pakistan series, adding up to India's awards to 3 out of 4. The spirit of cricket award was won by New Zealand for their cool attitude, fair play & spirit of the game. Sunil Gavaskar announced the Test & ODI teams of the year & the winners all gave starry speeches in their award speeches. Irfan Pathan had become a big star after this award, he received thousands of mails at his address containing marriage proposals from women. He had taken many wickets in the Aus & Pak series. This way, the inaugural awards concluded with star-studded eyes & glamour & fame flooding over the public arena.

Chapter 3: Initial winners

The multiple-winning of some players had started from the initial years only. Andrew Flintoff had won 2 awards in the first two years - One the inaugural year award of best ODI player & the joint Player of the year with Kallis in 2005. & Ricky Ponting had won the top award twice in the first four years - In 2006 & 2007. Shivnaraine Chanderpaul was the first lesser-grade player to win the top award in 2008 & Yousuf Yohana the Test player award for 2007.

I will be listing & describing the winners in first few years like till 2008.

2005 was the only year in which the top award was given to multiple players jointly - That to Kallis & Flintoff jointly.

Yousuf Yohana made a record of making the most Test runs in a calendar year in 2007 - That of 1788 bettering Viv Richards' previous best of 1710. The ODI awards for 2005, 2006, 2007 & 2008 were won respectively by Kevin Pietersen, Michael Hussey, Matthew Hayden & M.S. Dhoni. That of Test player for 2008 was won by Dale Steyn.

These years were dominated by some big players like Ricky, Ponting, Matthew Hayden, Jacques Kallis & Rahul Dravid in Tests & Mike Hussey & M.S. Dhoni in ODIs. For Kevin Pietersen it was the debut year in which he won the award. & M.S. Dhoni had set a record of reaching the no. 1 position in ICC rankings for ODI batsmen in the fastest number of innings - 42.

This was the phase of superlative dominance of Ricky Ponting with his records like 8 consecutive Test centuries in 2008, for which he had got 2 top awards. Dale Steyn had started his career with a bang & reached no. 2 position in one year only & Michael Hussey had come as an icing on Oz cake, adding to its aura. M.S. Dhoni was the first player to win two ODI awards - Which he did in 2008 & 2009.

Another important award that had happened in this period was the Spirit of cricket award for 2005 that had been given to England for their jelling very well that year. They played around 14 Test matches that year & were undefeated in them, won around 12 of them, had start of a great phase in their cricket, won a tremendous Ashes & they were jelling very well. How they enjoyed their cricket & enjoyed their team spirit & enjoyed each others' success very well whenever some achievement came, all this was very visible in their game, & they got the award for that.

Chapter 4: Winners & nominees

The winners & nominees I will be listing for all years till 2024 declared recently & it has been 21 years of the awards with the awards given in 20 years, one year off due to Covid & only decade awards declared in it. The Covid had hampered the cricket much & the protocols of quarantine on every tour caused delay in matches & less matches happened that year. The decade awards were given for the years 2011-20. Mitchel Johnson had wreaked havoc in the Ashes Series 2009 & he had won the best award for that year. Glenn McGrath had predicted before the Ashes 2009 that Australia will win it 5-0 & this is what they did.

The 2010 best award went to Sachin for his fabulous season that year which included six Test centuries, three double centuries & a world record 200 in ODIs. The 200 was the first in ODIs & came thirteen years after the standing record.

The next three years were Jonathan Trott, Kumar Sangakkara & Michael Clarke respectively. Michael Clarke won it for hitting four double centuries that year, the only event till now. & Mitchel Johnson won the best award two times in his career of 9 years - From 2007 to 2016, the other time being in 2014.

After the beginning of the ICC awards, similar awards had been started in many countries. Australia gives an Allan Border medal for the best player of the year in Cricket Australia awards which it has been doing since 2001. Pakistan gives awards for best batsman & best bowler in place of Test player & ODI player.

The other winners in the later years were -

Best player:

2015 - Steve Smith
2016 - Ravichandran Aswhin
2017 - Virat Kohli
2018 - Virat Kohli
2019 - Ben Stokes
2021 - Shaheen Afridi
2022 - Babar Azam
2023 - Pat Cummins
& 2024 - Jasprit Bumrah

Steve Smith had risen to no. 1 position in Test batsmen for the first time in 2015, for which he had got the award in that year. Ravichandran Aswhin had reached 250 Test wickets in 2016 in the fastest no. of matches (45). For which he had got the award in 2016. Virat Kohli had a dominant 2017 & 2018 for which he had got the award those years. He had also become the first player to win all the three awards the year 2018. The award for 2019 went to Ben Stokes for his MoM & all round performance in the WC final & a historic inning in Ashes 2019. The awards hadn't happened in 2020 & it was Shaheen Afridi for taking most wickets (78) in 2021. From this year, T20 awards were also introduced. Earlier, since the inception of T20 cricket, there was an award for T20 performance of the year, for one match performance of the year, from this year it was changed to T20 player of the year like other categories. The award for 2022 went to Babar Azam for some great innings specially in Test cricket. Pat Cummins had got it for his captaincy of Australia in ODI WC & WTC 2023. Winning the title in both. & Jasprit Bumrah was the star of the year 2024 sweeping the award with most wickets that year.

Test player of the year:

2009 - Gautam Gambhir
2010 - Virender Sehwag
2011 - Alastair Cook
2012 - Kumar Sangakkara
2013 - Michael Clarke
2014 - Mitchel Johnson
2015 - Steve Smith

2016 - Ravichandran Ashwin
2017 - Steve Smith
2018 - Virat Kohli
2019 - Pat Cummins
2021 - Joe Root
2022 - Ben Stokes
2023 - Usman Khwaja
& 2024 - Jasprit Bumrah

Gautam Gambhir had hit many Test centuries in the year 2009, for which he won the award that year. Virender Sehwag had been in superb form through the years 2009 & 2010 & had hit many double & triple centuries, for which he won the award in 2010. Alastair Cook had amassed 766 runs in Ashes 2010-11, for which he got the award that year. Kumar Sangakkara had won the award for his much dominant performance in 2012, Michael Clarke for his majestic run through the BGT 2011 in 2013, Mitchel Johnson for his devastation again in Ashes 2014 in 2014, Steve Smith for becoming the no. 1 Test batsman in 2015 in 2015, Ravichandran Ashwin for his wicket rout in 2016, Steve Smith again for his big runs in 2017, Virat Kohli for his all-formats performance in 2018, Pat Cummins for his flood of wickets in 2019, Joe Root for a record nearing 2021 in 2021. He had amassed 1708 runs that year missing Viv Richards' record of no. 3 position in most Test runs in a calendar year (1710) by two runs. Ben Stokes had led England to many Test wins in 2022 with his aggressive strategy under the coachship of Brendon McCullum for which he won the award of that year. Usman Khwaja had scored many big tons for Australia in 2023, for which he got the award that year. & Jasprit Bumrah had taken the most wickets in 2024 winning the award this year.

ODI player of the year:

2010 - A.B. De Villiers
2011 - Kumar Sangakkara
2012 - Virat Kohli
2013 - Kumar Sangakkara
2014 - A.B. De Villiers
2015 - A.B. De Villiers
2016 - Quinton De Kock

2017 - Virat Kohli
2018 - Virat Kohli
2019 - Rohit Sharma
2021 - Babar Azam
2022 - Babar Azam
2023 - Virat Kohli
& 2024 - Azmatullah Omarzai

M.S. Dhoni was the first player to win ODI player of the year award more than once - Winning it in 2008 & 2009. A.B. De Villiers won it for his dominant performance three times - In 2010, 2014 & 2015. & Virat Kohli four times - In 2012, 2017, 2018 & 2023. & The rest as listed in the list.

T20I player was introduced from 2021 & the awards for the four years since then went to:

2021 - Mohammad Rizwan
2022 - Sooryakumar Yadav
2023 - Sooryakumar Yadav
& 2024 - Arshdeep Singh

Moahammad Rizwan had amassed 1300 runs in T20 cricket in 2021 which is a record of most in a year still. Sooryakumar Yadav had a super 2022 & 2023 striking @ ave. of around 48 & str. rate of above 180. He is the only batsman with 40+ ave. & 180+ str. rate in T20Is. Arshdeep Singh had taken the most wickets in T20 in the year 2024 for which he won this award this year.

One important anecdote is that Babar Azam had surpassed Kohli's ODI average of 59 in between in this period & reached till 60. Kohli had also reached till 60 in this period.

Now the annual awards are announced without ceremony & they are announced in parts over a span of few days giving people the joy gradually. Public voting has also been introducing in these awards since the recent some time & the share is I think around 10%. So,

this ends my chapter on winners & nominees & I take to the chapter 5
of multiple winners & superlatives.

Chapter 5: Multiple winners & superlatives

Although the awards are a big achievement even if someone wins it once, but some players have won it multiple times. This chapter is a commentary on the winners of multiple times & the superlatives.

Multiple award winners

"Player of the year awards"

Ricky Ponting - 2006 & 2007
Mitchel Johnson - 2009 & 2014
& Virat Kohli - 2017 & 2018

"Test player"

Steve Smith - 2015 & 2017

"ODI player of the year"

M.S. Dhoni - 2008 & 2009
A.B. De Villiers - 2010, 2014 & 2015
Virat Kohli - 2012, 2017, 2018 & 2023
& Kumar Sangakkara - 2011 & 2013

& "T20 Player of the year"

Sooryakumar Yadav - 2022 & 2023

Superlative award winners

Overall player of the years - Virat Kohli, Ricky Ponting & Mitchel
Johnson

Test player of the year - Steve Smith

ODI player of the year - Virat Kohli

T20I player of the year - Sooryakumar Yadav

This completes the chapter on multiple & superlative winners & I from
here move on to the chapter on decade awards.

Chapter 6: Decade awards

The awards of the decade hadn't been planned earlier, they weren't given for the decade 2000-09 & its idea came up in the year 2019 when this award was started being given for the first time for the decade 2010-19. Massive advertising was done for it, making atmosphere for it in the last months. The Fab 4 were expected to win the most awards & this is what happened. Virat Kohli dominated winning 2 awards - Player of the decade & ODI player of the decade, as was expected. Steve Smith won the Test player of the decade, also as expected. The other major nominees were - Ravichandran Ashwin & Cheteshwar Pujara in Test player category & Rohit Sharma & A.B. De Villiers in the ODI player category. There was an award for the T20 player of the decade also, in which the main nominees were Lasith Malinga, Rashid Khan, Babar Azam & Virat Kohli. The award went to Rashid Khan. Kohli is the leading run scorer in the T20s & he & Rohit Sharma have been surpassing each other at this position many times. Kohli is the only batsman with 50+ batting average in all three formats. The Fab 4 were the face of the advertisement of the awards of the decade that was released in its promotional period. Virat Kohli is the player to win the most ICC awards & the awards are also given for women cricketers & associate nations.

Wisden had announced a cricket awards of the decade for the decade 2000-09 in which it had given the top award to Ricky Ponting. It had also announced an awards of the century for the 20th century ranking top five players of the century. In it it had declared Don Bradman, Garry Sobers, Jack Hobbs, Vivian Richards & Shane Warne as the best five players of the century. The awards of the decade brought much fun & pleasure among the people, glory among the winners & advertisement for cricket & ICC. Cricket is now played among 57

associate nations & there are more dimensions like women's cricket & four-day cricket. Newer forms have developed like T10, 3-T & The 100. Lot of commercialisation is happening, but the spirit of the game is important for its prestige.

A co-frame of the FAB 4 revealing the cream of this decade of which these awards were there



Chapter 7: Ranking & rating of players from backdate

The ranking of players & teams in ICC rankings started from June 2002. It was for batsmen & bowlers of both formats separately. The ranking was based on rating by a certain formula. I reached the no. 1 position in Test batsmen for the first time in October 2003 after the series against Newzealand & the no. 1 position in ODI batsmen in November 2003 after the TVS Cup. I stayed at the top of the rankings for Test batsmen for maximum nine years & ODI batsmen for around four & a half years. The rankings were after some time computed from backdate since the beginning of the game, & the highest rating points of different formats & departments were announced. Don Bradman was the highest rated batsman in Tests ever with 961 points at a time & Vivian Richards the highest rated batsman in ODI format with 947 points. Such records are also available as, when did Sachin reach no. 1 position in ODIs for the first time (It was in 1997) & Who has been the batsman with the longest stretch of no. 1 rank at a time. The rankings are calcuated every week, after every match, & there are such considerations also (For team rankings) that higher points are given for performance against higher ranked teams & more important tournaments. Some more terms that have come in circulation like ICC tournaments & SENA countries. ICC tournaments are considered the most important tournaments of all & they are four in number - ODI WC, T20 WC, Champions Trophy & the WTC. & There is a shortcode SENA for the four strongest teams of cricket - South Africa, England, Newzealand & Australia. Performance against these countries is considered stronger.

I remained at the top of the Test rankings for 2 years after retirement & my greater proficiency in Tests was evident in all my aspects like rankings, awards, partnerships, records & levels of the

game. Even in the tour games before any Test series, I always made sure that I played & strengthened my practise further by participating in all tour games.

Chapter 8: Awards of the month now & publicvoting

During the Covid pandemic season, the ICC introduced the system of awards of the months for the players in men's & women's category. The award was one across formats & was given by public voting. In the pandemic, people used to stay at home & the month awards was introduced so that people may stay connected with cricket & find interest & vote. The nominees for the awards were made by ICC & they were three for each men & women. The tradition has been running since then & the nominations are let out in FB etc. all platforms of ICC & the voting is done in ICC site. Many Indian players have won it & Asian players have won more than non Asians. Some have won it multiple times. These awards are determined fully by publicvoting. In the ICC awards of the year also, 10% public voting has been introduced. The nominees are announced on the 08th of the next month of every month for that month, & the results are announced after 11th. Asian players have an advantage in this also due to population.

The awards of the decade were I think wrongly set for period as the decade was from 2010 to 2019, but the awards were set for 2011 to 2020. The ceremonies when the awards used to be conducted, happened in different cities like London, Dubai & Melbourne. In 2010 when Sachin had won it it had happened in Bangalore. People say, Lord's is the Mecca of cricket, but I say Australia is the Mecca of cricket as it is the strongest team in history & thereby the most entertaining.

New venues have come up in the world in each country, but I love the traditional venues of every place like the five traditional venues of Australia & the nine Test venues of India. In India, the venues are rotated by cycle & the nine Test venues & thirteen ODI

venues other than these nine are with long history & glory. Among the special tasks taken in hand by the ICC, one was the institution of the Super Test Match & Super ODI Series of three matches that was done in 2005 to raise funds for the Tsunami victims. It was planned that this will be organised every year around the same time in October & the no. 1 team in each format will play with the Rest of the world in them. Australia was the no. 1 team in both formats in the first year & it won both the Super Test match & the Super ODI series 3-0. Although the Rest of the world had stalwart players from all the teams, but they didn't jell well in the matches & the Australian team won easily. The Super Test Match was of six days & the matches weren't held from next year.

The ICC has thus been doing great work in all departments & fields always & has been a great institution.

Chapter 9: The ceremony as a festival now

Evolving through the years & various trends, the awards have now become a festival. They are awaited all year & sought desperately by millions of fans across ages & continents. The awards have played a great role in highlighting women cricket & has brought spectators to even it. The womens Test matches are watched now on streaming apps & followed on live score apps like Cricbuzz. The fact that such information have come out about women cricket that their WC had begun before even mens WC in 1973, has added to interest in womens cricket.

ICC has publicised the game so well that now even practise sessions of teams are released on apps & TV & media rights are sold in billions.

The announcements of the winners come early every year, & the news sells like red-hot cakes. ICC has a site, an app, an account at every social network platform & it posts things, contents & news relating to every important thing of the game there.

The announcements have been faster in the late years urging from February to January & the voting is opened even before the end of the year if there is no match left.

Virat is far ahead of all other players in winning ICC awards with 10 awards to his credit vs 2nd highest 4 of Steve Smith & Kumar Sangakkara.



Over to last chapter

Chapter 10: The trophies & prizes

The trophies given in ICC awards are shields or cups along with cash prize & sponsored car to the Garry Sobers award winner every year. Now that the schedules are busy, & players aren't able to collect their awards themselves, the Council take gestures to present the shields to players where they are available. Like last year when India was in Dubai to play the T20 WC, it had gone to present the ODI player of the year award of the past year to Kohli there.

The ICC inducts some players into hall of fame also every year on the basis of its criteria of passing five years of their retirement. There are over 150-175 Hall of Famers now with many scores of the players of yesteryears there. The new ones are added now.

This hall of fame has played pivotal role in glorifying the players of yesteryears & awaring the new generation about them.

Another dimension of ICC festivities is the ICC Test mace which is presented to the no. 1 Test team at the beginning of every year. It is an award given to this team for leading Test cricket at the beginning of every year & had been started from 2015. India had won it consecutively six times since 2015 with Virat as the captain getting the trophy for India each year till 2021. The award is a big trophy honouring the team.

This completes my book & this was my commentary on ICC festivities. I am satisfied to have been presented it in contenting way & I close my book with this remark that **EAST OR WEST ICC IS THE**

BEST & that **ICC** is a mega governing body of the most glorious subject of human history.