

## Test Cricket Is Best Cricket

(A narrative on the cricket of 2010s onwards)



This is my new book & the fifth one of my e-book segment, I have planned this as I was feeling the inertia to write more after writing the fourth one. When I explored the subjects on which I can write this, I found it should be something on my core subject cricket. Cricket has produced some of the GOAT moments of human history & achievement in the last fifteen years & people have played this game with religious passion, devotion & dedication. Many of the GOAT cricketers have played in this era. The distinctive thing is that they have played against the wind when the world was in negative mode & goodness wasn't appreciated. They had to manage their things themselves & give something to the world also to allow them to keep going. The wind was so hard that many of the players who were being anticipated to break Sachin's records, retired even before he did. The new generation that came had to manage even more. They had to create something artificial on their own & live with something else afterwards. This era of players delivered some of the most glorious moments in cricketing & sporting history. This is what inspired me to write on them & by the new age I mean specifically the period of after the 2011 WC. The 2011-12 Test season defines the beginning of this phase for me in which India won some unprecedented series in England & Australia. The title "Test cricket is best cricket" I have kept as Test cricket has been in principle the slightly more popular format in this duration & the best of short-format players have acknowledged that they hail Test cricket as the most important format & they want to represent their country in this format as the highest aspiration of theirs. The greatness of Test cricket rose a notch up when Laxman scored that historic 281 in Calcutta. The whole world witnessed then what profound magic & fun the format has capability to spell. No one had thought a team can win even after following on. That series marked the starting of a new chapter in world cricket & India-Australia rivalry altogether. It fired up the Australians to think someone is better than them also & why they aren't being able to win their final frontier. It kept alive the Indian struggle against the Aussie might & commenced the Indian domination in the BGTs. Rahul Dravid, Ricky Ponting & Matthew Hayden were the first players to star in this segment of BGT. Although this generation of players ended around the 2011 WC, but new ones arose to fill their

shoes sufficiently. It wasn't easy to find the talents of these new ones, but they came from somewhere to do the job. Virat Kohli for me represents the face of international cricket in this section & he has done more than expected in his part to serve the game. I will be writing at length on all these topics in this book, here I pause to include the table of contents. Just remember the name till then "Test cricket is best cricket".

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## **Chapter 1: "The new age"**

The new age I have mentioned about what time it began with. It was the best phase of my career also with 800+ runs in two Test series. I made 2900 international runs that year & broke the record of most Test runs in a calendar year. Sunny Sir had motivated me to break record of my 839 one more time & I am happy I was able to do it two times. When Sachin drove that MoS car of 2011 WC & Zaheer & Harbhajan lifted him on shoulders to give him honour on his retirement, it was an iconic moment in history & I felt motivated from it to do something similar in my career. 2011 WC was in a new decade & it wasn't easy to win MoS in a WC second time, but Sachin did it third time. Things were appearing changing at that time & what had been lost, people had started giving signals to being willing to help each other in regaining that. In the news channels it could be seen people were desperate to find that lost plot which they had lost by own faults. All appeared to jump to say what all they are willing to do if given their thing when news came on TV. The nation had suddenly got under a sweep of nationalism. The new things had started developing in other fields also hence cricket was also likely to be influenced by it anyway. The first Indian player who rose to stardom in this period was Virat Kohli about whom The Times Of India had written in May 2012 that is he the no. 1 ODI batsman in the world at present when he had scored 1100 ODI runs & 5 ODI centuries in the first five months of 2012.

I will start this chapter with our tour of England & Australia in this year where these countries were hungry to take revenge from us of our past dominance on them. Australia were a wounded tiger having lost the BGT for six consecutive times. England had also rose one level up since 2009 & had started to knock on the top peak in the world cricket. We had won both these series 2-0, but the best part was of our gaining this new Test debutant in WI series

in Virat. Ashwin had also made debut this year only & we had some fun with three of our bowlers making century in Test matches this year in Ashwin, Harbhajan Singh & Anil Kumble. This year Virender Sehwag had also broken Sachin's record of the highest ODI score & set it to 219. Sunny Sir had said to me before the England series that he thinks I can break my record of 839 runs in a 4-match Test series one or two more times & I had told him that I think I can do this this year only. The prospect of playing the two most fierce teams in world in their own den in Test cricket & playing four matches in each had fancied my aspirations & I was seeing this as an opportunity to raise my Test status here one more level. Australia had lost to us in WC knockouts three times now & were eager to avenge themselves. Ricky Ponting & Rahul Dravid were to retire at the end of 2012 & the world had seen how colossal Sachin Tendulkar was when he had played 24 years & top scored in 3 WCs. At the age of 37 he had scored 1500 Test runs in the calendar year 2010 & won an ICC Player of the Year. The world had started to realise the greatness of Sachin Tendulkar even more when his contemporaries had started to retire even before him. & His greatness was heard in other things also when he was asked questions like will India get a new player like him. He used to say two of them are sitting in this room only - Pointing to Suresh Raina & Rohit Sharma. Two players who I thought peaked much early were Virat Kohli & Alastair Cook. Alastair Cook made his debut in 2006, in the post-anarchy era & went on to make 12000 Test runs & 36 Test centuries in his career of till 2018 & Virat Kohli has already registered 80 hundreds as of now including 50 ODI ones. He has won three WC MoSs already & has taken India to two WTC finals. He may not be greater than Sachin but he seems more entertaining than him definitely at present. In the new age, there has been a monster of Hashim Amla also who has scored more Test centuries than Jacques Kallis in a particular period of time & hit ODI centuries at a faster rate than Virat. Like, noone could surpass Sachin's record in his era, noone has been able to come close to Virat's performance also in his era. In the new era the players who have been among the top in ICC ODI rankings for batsmen the most times are Virat, Hashim Amla, De Villiers & Kumar Sangakkara. Dale Steyn has of course ruled the roost in Test bowlers. Steyn's record of ruling over the Test bowler chart for 2300 days is terrific. The batsmen in this age have been more legendary than bowlers & this is more essentially a batsman era but there have been still some bowlers like James Anderson, Trent Boult & Mitchel Starc who have been exemplary. The game has been marked with energetic & electric fields like agility, fielding & fitness & some players have shown leadership from the front in this.

Some captains have also been statesmen like Eion Morgan, M.S. Dhoni, Michael Clarke & Pat Cummins. Many world records have been broken & Steve Smith's average reaching 65 during the 2019 Ashes was phenomenal in this. My most favourite moment among the overseas players in Tests has been Smith's 774 runs in four matches in the 2019 Ashes including three hundreds which he recorded after coming from a one-year ban. His lowest score in that series was 80 till long time till he scored a 23 in the last match. I love Virat Kohli's energy & passion in Test cricket, but also adore Smith's simplicity & modesty. He is the only player to win two Test player of the Years. Steve Smith & Joe Root had come to fame around 2015 when they became popular for reaching the no. 1 spot in the ICC Test rankings. Kane Williamson had become known since 2016. This I will be writing in detail about in the chapter on Fab 4 as there are things to write in this, but just a small mention here as the subject has come. This book I have targeted to write 70 pages of at least, so there will be on an average 4-5 pages for each chapter, but the ones which are bigger will have to be written longer, as the others may be smaller. This first chapter I think I have covered 6-7 pages so far, but it is one of the main chapters, hence I feel I should write 3-4 more pages in it. Some pages I will increase by adding images. & Some by data. Cricbuzz & Wikipedia are the platforms I source my data from when it comes to taking information related with stats. Cricbuzz gives the figures while Wikipedia tells highlight stories. The biggest highlight of India in Tests in the 2010-2020 decade has been the undefeated run in home Test series from 2013 & the highest performance in leadership has been Virat's 40 wins in 68 Tests as captain. Virat's hunger for runs & his aggression as a captain helped a long way in developing the hunger for success culture in the team & making the junior generation aggressive. Just like Sourav Ganguly had done in the 2000s decade. His 7 double centuries in the span of one & a half years from 2015 to 2016 are proof how much capable he is if given the chance to lead. His 20 Test hundreds as captain which are only behind Ponting & Sir Bradman are symbols of his great anchoring aptitude. He is a statesman in a world of soft players. Most of the players of his era are soft players while he is a genuine hard hitter thanks to his giant workout routine & fitness temperament. It is his fitness character that has rubbed on to the team as a prerequisite that has developed them for higher aims much. They have lived a pursuit of much higher fitness standards than earlier & toiled hard to attain their goals. I pause on this chapter here to switch to Fab 4 although there are more thoughts going on in the mind but I will include them in the annexure in the end.



## Chapter 2: "Fab 4"

Cricket is a game of passion & much of its passion comes due to batting being a fun-filled craft. Batting has always been the cream of international cricket & the iconic batsmen who have ruled the game have ruled the public mind also. In the '90s & 2000s it was Sachin who was the reigner, in '80s & '70s it was Viv Richards & now in the 2010s, there has come a term "Fab 4". This term has been coined for the four batsmen who are of the superlative class in this period. It came around 2015-16 when Steve Smith had remained at the top of the Test rankings for some time & then Joe Root had surpassed him soon & after Kane Williamson had won some awards in New Zealand awards that year along with hitting some big runs in IPL 2016. It was then that it was made out that these four are a Fab 4. But it is wrongly expressed. It should be made clear that this club is only of Test cricket & not of international cricket. The other three than Virat Kohli in this have distinction only in Test cricket & they don't even come close to him in the shorter formats, but it is said to generalise that it is a Fab 4 of cricket. The timing also since when they have existed in this fab club is wrongly gestured. It is made out as if it was there since the beginning of 2010s, however it was only Virat Kohli who was famous at that level of these since before 2015. He was famous since 2012 & the rest came around 2015-16. This is also a misnomer. The Fab 4 are undoubtedly a great bunch, with Steve Smith being a specialist of Test average, Joe Root getting close to the 13000 Test mark & Williamson delivering from time to time & all of them having played 100+ Test matches. The other three than Root also are nearing 10000 & each have 30+ Test centuries. I would say in the 2000s there was a Fab 6 which included Sachin, Dravid, Lara, Ponting, Hayden & Kallis & now there is this Fab 4. In the '70s also it was said there was this fab trio of Vivian Richards, Sunil Gavaskar & Greg Chappell. In the '90s it was Sachin & Lara.

Much can be written about these Fab 4, but I will just mention the highlight cricketing achievements. I will conclude this chapter by citing their comparative records.

### **'Highlight Cricketing Achievements'**

#### **#Virat Kohli**

- 1) Virat Kohli has averaged 59+ in ODI matches for long
- 2) He has hit 50 ODI centuries in 175 less innings than Sachin
- 3) He completed 10000 ODI runs in 55 less innings than Sachin (Fastest)
- 4) He hit 9000+ international & IPL runs between 2016 & 2018
- 5) He has averaged 50 in T20I cricket also
- 6) He has won 40 Tests as captain
- 7) He is a super aggressive person on as well as off the field which adds to his impact on own & opposition players
- 8) He has scored 6 Test double centuries in a period of one & a half years between 2015 & 2016
- 9) He smashed 1000 ODI runs in 2018 within 11 innings
- 10) He is a master of chase & had scored more centuries in successful oneday chases than all other countries combined since his debut till some recent time
- 11) He has won 3 MOTS awards in WCs
- 12) He broke Sachin's record of most runs in a single edition of world cup in 2023 making 765
- 13) He has hit 600+ runs in a Test series three times
- 14) He has hit 2500+ international runs in a calendar year three times
- 15) He has won all the ICC player of the Year awards in 2018
- 16) He is the only player to win ICC player of the Year award in successive years - 2017 & 2018
- 17) He has won the ICC player of the Decade 2010s
- 18) He is the leading run getter in T20Is format
- 19) He is the 3rd no. player in most ODI runs behind only Sachin & Sangakkara at present
- 20) He is behind only Sachin, Sangakkara & Ponting in international runs also
- 21) He is close to 10000 runs in Tests also

22) He is the batsman with the maximum international average among batsmen with 10000+ international runs (54, With Sachin being the second behind him at 48)

23) He is the highest run & century maker in IPL also at 8000 & 8 respectively

24) He had made his debut at a tender age of 19

25) He had averaged 47 in the first 2-3 years of his career also

26) He is a dedicated teamperson

27) He had smashed 1100 ODI runs & 5 ODI centuries in the first five months of 2011 & reached the no. 1 ODI batsman position with that

28) He has hit the fastest ODI century by an Indian in 52 balls

29) He has the most double centuries as Test captain

30) He has great temperament for Test cricket

31) He has 2 away BGTs to his name as captain & player

32) He is a big star, earner & endorser

33) He is the 3rd most followed athlete on social media & 3rd richest cricket player in the world

34) He is a legendary player liked by all experts, opponents & contemporaries & is hailed even in his opposition countries

35) He has very committed attitude

36) He is a great fielder. He has 4th most catches as an ODI non-wicketkeeper

37) He is the biggest revolutioniser of Indian cricket

& 38) He is life partner of a superstar actress who is a stalwart in her own right

### #Steve Smith

1) Steve Smith is a specialist Test batsman with appearance in the 2010s decade for Australia

2) Steve Smith had reached the second highest Test average of 65 during the 2019 Ashes

3) He had hit record-equaling 774 runs in the 2019 Ashes series with equal to Sunil Gavaskar's in a four-match Test series

4) He is the only player to win two Test player of the Years

5) He had reached no. 1 Test ranking in 2015

6) He has scored 700+ runs in two BGTs

7) He has been the man of the series in two BGTs

- 8) He had hit two 60-ball centuries each in the 2019 ODI series vs India
- 9) He had scored five back-to-back half centuries in WC 2015
- 10) He has captained Australia in many Tests
- 11) He had hit twin centuries in the first Test of Ashes 2019 & led the team to victory
- 12) He had scored a double century in the fourth Test of Ashes 2019 while returning from a concussion
- 13) He had made his debut in 2010 at the age of 20
- 14) He has won many Allan Border medals in Cricket Australia awards
- 15) He has been the leading Test runmaker of the year many times

### #Joe Root

- 1) Joe Root is '90s born
- 2) He has already played 150 Tests
- 3) He had reached the no. 1 ICC rankings in 2015
- 4) He has won an ICC player of the year
- 5) He has smashed 17 Test centuries since 2011
- 6) He has reached 36 Test centuries
- 7) He has scored six double centuries
- 8) He has hit sixty five Test half centuries already
- 9) His highest in Test cricket is 258
- 10) He has become the 5th highest runmaker in Tests behind only Sachin, Ponting, Kallis & Dravid already

### #Kane Williamson

- 1) Won the WTC for New Zealand
- 2) Took New Zealand to the finals of the WC 2019 & became MoS in that
- 3) Scored 8 150+ scores in Tests with a highest of 251
- 4) Orange Cap winner in 2018 IPL
- 5) Named in the IPL XI of the Tournament by Cricbuzz in 2018
- 6) Captain of the Team of the Tournament by Espn in WC 2019
- 7) Took team to no. 1 position in Tests in June 2021
- 8) Beat England in an intense series in June 2021

- 9) Reached the finals of the 2015 WC
- 10) Sir Richard Hadlee Medal in 2015-16 & 2016-17
- 11) Scored 161\* against Windies in June 2014 & helped his team secure a rare away Test series victory
- 12) Finished as the leading run getter in the series with 413 & was denied a double century only by rain
- 13) Established one of the most potent top order partnerships with Ross Taylor in the 2010s at no. 3 & 4, with himself being the most prolific scorer of the national side
- 14) In 2015, started with 69 and 242\* against Sri Lanka, with 2 catches in the field in an MoM performance
- 15) Scored over 700 runs in the first 2 months of the calendar year 2015 before the WC
- 16) Ended 2015 with 2692 runs, the highest total of the year, & 3rd highest in a single year
- 17) On 08 December 2018, scored his 19th Test century in a deciding 3rd game vs Pakistan in an away series
- 18) On 07 December 2018, became the 1st New Zealander to cross 900 rating points in the ICC Test rankings for batsmen
- 19) Scored 200 n.o. during the 2019 Test series against Bangladesh, as New Zealand posted their highest ever team total of 715
- 20) In November 2020, he was nominated in the ICC Cricketer Of The Decade award & the ICC Test Cricketer Of The Decade award
- 21) Was named the skipper of the NZ U-19 team in the 2008 U-19 WC & took the team to the finals against India
- 22) Williamson made his 1st-class debut for Northern Districts in 2007, at the age of 17, whom he has remained with for the entire duration of his NZ domestic career. He scored his 1st T20 hundred, in 2014 making 101 in 49 balls to guide Northern Districts to a comfortable win against Cape Cobras in the Champions League 2014
- 23) As of January 2021, he has scored 24 Test centuries & 13 ODI centuries. His highest score in ODIs is also 148 & he's yet to score a century in T20Is
- 24) Williamson has a background of a sportsmen family. His father's a sales representative who played under-17 & club Cricket & his mother'd been a representative Basketball player. He's a twin brother Logan, who is just 1 minute younger to him. The brothers've 3 older sisters, Anna, Kylie & Sophie - All 3're accomplished Volleyball players, & Anna & Sophie're in the NZ age group teams
- 25) Williamson was the only New Zealander to be named in the ICC Test Team of the Decade 2011-2020

26) Great former Cricketer Martin Crowe noted that, "We're probably seeing the dawn of our greatest ever batsman in Williamson"

27) Ian Chappell has ranked Williamson among the top 4 or 5 batsmen with Joe Root, Steve Smith & Virat Kohli

28) Williamson became the youngest NZ centurion when he scored his maiden ODI ton against BD on 14 October 2010

29) Due to his performance on the BD tour, Williamson was selected in the NZ Test squad for the tour of India

30) Williamson is a saintly heart also. During the 2014 ODI series vs Pak, he donated his entire match fees of all the series matches to the victims of the Peshawar school massacre

& 31) Williamson is famous for his generous & kind personal attitude also for the calm & composure he maintains on the field & throughout the public affairs & his compassionate smile for the winners on losing the 2015 & 2019 WC finals have become iconic wallpapers.

With this, I conclude this chapter on Fab 4 having written six pages in it, now I am only copying the compairitive chart of these four across all formats to conclude the chapter. Hope you all have liked this unit much, this Fab 4 is the cream of this decade.

**\* Tests \***

Player	Mtchs	Inns	NOs	Runs	Ave.	100s	Highest	S/R
Virat	123	210	13	9230	46.85	30	254	55.58
Smith	114	204	25	9999	55.86	34	239	53.55
Root	152	278	23	12972	50.87	36	262	57.48
Williamson	105	186	17	9276	54.89	33	251	51.78

**\* ODIs \***

Player	Mtchs	Inns	NOs	Runs	Ave.	100s	Highest	S/R
Virat	295	283	44	13906	58.18	50	183	93.54
Smith	165	149	19	5662	43.55	12	164	87.19
Root	171	160	23	6522	47.61	16	133	86.77
Williamson	165	157	16	6811	48.30	13	148	81.39

### **Chapter 3: "The rise of England"**

England have risen to what is the level of great teams in this decade. Only two teams had been there earlier - West Indies in the 1970s & Australia in the 2000s. India grew up to there in the 2010s & England in 2020s. The team led by Eion Morgan had some skilled players & they were aggressive & spirited to do something big. This led them to their glorious World Cup victory in 2019. They had been in this form on & off for some time in the '10s decade also, but the highest championship came in WC 2019. One period of their high success was from 2009 to 2011. Then they did well in a few Ashes in the middle of this decade then topped from 2019. Since then they have adopted aggressive approach in Test cricket & made it their strategy & have succeeded more or less in triumphing over teams on the basis of it since then only. What Eion Morgan did as a captain for the 2019 WC was much like Imran Khan in the 1992 WC & Arjuna Ranatunga in the 1996 WC. He has registered himself in the hall of great captains since. The main roleplayers who contributed in this road were Jason Roy & Jonny Bairstow as openers, Joe Root at no. 3, Stokes & Butler in the middle order & Morgan as captain. Jack Leach, Mark Wood & James Anderson had been playing the role of good pacers in this.

When Morgan retired & Ben Stokes took over the Test captaincy & Brendon McCullum became the head coach, the policy of aggressive batting got full charge in England's Test strategy & they defeated many a teams with their offensive attitude through this period. They won perhaps 12-14 Tests out of their 15 in 2023 & won almost all the series they played. India was I think the only team which challenged them & caught them off-guard at spin. India beat them in 2021, 2022 & 2023. India-England Test series have been 5-match affairs since 2014 when they have played in England &



India-Australia series have also been extended to 5-match episodes from this year. England have done what South Africa couldn't do. South Africa remained at the peak of cricket for many years but couldn't materialise an ICC win. England have done that & with the WTC finals played in England every time, they have a slight advantage if they qualify for the finals. The WTC finals should I think have been played in Australia this time. Australia is also no less a mecca of cricket & must have been given this honour. Jos Butler is talented as a white-ball captain & is leading in these formats well now. Once England had beaten Aussies in the Ashes in 2010-11 when Cook had made that magical 766. & Once they had made mat of Australia in that Test of 2015 in which they had belittled them to 60 due to which Michael Clarke was made to retire. The 2019 Ashes was an iconic one & ended in a draw, although Australia dominated over it in most part of it. Yes, one more big victory of England which is mentionable here is the 2022 T20 WC in which they had taken the title thanks to Sam Curran's title-winning & all-round performance. Another is the Headingley Test of 2019 in which Stokes had partnered with Leach to lead the team to a one-wicket win in a chase of 362. The ninth wicket partnership in that had been of 29 runs & the tenth wicket had been of 76 runs. Jack Leach had contributed only one run in that. This tells how tactfully Stokes must have played that inning. He ended up winning England with an inning of 135(215). Undoubtedly, he won the Player of the Year that year in ICC awards & WC Player of the Match in the finals for his 84. England are not of the level of the Australia of 2000s but they are still in that fight. Most probably their prowess will be silenced only by India when they tour them (India in England) this year. England is the only country which is good in both cricket & football & has won a world cup of both. Having qualified in the knockouts of the world cups in both sports many times, they have developed competitive rivalry between the two games there. The most pathetic condition I have seen England in the last five years has been in the 2021 series against India in which they were wiped out 3-1. The web of Indian spinners knit very well in that & they trashed out them dominatingly in that series. India have been playing Australia & England most frequently in the last eleven years with their home & away series coming timely every two years, even if games with other countries might not have happened. England are developing into that commanding board of the ICC again like which they had been since 1877 till the decision-making power of the MCC was given to ICC. They are good as administrators & I think India can also rise to some power in ICC if Indian governors manage the job well & deliver good performance in the ICC officiation. The dominance of Australia,

England & India in the management of ICC is sometimes questioned but they are good operators & they do the job well.

## **Chapter 4: "WCs 2015 & 2019"**

The world cups of 2019 & 2015 have been the best so far. In both world cups India dominated through the group / league stage & reached the knockouts undefeated & lost only the final in the later one. Before both the world cups, India weren't seeming like the rhythm of winning a world cup but clicked on the road there. It shows it's not over till it's over. In 2015 MS Dhoni was the captain & in 2019 Virat. The formats of both the world cups were different, with it being a two-group event with quarterfinals in the '15 & all-play-all & no QFs & only SFs in the '19. India now were a strong team capable of winning big matches & cups. When it's a final thing, they put in everything & pull things off. Due to this the '19 & '15 WCs in this order are my favourite from the ones I have played. I will now commentate the two WCs of these in detail as they happened. I will begin in chronological order as that will make more interest.

### **"2015 WC"**

The 2015 WC was a 14-team tournament with divisions in two groups. India's group had Pakistan & South Africa as the other two non-minnows. People were anticipating that India might have an easy group as South Africa is the only tough opposition. Pakistan remains vulnerable & West Indies is not that force. Hence South Africa was the only strong opponent in that group. The other three teams were minnows. Hence reaching quarterfinals might not be that difficult & from there it may be a matter of chance with only two games to go. This is what happened also. India swept through the group winning 6/6 as also New Zealand in the other group. The first game against Pakistan, Kohli clicked & India posed a solid 300. Defeated Pakistan comfortably then. Then South Africa also faltered against Indian

might, going off against a powerful show of 300 generated by Shikhar Dhawan century. Australia on the other side were doing aggressive batting courtesy David Warner & Aaron Finch & the standout Glenn Maxwell who made a 101(51) in one of the matches. South Africa scored 400+ in two matches with De Villiers' 162(66) in one. Australia also scored 400+ in one of the matches. In the quarterfinals India met Bangladesh. Bangladesh posed some challenge setting up a target of 288 against which India were reduced to 92/4. Then Dhoni & Raina took the uphill task & charged the chase. The best match of the tournament was the S/F in which Australia presented us an altitudinal target of 329. We attained that with one wicket to spare & on the last ball. Our tail delivered in that producing 50-60 runs in the end. Umesh Yadav & Mohit Sharma were our spearhead bowlers in this tournament. Umesh Yadav threw down 18 wickets being the second highest scalper of the tournament & Mitchel Starc ended up as the MOTS with 22 wickets. The New Zealand-South Africa S/F the other one also was very interesting. South Africa produced 281 in a rain-interrupted match in which they had only 43 overs to bat. The target was thus set for NZ to 298 to be chased in 43 overs. The match went till the last over where the Kiwis fought with three wickets remaining & all their players contributed & they won the match handsomely with some members doing all-round performance. A.B. De Villiers' teary eyes in the end became the photo of the tournament & a sad human snap till long. The final was in this way set up between New Zealand & India. This was a cakewalk now as New Zealand succumbed to big-match pressure & got out for 183 batting first in which Indian pacers had bowled very well. Which was an easy target then. Martin Guptill ended up as the leading run scorer of the tournament with 544 runs & he had scored a double century also - A 237 which is still the highest score in a world cup. There was another double century which was by Chris Gayle (215) in 152 balls. In this match with Zimbabwe Chris Gayle & Marlon Samuels had put up a 365 run partnership for West Indies. Mohit Sharma also ended up with 14 wickets. Trent Boult's 7-fer was the best bowling of the tournament which came against Australia in a match in which Australia were bundled out for 151 & New Zealand also chased it with nine wickets down. A.B. De Villiers' picture of sitting on the ground with heads down after the S/F loss & Kumar Sangakkara's similar pic after the 2011 WC final were seen with much emotion as also Kane Williamson's picture after the 2019 S/F defeat. 2015 WC was special also because of being hosted in Australia. Australia is always special in whatever they do because they have been that good in the game & this is the reason anything related with them is good.

## "2019 WC"

From the 2019 edition, ICC changed to the 10-team format changing from their decision of following the QFs format which they had decided from the 2011 WC & about which they had said that they will stick to it now. But they changed that in 2019 & followed the same format in 2023 also. The 10-team format they are saying now that it is better. In the 10-team format there is a league round & then there are S/Fs. The total no. of matches in this way is 48. I however prefer the 8-team format of the 1992. The matches should be less & the tournament shouldn't stretch more than 35 days. The 2019 tournament had all the eight main teams & then Bangladesh & Afghanistan. India's first match happened with South Africa in which they crumbled to the pressure of big match & presented us an easy target of 222. This was an easy task as Rohit Sharma scored a mature 122(144) playing a patient inning. Kohli had later said that this was Rohit Sharma's most mature ODI inning he had seen. Who knew that he will score 5 hundreds in this world cup? The second match was with our favourite opponent Australia. We posted a mammoth 350 in this thanks to hard hits from all our top order batsmen. Rohit had also scored 70 in this. The target wasn't chased by Australia. The third match against New Zealand was again a one-sided show where we set up a 293 in a rain affected match & New Zealand couldn't chase that. The fourth match was vs Pakistan, in which we made again 335 batting first & this was also a no show by Pakistan. The fifth match tested us a bit as Afghanistan were some effective on a spinning wicket. We could make only 225 on that turning track & they seemed like chasing it but got restricted in the end. Then Bangladesh as Dhoni took us across in that testing game with his presence of mind & agile wicketkeeping. Bangladesh needed three runs to win in that match in the final over with three wickets to go, but Dhoni outplayed them with his clever stumpings & runouts. The seventh match was the toughest of the league stage in which England set us up to a daunting target of 336. They made that with just 2-3 wickets gone & were at one stage looking like reaching 360. The opening partnership was of 280. England's top order of Roy, Root & Bairstow had batted very well in this tournament. The eighth match India crushed West Indies by 200 runs & then Sri Lanka by 80 runs. The semifinal of ours happened with New Zealand & England's with Australia. India's semifinal was a close finish with India chasing New Zealand's 239 with just one wicket left & on the last ball. New Zealand's score had come off 5 wickets & it

was a rain marred game spilling on till the next day. New Zealand had batted first for 45 overs on the Day 1 & reached 218/5. The next day they reached 239. India's start was poor as Rohit went on score of 0, Kohli & Dinesh Kartik at 1 & Hardik Pandya at 25. Rishabh Pant then took the inning somewhat up with me & we took the score to 92/5 when Rishabh fell. My wicket went on 138 as the sixth one & then Dhoni played with the tailenders with each of them contributing 10-20. The Man of the Match was Jasprit Bumrah for his 10-3-15-3 & we qualified for the final with that bowed down head of Kane Williamson who didn't win the world cup once again but won hearts & the MOTS. He had amassed 578 runs in the tournament + might have got some points for captaincy I think. Three batsmen had scored 600+ - Rohit (648), David Warner (647) & Shakib al Hasan (606). Kane was the fourth in this rank. The other semifinal happened between Australia & England in which Australia bent to a pressure of big match situation & got bundled out for only 223 which England chased easily losing just 2-3 wickets. The final was set up between us & England. This day also England set up a similar score making 241 like our semifinal. They did this at eight wickets. Ben Stokes was the highest scorer from their side making 84 & we stumbled with just one run remaining & one wicket left till the last ball losing to Ben Stokes' all round performance in which he claimed three wickets also & for which he was the man of the match also. It were these two heroics of his the Headingly Test century & the WC final inning for which he got the POTY award of this year. Rohit Sharma was the biggest hero of our side in this tourna for his five centuries & Eion Morgan the hero of the winning side for his potent captaincy (He hit a 224 also) & Kane also hit a 148. India lost the cup by a margin of one run & they had a demolition of wickets at regular intervals to blame that for which exposed the tail although they did well & made 60-70 runs. Shakib al Hasan had taken some wickets also & he could have been the MOTS for that too. Ben Stokes had written a book on this world cup later that year in which he had mentioned about how he felt about different players in this WC. 'Intent' was the word of the tournament as many players had been accused to playing poorly intentionally to make their captains defeat whom they envied. Virat had hit five consecutive fifties. Steve Smith had hit five consecutive fifties in the 2015 WC. Australia's quarterfinal in the '15 was against Pakistan in which they had been set a target of 236. Wahab Riaz was bowling fiercely & he had kept alive Pakistan's hopes of winning till they had reached 168/4 as per Ramiz Raja. Ramiz Raja had said in the commentary of this match that Pakistan have found a bowler for five years. He had also said that a fast bowler's peak is for five years &

the ghost of Dale Steyn had now ended as he had passed his five years. David Warner & Aaron Finch had scored some fast centuries in the group stage of this WC & Maxwell's 101(51) was the fastest WC century till then. De Villiers' 162(66) was the fastest 150 of ODIs. De Villiers had also set a world record of the fastest ODI 100 in 2015 in 31 balls about which I will talk in some other chapter & McCullum had also played some fierce innings. In all, Australia, India & England had played out most of the other teams in these two WCs very well & they deserved to be among the top in them.

## **Chapter 5: "The champion of Virat Kohli"**

The greatest champion of modern day - The least that can be said about Virat Kohli. He has been more unparalleled in his age than any player was in any age. He begun his career with an average of around 47-48 in the first two-three years, made debut at age of nineteen & hit a century in the first WC match. He had played a significant role in India's chase of 275 in the WC 2011 final also & had made a good 35(49) in that in the middle overs. Hit his first century in 2009 & came up with a gritty 121(118) against Australia in a chase of 290 in 2010 where India won by seven wickets. Partnered with Gautam Gambhir also in a few games in the NZ series of 2010 in which India drubbed them 5-0. But the biggest arrival came when he completed 1100 ODI runs & 5 ODI centuries in the first five months of 2012 after which he was started to be seen as the no. 1 batsman of the world at that time & had been promoted as the vice-captain during the VB series. His fierce knock of 133(86) which helped India chase a 321 against Sri Lanka in 40 overs was what won him this vice-captaincy. This was one of those five centuries & one was that mounting 183 vs Pakistan in the Asia Cup in Mirpur. That was a chase of 330 & he made that in just 147 balls. It was showing he has serious intentions & high aims to go. The next wave of his came in the Australia bilateral series 2013 in which he produced three fast centuries in India's chases of 350. The first one is regarded as the best ODI knock by many & came in just 52 balls (100) & in all those three matches, each of three batsmen of the Indian top order of Rohit, Dhawan & Virat had scored hundreds. In the second chase, he produced a 115(66) completing century again in 61 balls. It was the solid knock of these three in all these games, that won India the series 3-2. Rohit Sharma was although the best of these three in overall performance & registered the maximum total in a five match One-Day series of 491. After this series, he had scored a 136 in some tri-series against Afghanistan



also after which Sunny Sir had said that Virat is showing capacities of breaking Sachin's record of most ODI centuries & he has capacity to hit 4-5 more centuries in this season only. Although no more centuries came that season, but many more came soon & he speeded from where he was at that time at 17 & reached 31 & then 43 & then 50 soon. When he had reached 31 ODI centuries in 2018, I had thought that he mightn't be able to score that fast now as he has reached much, but he raced to 43 then & then 50. Hashim Amla was also 27 at that time & he was scoring at faster rate but he didn't accelerate, rather retired. His tour of England in 2014 hadn't been good & he had summed only 134 runs in ten innings, which was his only failure till then & yet, but he took that very seriously & went up to Sachin after that & consulted for his flaw & corrected it. Soon he was in Australia smashing 692 in eight innings & gathering four centuries. It was a high-scoring series although & many batsmen had notched high scores, but he was no less special & he got charge of the Test team also in between then after the second Test. Dhoni retired after 90 Tests & ended his career with 4800 runs @ 38 due to which he was given the captaincy of Test team & Rohit Sharma made his deputy. There was no looking back since then. He produced 300 runs in the 2015 WC, was his best in the 2014 & 2016 T20 WCs & had played a GOAT inning of 82(47) against Australia in the virtual Q/F of the 2016 WC & won the match from a difficult position & top-scored & been the MoS in both these WCs. In the virtual Q/F of the 2016 WC, he had smashed 19 runs in the penultimate over when India needed 22 from the last two, hitting five fours & taking the pressure off from the last over. The 2016 season of IPL also saw him rising to the peaks, with 973 runs in the edition & 4 centuries on the boards. In the first Test match against Bangladesh in 2015, when he was playing his first Test match as captain, he scored a 200(283) after which Rohit Sharma had praised him a lot saying he is a captain by example. It was middle of 2015 & it was his first double century & he hit six double centuries since then by the end of 2016. Those three years of 2016-2018 were his peak in which he reigned like an emperor, crossed all mountains & planted his print on the moon. In those three years he scored 9000 runs including IPL, won two ICC player of the years, broke IPL records of most runs, led India to many Test series wins & did the most admirable job of beating Australia in Australia in 2018-19. He most hugely developed an aggressive & hungry culture in the team which went a long way in elevating this team's capacity further. He took over the ODI captaincy in 2017 & struck a very coordinative partnership with Ravi Shastri as the coach. He had scored Test centuries in South Africa & England even when it was considered very

difficult in 2018 & had delivered when it was being said that India has to play the three toughest countries of the world overseas together for the first time in 2018. How great his stature is in the world of cricket, this gets known from this only that Australians are a bigger fan of him than their own players & the Australian corporate has a market of 4.5 billion rupees on him when he toured there in 2018. He has a big market value now & has net worth of 10 billion & SMC price of Rs. 5 cr. rupees for sponsored social ads. He is the most followed star on social media & has property worth billions in Mumbai & Gurugram. What Kohli is to world cricket, it can be seen only by how much opponent players fear him & they have to make special plans to trap him & contain his outflow. His biggest recognition from the point of view of awards came in the form of ICC Player of the Decade 2011-20 in which he had also won the ODI Player of the Decade. How sweet memes & jokes come on him are also hilarious. During the 2023 WC, when India wasn't getting enough high targets in the first few matches & Kohli was remaining not out on scores of 90s & 95s, Rohit Sharma had joked that the opposite teams should make at least so many runs that Virat is able to complete his century. India was the mightiest team in the tournament, having remained unbeaten till the final, but lost to bad luck in the final. The T20 WC 2024 came as a fresh refreshment after many ICC finals lost including the WTC finals in 2021 & 2023. ICC had started a tradition of giving a Test mace to the team which remained no. 1 at the time of beginning of any year since 2015. For six first years, this mace had been won by Kohli. The 2021 BGT which India won, Kohli wasn't part of the team in three of its matches, but it was his preparation & training that brought India that capacity in that series. These young guns of Jasprit Bumrah, Rishabh Pant & Ravindra Jadeja that popped up into the big world, it's Kohli's patting behind that. The job of team building that Ganguly & Dhoni had done, Kohli took it one step further by elevating the level of deterrence in the team & pushing them in fitness mode. How much workout he does, can be seen only from the pictures of his sessions that he puts on the social net & it's heartening to see him sweat out so hard. It's all for the team & the country & in the name of the game & work. He has brought new values in the team like determination, discipline, aggression & control. People say he is outspoken, but he is good for the team & does good for it. He lives outside his comfort zone & that's good for his team & nation. This is the way to go in the current age & people who are able to do this, they only succeed at the highest level & set examples for others & give direction to others. Virat Kohli is in my opinion a legend of not only the game at

present, but of overall world where he is on par with the likes of Mukesh Ambani, Mark Zuckerberg & Elon Musk.

## **Chapter 6: "Indian Test veterans Cheteshwar Pujara & Ravichandran Ashwin"**

Some players are all-rounders of all formats, while some are specialists of selected formats, but they are so excellent in that format that they don't seem like being out of the team ever. What VVS Laxman was for the Indian Test team in 2000s, Cheteshwar Pujara was in the 2010s & what Anil Kumble was in spin bowling, Ravichandra Ashwin was as off-spinner. Cheteshwar Pujara was rock solid like Rahul Dravid, absorbed a lot, stayed calm & patient, consumed many balls & thwarted away the opposition when it came to his bat. He started out in 2012, hit three double centuries in 2012 only, batted like a good no. 3 till one decade, reached 7000 Test runs & ripped many a bowlings apart including the BGT 2018. Nathan Lyon had said about him in the BGT 2018 what Shane Warne had said about Laxman for the BGT 2001. Warne had said about Laxman that if you can get Tendulkar out, you are brilliant, if you can get Dravid out you are a genius, but if you can get Laxman out it's a miracle. The same Lyon had said about Indian batsmen, that Virat & Rohit are tough, but bowling to Pujara is the hardest job. The same is true of Ravichandran Ashwin. He has been hailed by Lyon only as a bowler of the league of Murlidharan & Warne. He could have taken 600 wickets. Lyon has said about Ashwin that he is his mentor. He has learnt from him & has followed him from the early career. Although he is three years older than him & has played 25 more Test matches, but he says that he has learnt a lot from him. Ravichandran Ashwin came to the highest rugs when he raced to the 250 Test wickets in fastest number of matches (45) & got 2016's Player of the Year for that. He had been a criminal since then only & was taking 5-vers & 10-ers frequently since then. He has won the joint most MOTS awards in Tests (11) along with Murlidharan & has the second most 5Ws in Tests (37) after Murlidharan (65). It's sad that he couldn't play that much in ODIs &

has claimed only 194 wickets in it. Although he had made his squad debut in the 2011 WC & has 6 centuries in Tests as a batsman also. His banter with Tim Paine in the 2020-21 BGT is world famous. Paine had sledged him from behind the stumps saying that "Can't wait to come to you at Gabba". Ashwin replied "Come to India, that will be your last series." & The rest is history. Paine couldn't even come to India & he already had 1000 more runs & 5 more centuries than him as a batsman. Pujara had piled up 530 runs in the 2018-19 BGT including three centuries that covered a mammoth 193 also. That match in which he made that 193, India couldn't win only because of rain. Australia needed 300 runs to avoid inning defeat in it on the last day, when it rained whole day. Otherwise the series would have been 3-1. In the 2020-21 BGT also Pujara had played crucial knocks like the one at Gabba. Ashwin has taken many a 10Ws at home in spinning conditions & bowled much in tandem with Ravindra Jadeja. They together have taken around 500 wickets & have webbed many a great batsmen in their flipping nets. Test I don't consider more important than ODIs, but if I can play only one, I will choose Tests only always. Because it is bigger, it tests more, it builds bigger records & it gives more fame. For these reasons, Test is my slightly more favourite format. WC is the most important in international cricket, but big Test series comes next before other big ODI series. Through this chapter, I give dedication to my fellow Test champions & India stalwarts Cheteshwar Pujara & Ravichandran Ashwin for their invaluable services to Team India & contribution in national happiness. Without them, Virat & Rohit wouldn't have been what they are & wouldn't have succeeded in their own individual playership as much as they did. One name I will like to take here is of Ravindra Jadeja, he has become a bowler of the class of Ravichandra Ashwin of late & has taken many 9-W, 10-W halls like him & contributed as much with the bat also. He has developed as a Test allrounder of invaluable merit & has good potential in ODIs also. It's sad that he, Virat & Rohit retired from T20 cricket after the 2024 WC. The team needs them more than they need the team & the nation is as much indebted to them as to God for giving life. Jadeja's 175 & 10-W in the Test vs SL in 2022 is I think his best one-match performance & he has won many an MOTS award also. Winning an MOTS award in BGT is no less than a mountain scaling & he has done it in 2016-17 BGT. Ashwin & Ravindra Jadeja have built the environment for spinners in the team like Kuldeep Yadav & Axar Patel. Their work is now paying off as these young guns are firing the cylinders. Mohammad Shami as a pacer since 2010 & his heroics in the 2023 WC where he missed the Starc record of most wickets in a WC (27) by just one wicket are also an achievement important to be mentioned

in India's chapters of modern history. Shami has rightly been given the Khel Ratna award & I think it's time now that Bumrah & Jadeja also get it.

## **Chapter 7: "Modern ODI legend Rohit Sharma"**

The vice captain of Virat Kohli, who wasn't as big a player when he was appointed the vice-captain also progressed with his captain & rose up to the ranks in the quicker pedals. Rohit Sharma isn't as all-rounder as Virat, he has played Tests less, but he is as tall in stature as him in the team & he is a modern ODI legend. I started considering him of the league of greats when he hit that 3rd ODI 200 in 2017 although he was doing that kind of work since 2015 WC. He had come to the team as early as 2007 T20 WC & had played a crucial inning of 30(16) in the final. After that he rose to fame as an ODI player on hitting those twin centuries against Zimbabwe in the 2010 Micromax Cup. He couldn't catch the bus for the 2011 WC but he was preparing for the big flight always. His first brush with superstardom happened in 2013 when he hit those three centuries & one double century in an ODI series. Then he went on to hit two more ODI double centuries one of which is a world record yet & five centuries in T20I. His score of 264 is some which was considered a good team score till not too long ago. He had that spark in him to shine in Tests also & he proved when he got the chance in 2019 SA series. He scored 3 centuries in that 3-match Test series & amassed 500 runs including a double century. One match of that was a twin century. He, Virat & Mayank Agarwal in that series had wreaked havoc & caused mayhem on SA. The fact that he is second fastest only to reach 10000 ODI runs in terms of number of innings after Virat speaks volumes of his calibre & makes him a modern ODI legend. He ended up with 2nd most runs in the 2023 WC also (597) at a S/R of 125. He, Virat, Pujara & Ashwin - These four for me are the Indian players of this decade who are superlative. Rohit had played an inning of 161 in the England series of 2021 also about which Virat had said that it was as good as a 250 on a good track (Because that was a spinning track). He was dropped from team two times in 2018 & 2020 & that was a bold

move, players of his class aren't easy to axe. MS Dhoni's move to make him open in the 2013 CT was a big tactic as it worked out & gave India one of the best openers ever. He has heaped 15000 runs as an opener & has 49 centuries in global cricket. When Virat stepped down from captaincy it was Rohit to lead naturally & he has taken this charge very well. His five titles in IPL also are beyond evaluability & he is a natural captain in T20 cricket. He is second behind Virat only in IPL runs also & has an image of a very noble man in the team. Ravichandran Ashwin had said about him recently, that in this selfish world there are some selfless people like Rohit Sharma also, when he had arranged a chartered flight for him to see his ailing mother in the middle of a series. Rohit's three double centuries in ODIs are a record which will be very difficult to break & he is a strike rate person, he takes the ball in the Superover also & has chased 18 & 24 runs many a times with two sixes on the last ball. I will close this chapter with just this remark that Rohit is to Team India what Dravid was to Ganguly & Kohli was to Dhoni, he is such a good person & it's pathetic to see how he has been dropped from Mumbai Indians without consenting him. This is a height of pityness.



## **Chapter 8: "The era of aggressive batting"**

Cricket has evolved in many ways, including the aggression aspect of batting. In the period of West Indies domination, the good first inning score used to be 400, then it reached 500 since the '90s. The aggressiveness of ODI batting jumped a notch up with the introduction of powerplays in the 1996 WC. Sanath Jaisurya stretched it one more hand up with his superexplosive batting. That kind of batting was rare but the Sachin level of strike rate of around 89-90 remained the best till another decade. There were only 5 batsmen in the world till 2005 who had S/R above 90 - Shahid Afridi, Gilchrist, Sehwag, Flintoff & Andrew Symonds. Their strike rates were respectively 102, 96, 95, 93 & 91. Then there were three batsmen with S/R in the 85+ range - Sachin (88), Jaisurya (89.5) & Chris Cairns (88.5). Then after that Yuvraj Singh was the only one in the eighties - 85. But then temperament evolved with time & also technique. New players came & they brought new strategy which helped elevate the strike rate level. Then some such new rules also came which enhanced the aggressive approach. 2 new balls, 5 overs extra of powerplay & short boundaries enabled batsmen to score at a little more higher rate. There was aggressive batting & there was another super level of aggressive batting which some batsmen like Glenn Maxwell, Jos Butler & Thisara Perera did helped by these rules. But the batsmen who did this along with high average also were some like A.B. De Villiers & Brendon McCullum. A.B. De Villiers had average of 54 in ODIs with S/R of 101. He had scored many big innings in ODI cricket @ S/R of 300-400. Brendon McCullum was also of that league. All of De Villiers' 25 ODI centuries came at strike rate of over 100. He has 7 ODI centuries under 75 balls. The world record that he had set of fastest century, he had smacked 149 runs in that off 44 balls. The 49 runs of after 100 came in that off 13 balls. The record of hitting most sixes in an ODI inning also (16) he had equalled in that which

was of 2 more batsmen. That record is at 17 now. He had smashed a 66-ball 162 also in WC 2015. Brendon McCullum had scored a 25-ball 77 in ODI cricket. The advent of T20I cricket also was a development which impacted the way the game is played & more so in ODI cricket. T20 cricket had been adopted from Australia where it was played in domestic cricket. It was played there around 2005. The format was adopted in international cricket in 2006 & India played a one-off match with SA in December in which Sachin, Ganguly & Dravid had also played. Then the regular organisation of T20I cricket started with the T20 WC 2007 & private leagues came after that. IPL was a big event which set up platform for players all over the world to show their talent. Brendon McCullum had scored a 75-ball 158 in the opening match of the first IPL only which had set the tone for an aggressive batting display. He, along with Gayle, Pollard & many others played many super aggressive knocks in IPL. Gayle had emerged as a mega specialist of T20s in the IPL & won Orange Cap two times, hit six centuries, smashed the fastest T20 hundred (30 balls), highest score (of 175) & most sixes in a T20 inning (13). Aaron Finch had scored the highest T20I score 156 & then 172. Teams earlier made 200 runs in T20 match sufficiently, but now even 250 is chaseable & 300 is postable. With IPL, T20 cricket has evolved much over the years & has influenced the way batting is done in all formats. England's new aggression level in Test cricket is an advancement in that direction only. In bowling also, there have been some speedsters who make the bowling more aggressive & as a result of that the batting done in response more aggressive. The result has affected fielding, fitness, strategy every aspect of the game. Gayle's 175 of IPL had come in 66 balls & De Villiers has two scores of 150+ there. Many batsmen have scored 400+ runs in an IPL edition many times & David Warner has won the Orange Cap three times. He had hit 848 runs in that season of 2016 in which Virat had scored 973 runs. In the 2023 season, Shubhman Gill had hit a record-seconding 890 & Jos Butler had fourthed with 861. Jos Butler then made an 800 in IPL 2024 also. All these foreign players accept that IPL has helped them improve their performance much. The exponents of aggressive batting have been many, but I will name a few who have been extraordinary - Like David Miller, Andre Russel, Sooryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan & Rishabh Pant. David Miller & Rohit Sharma are the joint record holders of the fastest century in T20I in 35 balls & Sooryakumar Yadav has emerged as a player who is the new Mr. 360° & hits the balls from whichever angle it comes, scoring @ S/R of 180 in T20Is, winning 11 POTMs in T20I cricket in just 45 matches & scoring 5 T20I centuries. New shots have also been developed like scoop, reverse

scoop, switch hit, reverse sweep & helicopter shot. Rishabh Pant has reverse scooped many big bowlers in Test cricket also. Rishabh Pant has done aggressive batting with a storm in Test cricket & played offensive batmanship in the best of matches. All this has happened courtesy T20 cricket & it has been a revolution in international cricket. Australia's great coach of 2000s John Buchanan has written a book also on T20 cricket calling it a revolution in international cricket.

## **Chapter 9: "The legacy of A.B. De Villiers & Brendon McCullum"**

I have talked about aggressive batting in the last chapter & this will be in connection to that only. A.B. De Villiers & Brendon McCullum are two of the most aggressive batsmen to ever have played this game & their legacy in aggressive batting is the highest of all. I therefore dedicate a separate chapter to them, but will write only those things here which I haven't written there. Both De Villiers & McCullum made debut in 2004. De Villiers was '84 born. They ruled the world of short format cricket for many years & won many awards also & broke many records. De Villiers won three ODI Player of the Year awards in ICC awards which was the joint-highest along with Virat & Sangakkara till very recently when Virat extended his tally to 4 last year. McCullum broke the record of fastest Test century in his last match in 2016 in which he scored it in 54 balls, improving Viv Richards' previous record of 56 balls. De Villiers was very skilled as a batsman & his batting style was called naturally flairsome like Brian Lara. He was called Superman for his batting might & Mr. 360° for his range of shots going all round the park. De Villiers was an all-round batsman. He has played innings of 20(243) & 33(297) in Test cricket also & those like 149(44) & 162(66) in ODI also. He has played some like 41(10) in IPL also. In IPL, 2014 was my favourite season as Glenn Maxwell produced some mindbogglic results in that although he couldn't reach the Orange Cap. He begun with 95(43), 89(44) & 95(43) in the first three innings, then missed a few chances, then made another 83(38) & made a few more fifties in between. But he missed the final task when PBKX were up against a spirited KKR in the final. He fell for 6 in this & KKR chased their 200. Before that Raina had produced an 87(25) in CSK's play-off. Two of the fastest scorings of team innings till that time that had come where MI's 190 in 14 overs in that season & CSK's 100 in 6 overs. De

Villiers had set up many big partnerships with Virat Kohli in IPL & he had retired earlier than expected in 2018. People were very sad when he & Hashim Amla announced the retirement in 2018 & 2019 respectively. RCB is my favourite IPL team because of Virat Kohli & he is the biggest face of IPL also for me like international cricket. Brendon McCullum had earlier broken record of most Test centuries for New Zealand surpassing previous best 17 of Martin Crowe also & hit a score of 302 in a match-saving quest vs India also.

## **Chapter 10: "The concept & cycle of WTC"**

The idea of a WTC had arisen in the ICC two times before also before being finally implemented in 2019. It had arisen in 2013 & 2017, but couldn't materialise. Finally it came to fore in 2019 when it was thought that people are wanting a WTC in some form to have a world championship of Test cricket & it should be tested once how it materialises. As a result of that the plan was drafted. The first thought that came was that WTC should be a four-year cycle like WCs to be in the same loop as that. Then the format how should it be played was thought. It happened to be played between the eight Test-playing nations divided into two groups of four teams each, with each one in each group playing the other three once. The top two teams from each group would go to the play-offs. The play-offs were visualised on the pattern of IPL. The top team from each group meeting in the Qualifier 1 & the second each meeting in the Eliminator. This was planned in 2018 & the tournament was planned to be played in Feb-Mar 2019. It was thought that it will be explored once how this plan fairs & it will be decided on the basis of that whether it will be repeated in future or not. If the plan is successful, it will be repeated every four years. Initially it was thought ideally the WTC should be played in a non-WC year & exactly at a distance of two years from the preceding & succeeding ODI WCs, but since the time wasn't there at present, it was decided that it will be played in 2019 this year & will be adjusted in time later as suits. The schedule was over a span of two months & the total number of matches were 16. The venue was Australia with matches being played at different places & the format of play-offs was that the winner of the Qualifier 1 reaches the final straightaway, while the loser of the Eliminator gets eliminated. & The loser of the Qualifier 1 & the winner of the Eliminator meet once again in Qualifier 2, the winner

of which reaches the final as the second team reaching the final. The teams reaching the final could have played 5 or 6 matches in total. & The final would be played in MCG. The matches were all day-night & the teams were given a minimum gap of 3 days before each match after the start. This model was passed & implemented in Feb-Mar 2019. The groups were divided. India's group had South Africa, England & West Indies. We topped our group & South Africa came second. In the other group, Australia came first & then New Zealand. So, we met Australia in Qualifier 1 & South Africa & New Zealand matched in the Eliminator. In the Qualifier 1 we won & reached the final. Australia went to the Qualifier 2. In the Eliminator South Africa beat New Zealand & qualified for the Qualifier 2. Australia beat South Africa in the Qualifier 2 & re-entered the final. In the final, in front of 90000 crowd, we toppled Australia & ended up as the winner of the WTC which was called the WTC 2019 later as further cycles of it started. In the series, we played 5 matches & Australia played the most 6 matches. The player of the tournament was Pat Cummins for his 36 wickets & I was the Orange Cap holder for my 587 runs. Virat Kohli lifted the trophy as India captain & we were called the world Test champions until the next four years. The second season has again happened in 2023 in England & this time also we held the trophy. WTC is the fourth ICC tournament after WC, T20 WC & CT. ICC has approved the plan to conduct WTC every four years now & host it in different countries one by one. The time taken can be reduced further as there is a liquidity of 8-10 days in it in between & an MOTS car is given in the MOTS. It was won by Rohit Sharma this time.

## Chapter 11: "ICC awards of the decade"

ICC awards of the decade were introduced from the decade 2010-19. They were announced along with the ICC awards of the year 2019. The nominees were announced one month in advance & the ceremony was held on 18 February in Melbourne. The awards were in four categories of individual awards & one of team. The individual awards were Player of the Decade, Test player of the Decade, One-Day player of the Decade & T20I player of the Decade & the team award was Team of the Decade in overall cricket. The Player of the Decade nominees were Virat Kohli, A.B. De Villiers, Steve Smith & Ravichandran Ashwin. The nominees of the Test player of the Decade were Steve Smith, Virat Kohli, Joe Root & Kane Williamson, the nominees of the ODI player of the Decade were Virat Kohli, A.B. De Villiers, Hashim Amla & Kumar Sangakkara & the nominees of the T20I player of the Decade were Babar Azam, Lasith Malinga, Rashid Khan, & Virat Kohli. The night was telecasted live on all TV & internet platforms & the jury were an elite panel of 25 former & current cricketers & experts. The team award wasn't announced nominees of & the winner was India. The winners of the player awards were Steve Smith in the Test category, Virat Kohli in the ODI category, Rashid Khan in the T20I category & Virat once again the winner of the Garry Sobers award for the Best player of the Decade. With much aplomb & fanfare, the festivity was celebrated. I believe that ICC awards is a festivity of cricket & should be celebrated like that only. I hope when this century ends there will be an Awards of the Century also like wise millennium etc. Some fields announce a GOAT award also, but it isn't right in cricket as the time hasn't ended yet. One thing I would suggest is that the awards should be conducted on a fixed date every year so that there can be waiting & more eagerness in this festivity. I have noticed that most of the netizens on the net are always people in their 20s.



I have been using social media since its beginning but the average age of netizens has always remained this young. Due to this reason the people of today have grown up watching A.B. De Villiers & Virat Kohli more than Sachin & are more a fan of theirs. Virat Kohli was rightly voted as the Player of the Decade for his 50+ average in all three formats & excellent SENA & chase records.

## Chapter 12: "BGT growing bigger than Ashes"

Ashes was the history of Test cricket since 1877. New rivalries came up as teams joined the cricket council. South Africa joined in 1889, West Indies in 1928 & New Zealand in 1930. But Ashes remained the most watched series till long. But the Border-Gavaskar Trophy which was instituted in 1996 became the most sought after test series since 2001 as it beat the unbeaten, winning a followed-on match & then denying Australia their final frontier. The 281 of Laxman had found place in the GOAT innings & Australia had found a new challenge, of winning their final frontier which was not to be. As the newer BGT seasons progressed, the domination of India in it went on increasing, margining by 2-0 in 2003-04, 2-0 in 2004, 3-0 in 2007-08 & 3-0 in 2008. The rivalry remained unwon by Australia & it lost 10 series by small & big margins out of the 11 I played. What went on rising was also our fashion of victory. We went on dominating them by bigger margins & remained an unreckoned force in the Test history. This is the reason the Australians gave us higher place on their criteria than Ashes. If they had greats of Ponting, Hayden, McGrath, Warne, Langer, Gilchrist & Steve Waugh, we also found new players in Laxman, Sehwag & me after the present Sachin, Dravid & Kumble. The bowlers also joined the camp with Harbhajan & Zaheer chipping in with their flippers. The likes of Gambhir & Dhoni liquidated our unit & the arrival of Virat, Rohit, Pujara & Ashwin eased our path. The only season we didn't win was in 2014-15 which went 0-0(4) draw due to being flat tracks there & all matches ending in high-run draws. I, ironically, enjoyed this 2014-15 season more than many of the other seasons because I enjoyed having fun on the flat tracks much & ended up on the positive side of runs at a time when I wasn't feeling it would happen easily. In the 2014-15 Test season, when we had a tour of England with five Tests & Australia with four, I wasn't at ease

with myself. Not feeling peace from inside & I believed I won't pass off until something came to me on its own. Things didn't come, but I passed off on my own, succeeding through the run riots on both tours & piling a respectable 960 in the nine matches. This indicated that my things weren't happening, but something else was coming. This is what happened then, people from the world over were coming to help each other out of the cycle of social anarchy. This gave an idea that even if the right things aren't there, we should try one more time, something good may happen. The only hurdle now was the 2015 WC. If this passed off well, I felt there would remain just one target before me before completing a respectable career. That of 2019 WC. So I dumped myself in the preparations of WC 2015 with extra consciousness. As we won, new energy circulated through me & told me that I should focus all energy now on the 2019 WC, not to get deterred by anything else in between. This is what I followed, passing through the motions just doing the work, not losing my own self if the needful wasn't done. The ultimate goal wasn't achieved, we didn't win the WC 2019, but we won many positives in between sufficing for our personal attainment like the DST 2017, TCT 2018 & BGT 2019. The triumphs were many to suppress our pride & we tasted every one on the path to glory after the final battle. I ended my career with 4 golden bats, 6 Test player of the Years, 6 600 runs in a Test series, 5 2500 international runs in a calendar year, Dhyanchand Award, Orange Cap, Order of cricket australia & Sportsperson of the year 2016-18. These recognitions were sufficient to elate me to my satisfaction & filled my cup with coke. I had 6 MOTS cars & max. time of 9 years as no. 1 batsman. I regret our captain not opting to enforce follow-on on the opposition 2-3 times that we haven't when we could, the margin of 200 runs in follow-on is I think bigger than any factor of spin being more effective on the 4th or 5th days or anything like that. Hence, I think follow on should always be enforced. & The 2-3 times that we haven't done that, we would have won the matches if we had. This I am mentioning here as it had happened once in BGT also, when we were leading Australia by a 224 runs margin in the first inning & took the risk of not enforcing the follow-on on them, the luck went with us & we won that game at the last moment, however it might not have happened that way had Kumble not run through the Aussie lineup that demolitionly. Once more when we made this mistake was in the England-India series 2007 when we had a lead of 295 on the board but didn't enforce the follow on ending up with a draw. The third time this had happened was in the India-New Zealand test series in India in 1999 however I wasn't part of the team then. Then also, the team had missed a probable win &

ended up with a draw. Anyway, the subject of this chapter was the glory of BGT & it has flown high in the forts of craze in the cricketing world & peaked as the series next only to WC.

### **Chapter 13: "The colossalness of Test cricket"**

The colossalness of Test cricket is contained in its scopes of altitudinal glories of many kinds like high scores, big partnerships, long batting, playing big innings, facing tough conditions, meeting tall challenges, showing courage, determination & patience & fighting spirit. The requirement of dismissing the opposition for winning a match makes it stand out as a demanding task. The askings like playing out time to save a match, taking short balls on body & chasing huge targets are daunting essences which bring fame, publicity & craze. The test history has been rich with eminent artisans there throughout since the time of its commencement. Even in 1906 there was a Jack Hobbs who played for 35 years & made 5000 runs @ 54 & S/R 99. Then came the GOAT Don Bradman in 1929 who spelled magic for 20 years. The accomplishment of 7000 Test runs @ 99 is a mountainous job which all world witnessed for those twenty years & then followed his heritage to replicate his feats & then came a GOAT allrounder in 1955 who amassed 8000 runs, hit a score of 365 & hit six sixes in an over surpassing Len Hutton's tally of 364 & faced even a haunting Hanif Mohammad in between playing eleven hours to save with a monumental 337. The next generation was of Geoffrey Boycott & M.A.K. Pataudi who led well & attained high feats. The '70s were starred with the magical trio of Vivian Richards, Sunil Gavaskar & Greg Chappell & studded also with a background Barry Richards, Allan Border & Zaheer Abbas. Sunil Gavaskar showed on his debut in 1971 what largeness this sport can bring with a summation of 774 from eight innings & three notouts. The average of 143 & a double of century & double century in the last Test made the West Indians accept they couldn't get him out in that series & he was promising of doing something bigger. This was what a dream debut could be & the series along with the defeat of England in the subsequent tour made

what was the coming of age of Indian cricket. The Indian bunch at that time couldn't imagine such wins in foreign series, but Gavaskar showed he could do that single-handedly. The '70s trio made many big double centuries & presented a tough example of classical batting equipped with the perfect technique & temperament. Gavaskar is someone many people say they can bet their life on. He had scored thirteen test centuries against that marvelous team of West Indies in 1970s. He could do all this as an opener batsman & that too without helmet. Viv showed all that could be done at a S.R. of 86 & Greg was an exponent of shrewdness. The remaining four greats of '70 of Barry Richards, Border, Zaheer Abbas & Vishwanath were as much might & produced innings of class & valour in the trade of typical batting. The '80s era was marked by two more destructive batsmen of Greenidge & Haynes. The assembling of many of these in the Windies team was what placed them in the command of the international cricket & they served the game of batsmanship for years. The genuine allrounder club of Kapil Dev, Ian Botham, Imran Khan & Richard Hadlee who were just one level below the legend of Garry Sobers, incorporated the jackness of all trades much & they were very fit also. Kapil Dev in his career of 131 Test & 225 ODI matches, never missed a match due to injury. The bowling quartet of Marshall, Holding, Garner & Roberts of the Windies & the Dennis Lillee of Australia & the Geoff Thomson of England were demons with leather in hand. All those pacers of the golden era marred the batsmanship of the batsmen who faced them & belittled them to dwarfness. The domination with which the Windies team ruled over the opponents through this period was mindboggling & era defining. All this defined greatness for test cricket & created a magical presentation for players to play & watchers to watch. The result was a miraculous display of gallantry & dare & the players competed for this in the colossalness of test cricket. Then after a dominance of ODI cricket in the '90s, Test cricket again returned to demand in the 2000s when the BGT of 2001 reestablished its past glory. That series started a golden era in the chapter of Indian cricket with every BGT being the most important feather in it. The India-Australia rivalry popped up unlimited challenge, hurdles, craze & fun & it just produced unbounded amount of energy, enthusiasm, plan, strategisation & preparation. It proved test cricket is the ultimate form of cricket & scathered its radiation, light & heat. The magnitude of warmth in it was extentless & it reflected true character of human soul & spirit. The result of which was incessant shine, illumination & mantra. I could say so about other series also like the Ashes, series involving South Africa, England etc. but in all this the biggest winner was cricket only which was Test cricket.

No profession in the world combines valour, skill, training, wealth, fame & highlight as cricket does & thus this is a rare combo of science, art & commerce. The room for limelight that it has thrown in the era of media & publicity, it has become a dear art with that. Test cricket is all this & plus technology, glamour, socialisation, adulation & character at work. Hence, cricket is in my books a colossal institution of human endeavour.

## Chapter 14: "GOAT innings"

After discussing about the GOAT institutions & GOAT crafts, I now come to some GOAT innings. Cricket has always been a game of compairisions & stats. It is compilable in data form & the data are related with players, teams, games as well as the sport. The GOAT players produce GOAT innings from time to time & they go into history of human memory with that with an indelible imprint of great marks & image. The GOAT innings must comprise of unforgettable performance, challenges, conditions & situations. The circumstances which make an inning top are like overseas venues, chase inning, quality bowling, tough weather & pitch conditions, SENA opposition, falling of wickets from the other end, high targets & pressure. Meeting with all these conditions, when a batsman scores a big century or winning cause, he is registered in the record of books as a GOAT inning hitter. There have been many such innings of utmost quality, which have been listed in many rankings like the Wisden list of top 100 innings or ICC ratings etc. I will enlist here some which are of the apex quality for me, & which haven't been repeated again under similar circumstances. I am going to mark ten of them & this will cover my chapter on GOAT innings.

1 >> Sachin 136 vs Pakistan, 1999 - Sachin's 136 against Pakistan in the Chennai test 1999 was a knock of that quality only & it attracted as much appreciation, but it didn't end up on the winning side, so was forgotten among the GOAT lists. Wisden had said that it would have kept it in the top ten if we had won & not otherwise, but I keep it in my top ten anyway. Faced with target of 271 in a low-scoring match, where the fifth wicket had fallen at 80, Sachin had the company of Nayan Mongia at the other end. When Mongia had fallen (Sixth wicket), he had said later that he had started of



dreaming of the win in sight as it was appearing close. But when Sachin went, it was the seventh wicket & that was seventeen runs away from victory. But the job couldn't be done & India lost by twelve runs.

2 >> Lara 153 against Australia - Lara's 153 has found place at no. 2 rank in Wisden rankings. It was an inning of perfect technique, control, class & stylishness. West Indies were faced with a target of 308 in that match, with the likes of McGrath & Warne firing on all cylinders. Lara came to bat at no. 3 & was the only big batsman in his team. He needed to score a century & set a few partnerships to achieve that target. But the quality of opposition was too high to yield. Wickets kept falling at regular intervals & Lara was under pressure to deliver single handedly. But he played an inning of class & beauty like the one he was known for & which is expected from great batsmen. He showed technique, played every ball as it came, hit all the shots along the ground & stitched partnerships till the end winning West Indies by one wicket. He produced an inning of class & beauty where the quality of batsmanship was elegant & played the right techniques, played according to books & took the match home.

3 >> Laxman 281 - This I have already described as the GOAT inning. I will only give its details here. This came on the hindsight of India getting a target of 539. Australia had placed 445 in the first inning. In reply to which India had managed to avoid merely follow on. The lead of 155 Australia added 383 to it in the second inning & set a target of 539. India had five sessions to chase this. They reached 232/4 by Day 4 & needed 307 on the last day with the batsmen on crease Laxman & Dravid being the last recognised batsmen. Laxman was not out on 107 at stumps & Dravid was at 11. Next day, they both ended up unbeaten taking India to the target. Laxman remained at 281 & Dravid at 180. The conditions in this match were difficult, Laxman had smashed every leg-side ball of Warne to mid wicket boundary. Harbhajan Singh had taken a good 13 wickets.

4 >> Dravid 233 - Dravid's 233 is the best overseas inning I have seen. It came in partnership with me against a mongomous 556 of Australia, we posted 620 in reply & Ajit Agarkar dismantled them in the second inning. We were so confident of ourselves that we declared with just a lead of 64. My partnership with Rahul started when Sehwag got out at 85/1 after a solid 47. The day we ended with 180/1. Rahul completed his double century first when I was at 194 & he went on to make the higher score with me being restricted to 206. He faced 495

deliveries in the inning & I faced 460. Our partnership ended at 402. We lost only five wickets till 620. How great that inning was, it is evident from only this that Steve Waugh came up with the ball & handed to Rahul Dravid in the end when he hit the winning shot, marking as a gesture of respect. Dravid's knock was full of control & aggression, & he played every delivery as it should have been, smashing shots whenever they should have been. In the highlights it seems he has played an aggressive inning, as the shots that he hit were all offensive & he didn't hesitate in striking when it was right. The series of my rising to superstardom, when I maxed India's total with 620 & got the Man of the Series. I got lot of confidence from it & climbed a ladder up in my progress.

5 >> Dravid 270 - Dravid 270 was an inning which was of no less quality than his 233 but it got less glories as India won it easily. India were batting first in this match & Shoaib Akhtar was playing at his homeground Rawalpindi. He dismissed Sehwag on the first ball & India stayed at 342/6 on the stumps. Ganguly & Laxman contributed important 70s, but it was Dravid who was the star of the show with his massive 270 in which he played selflessly after India had reached 550 to save time for the team. He didn't try for his 300 & ensured just that India reached 600. This is one of his best knocks & Ramiz Raja has appreciated how much concentration he had in this inning. Matthew Hayden had also said about this knock once - 'All this nonsense going around here about aggression is rubbish, if you want to see real aggression look into the eyes of Rahul Dravid'. This was his third 200 of the season in 9 matches aggregating 1296 in 16 innings with three notouts. This was the effort for which he got the Player of the Year & Test player of the Year. He had got appreciative comments from many great cricketers on this including Viv Richards, Ravi Shastri & Sunil Gavaskar. Cricket Today magazine had posterized him as the new god of Indian cricket. I rate this inning as one of his best five which also includes his 222 against New Zealand.

6 >> Matthew Hayden 380 - Matthew Hayden's record breaking 380 came in 2003 & against Zimbabwe. It was a knock in which he had shown much concentration & dedication. He had said about it later that he was in the Tranquility Zone during this knock & it was a state of mind in which he was at complete equilibrium with himself, having peace of mind & joy. Steve Waugh was the captain & he allowed him to go for the world record even when Australia were losing time. Ricky Ponting had said later when Brian Lara regained this record with his 400 that no selfless cricketer can make so many runs in today's competitive

cricket when there is so much competition. Even when Hayden had made that 380, Steve Waugh had allowed this as an exception, we don't do this normally. This was also an inning of much class & beauty in which Matthew Hayden had played every ball as it should have been & he produced world record as the result.

7 >> Brian Lara 400 - This was the inning of redemption of world record in which Brian Lara took it back from Matthew Hayden surpassing his 380. The delight on his face could be seen clearly when he had crossed to 384 & he kissed the ground after that & saluted the world. West Indies declared that inning at 751 & it wasn't a very slow inning, he had done it in just 583 balls. This was also an inning of much class & beauty as he had played every delivery just as it should have been & never hit any aerial shot. It is one of the best knocks of his as well as Test cricket & he regained the place at the top of the world cricket with it in 2006.

8 >> My own 143 + 151 in BGT 2007-08 - It was the first match of BGT 2007-08 & Australia were fuming with frustration after our rout of theirs in the WC 2007. They had posted 343 in the first inning. I helped our team equal that score with my 143 & chased the target also when they scored a 351 in the second inning with one wicket to spare & my 151. It was my first match with twin century & I savour it very much as my best effort. Many people have ranked this as the best Test inning as it was a twin inning & chased with one wicket to spare, but I rank it here at the no. 8. It is my most satisfying inning definitely & the BGTs of 2011-12 & 2007-08 are my most contending test efforts. The stadium had erupted with a loud uproar when Munaf Patel hit that winning shot & took us across the target. I had made sure in both the innings that I save the tail from being exposed much & I took the maximum of deliveries. I have scored two twin centuries & the other one came in BGT 2011-12. This was my progress to another level (After this entire series) & the 2011-12 BGT another. BGT has always been the path defining points for me & I have enjoyed playing it the most in my entire career. WC is the highest point in world cricket but it brings so much pressure that it takes away the fun.

9 >> Steve Smith 144 + 142 in Ashes 2019 - Steve Smith was making a comeback in the Ashes 2019 after a one-year ban from international cricket due to the sandpapergate controversy. It was a sad incident as he is a very nice player & he shouldn't have been in such condition in any case ever. But he got messed in this & had to miss the WC 2019. He rejoined with the Ashes 2019 which was played in

England. Australia won the first match in which Smith scored those twin centuries of 144 & 142 & Australia dominated that series much although it ended in a 2-2 draw. It was a massive performance as he summed up a huge 774 in four matches that he played & had scored less than 80 in only one inning. He had concussion also in one match (Second) when he was batting at 80 & returned to reach till 92 & missed the third test due to it.

10 >> Ben Stokes Headingly 135 - Ben Stokes' heroics in the Headingly Test Ashes 2019 which won him the player of the year of that year after the MoM performance in the WC final was the talk of that year as of a single match. It was a leading performance as England had got a target of 362 in a match in which the first inning scores were very less. England were 253/8 & then Ben Stokes produced that beauty after fall of another wicket at 286. The final partnership came of 76 runs of which the other partner Jack Leach had contributed just one run. Stokes saved his tailing partners from exposure & kept batting aggressively still & registered those 135 runs in just 215 balls. It is one of the greatest innings in Test history & came after Australia were 1-2 down in the series. It was the inning of the year for me & I enjoyed watching the final moments much as I had seen the score when it was 302/9. I thought England will lose easily, but soon it was 362/9 when I saw it.

Collage of GOAT innings



## Chapter 15: "New rules"

There have been introduced some new rules in the game by which the game has become some better. All these have come in the recent few years & I am going to enlist them here one by one:

A >> **Stop-Clock rule** - The International Cricket Council (ICC) has introduced a "Stop-clock" rule to minimize time wasted between overs. The bowling team must be ready to deliver the first ball of their next over within 60 seconds of the previous over's completion. Failure to comply will result in a five-run penalty after two warnings.

B >> **Powerplay rule** - Although not entirely new, the powerplay rule has undergone changes. In the ODIs, the first powerplay has been reduced from 10 overs to 8 overs, with two fielders allowed outside the 30-yard circle. In T20Is, the powerplay remains 6 overs, with two fielders allowed outside the circle.

C >> **No-Ball rule** - The no-ball rule has been modified to make it easier for umpires to call no-balls for high full tosses. If the ball passes or would have passed above the waist height of the batsman, it will be called a no-ball.

D >> **Twenty20 format** - The Twenty20 format, introduced in 2007, has revolutionised the game with a shorter match duration and innovative rules.

E >> **Free hits** - If a bowler delivers a no-ball by overstepping the crease, it costs one or two runs, and their next delivery is designated a "Free-hit".

F >> **Fielding restrictions** - Fielding restrictions apply, including no more than five fielders on the leg side at any time, and restrictions on field placements during powerplays.

G >> **Concussion replacement** - The ICC has introduced concussion replacement rules, allowing teams to replace a concussed player with a substitute.

H > **Shortened boundaries** - Many modern cricket stadiums have shorter boundaries, making it easier for batsmen to hit sixes.

I >> **Lighter bats and advanced equipments** - Advances in bat technology have made bats lighter and more powerful, allowing the batsmen to hit the ball farther and faster.

J >> **Two new balls** - The introduction of two new balls in ODIs, one from each end, has made the ball swing less, making it easier for batsmen to score.

## Chapter 16: "SENA"

New analysis & discussion has been coming up in newer platforms like FB groups of late in which detailed review of the cricket games & data comes. They present novice interpretation of the research in cricket & there are many specialised channels like them apart from the groups also like pages like CricTracker & CricAddictor. I have been subscribing to these groups since 2020 & they bring many new revelations every morning. Every morning that I wake to check my new notifications first, I see new charts, comparisons, assessments & information flowing in from different institutions & accounts & then put up very right, important & interesting facts. One assessment that they have done is of performance in SENNA countries. They have coined a term "SENA" meaning the shortform of "South Africa, England, New Zealand & Australia" - The four countries which are the strongest in cricket. They have laid importance on it on this basis only that the players who perform very well in SENNA, they must be very good. This they have made a parameter to judge non-SENA & other visiting players. This has come up to be a very good criteria & I am now inserting photos of some very important interpretations of these SENNA games which they have brought up.



# INDIA'S TEST WINS IN SENA



**1970 -2017 =8**  
**2018 -2021 =8\***



CRICKET ADDICTOR



CRICADDICTOR



ADDICTORCRICKET



CRICKET ADDICTOR

## ASIAN CAPTAINS WITH MOST TEST WINS IN SENA COUNTRIES



CricTracker

## CURRENT INDIAN BATSMEN WITH MOST RUNS IN WINS IN SENA COUNTRIES



**C. PUJARA : 638 (AVG : 39.87)**  
**A. RAHANE : 593 (AVG : 45.61)**



CRICKET ADDICTOR



CRICADDICTOR



ADDICTORCRICKET



CRICKET ADDICTOR

## HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF **TEAM RUNS** IN SENA COUNTRIES (TESTS)



**VIRAT KOHLI: 17.6%**  
**BRIAN LARA: 17.4%**  
**SANGAKKARA: 16.7%**  
**CHRIS GAYLE: 16.7%**

## **DID YOU KNOW?**



**SACHIN TENDULKAR ONLY ASIAN  
PLAYER WITH 50+ TEST AVERAGE  
IN SENA COUNTRIES  
(MIN 1000 RUNS)**

# ***MOST PLAYER OF THE SERIES AWARDS***

BY ASIAN PLAYERS IN  
SENA COUNTRIES

IMRAN  
KHAN

***03***

WASIM  
AKRAM

***03***

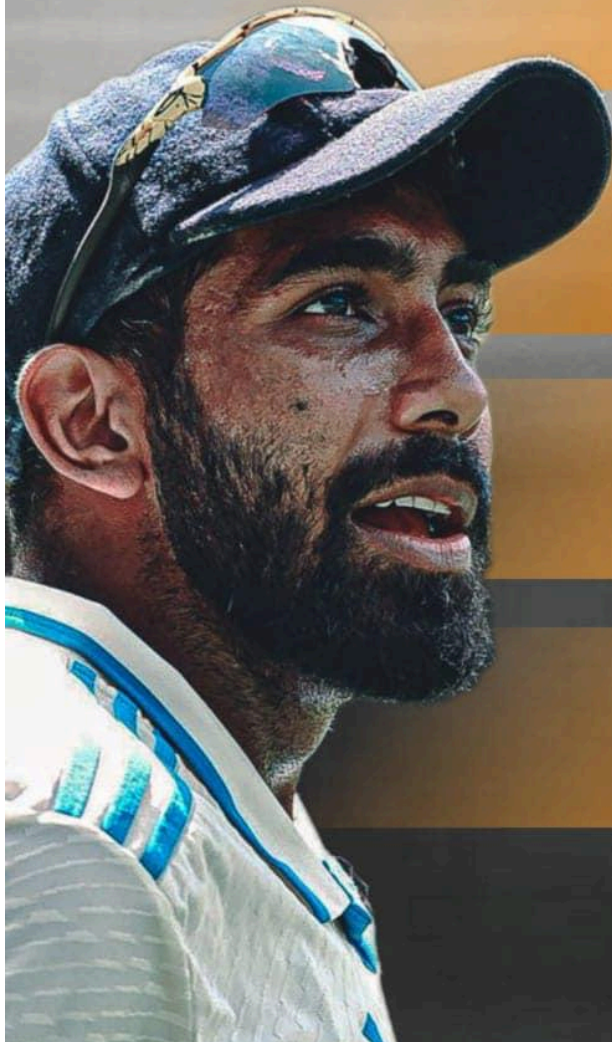
RAHUL  
DRAVID

***03***

JASPRIT  
BUMRAH

***03***

CRICKET  
**360**



**146**

**WASIM AKRAM**  
**(24.11)**



**141**

**ANIL KUMBLE**  
**(37.04)**



**134**

**JASPRIT BUMRAH**  
**(21.34)**



**MOST AVERAGE IN A ODI  
IN WINNING CAUSE VS SENA COUNTRIES**

**BABAR AZAM**  
**100.2**  
AVERAGE



**AB DE VILLIER**  
**73.2**  
AVERAGE



**VIRAT KOHLI**  
**68.6**  
AVERAGE



**JOS BUTTLER**  
**68.4**  
AVERAGE





## **INDIANS TO HAVE MOST 50+ SCORES IN SENA IN INT'L CRICKET HISTORY**



**VIRAT KOHLI - 74\***  
**SACHIN TENDULKAR - 74**

With these anecdotes I complete my chapter on SENA & move on to the next one on Overseas & chase specialists in which I have mentioned which players are more performers in overseas & chase conditions & have delivered the max in such situations through their career & in history. I myself liked batting in overseas & chase conditions much

as I liked achieving the successes in challenging conditions that they brought & the glory associated with it. Some of us have been experts in these & have produced the best of such conditions.

## Chapter 17: "Overseas & chase specialists"

Some players are masters of tough conditions like overseas & chase. They find their juicy fluids flowing on being faced with such circumstances. The challenge makes them feel happy to be opportune to the glory that it will bring. I am listing here some such players who have been better performing in these conditions & their images along with.

### #Overseas

1. "Virat Kohli" overseas centuries
2. "Steve Smith" batting in "England"
3. "Kane Williamson" in "Indian conditions"
4. "A.B. De Villiers" in "Australian conditions"
5. "Rohit Sharma" overseas centuries
6. "Joe Root" batting in "Australia"
7. "David Warner" in "Asian conditions"
- & 8. "Hashim Amla" in overseas conditions

\* Pictures \*













# 10K IN A DECADE

SHORTEST TIME FROM DEBUT TO REACH 10,000 RUNS



PLAYER	TEAM	INNS	TIME*
Joe Root	ENG	218	9 years, 171 days
Alastair Cook	ENG	229	10 years, 87 days
Bahadur DRAVID	IND/ICC	206	11 years, 280 days
Kumar Sangakkara	SL	195	12 years, 159 days
Ricky Ponting	AUS	196	12 years, 174 days

\* From start of debut match to start of match in which 10,000 runs were reached

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### #Chase

Chase experts have been many (Michael Bevan etc.), but someone who has come to be recognised as chase master is Virat Kohli. Virat Kohli's recognition as chase master developed around the time 2012-13 when he was hitting many centuries in chase. This prompted people to see whether he does more of that. He delivered that & did more times than was opportune. He played at high strike rate & was not out many times. As of today, he has 44 notouts in ODIs & he has other qualities also like being very good in running between the wickets than the main one of here 'Chase'. His masterhood in chase has been so much that he has more centuries in successful One-Day chases than all other countries combined since the time of his debut. This makes

him a standout persona in the chase aspect & this is the reason he is considered as the GOAT batsman in One-Days by many even above Sachin & some others because of the fun he brings to the game & fore. I rate him as the most enchanting batsman of One-Days & he is for me the face of One-Day cricket. His 50 centuries in ODIs in 175 less innings than Sachin is something which can't be overseen while compairing him with Sachin. He must have developed motivation to do better in chase when people started recognising him as a chase stalwart. I end this chapter here with the listing of eight experts of overseas gaming & one Virat of chase & the image of Virat as a One-Day chaser. I from here move on to the last chapter of Sixer kings in which I have discussed about the biggest sixer kings, the many that are there & the earlier ones who were the record holders earlier.



One point I would like to mention here that all 25 of A.B. De Villiers' ODI centuries came at a higher strike rate than 100, but Virat has more ODI centuries (28) than him at a higher strike rate than 100.

## Chapter 18: "Sixer kings"

In the current phase of cricket, hitting sixes is considered a very important ability in batsmanship. It is a requirement of limited overs cricket & many players are experts of this. They are able to deliver this at ease & in style. The term "Sixer king" had come to be coined from the six sixes of Yuvraj Singh in an over. He had been named with this title as a natural captioning of this ability & later there developed many sixer kings including Kieron Pollard, Ben Stokes, Jos Butler & Brendon McCullum.

I will talk about in this chapter, the hitters of most sixes, hitters of 6 sixes in an over & the maximum impact players of sixes in the T20 & ODI cricket & give their images also.

The term "Sixer king" although had been coined towards Yuvraj Singh, but it gradually passed through all those players who broke his record & is finally held by Rohit Sharma as he is the player with most sixes (600+) in international cricket. Yuvraj Singh himself says that Rohit Sharma is the real sixer king. The record of most sixes was earlier held by Chris Gayle at 553, then Shahid Afridi at 476. Rohit surpassed both of them & is now leading somewhere around 630. The hitters of most sixes in Test cricket also have changed from Adam Gilchrist (100) to Brendon McCullum (107) to currently Ben Stokes (133). A bowler of New Zealand (Tim Southee) also has many sixes (98) in Test cricket. Other hitters who have many sixes are Sanath Jaisurya, Sachin Tendulkar, Jacques Kallis, Sourav Ganguly, M.S. Dhoni, Sooryakumar Yadav etc. There have emerged many new players like Sooryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya, Rinku Singh & Shivam Dube who have this capability of hitting many sixes. They have practised this skill through the IPL. Henrich Klaasen is the current heartthrob of the limited-overs cricket. I will list the players who have hit six sixes in an over in any form of cricket. Like Garry Sobers (In first

class cricket in 1968), Yuvraj Singh (In T20 WC 2007), Herschelle Gibbs (In 2007 ODI WC), Kieron Pollard (In league cricket in 2023) & Ravi Shastri (In Ranji Trophy 1985). There are some more who have done the job in other forms of cricket like Jaskaran Malhotra (vs Papua New Guinea in 2021), Dipendra Singh Airee (In T20 WC 2024) & Ross Whitely (In a T20 Blast game in 2014). The ability of hitting sixes is of much value in limited-overs cricket these days & this ability escalates a team's chances of winning much. The players who are doing this with much impact these days are Sooryakumar Yadav, Jos Buttler, David Miller & Mitchel Marsh. Now I will add the images of ten players who have been the best six-hitters in international cricket & complete the chapter & conclude the book after that.

























With this, I commemorate my book on "Test cricket is best cricket". I hope I have given the right insight on contemporary cricket & thrown light on the most important fact. I am now developing ideas to write some more books like "R.D. Burman", "UPDA Society" (My residential society), Nationalism & "ICC Festivities". On all these topics, I have many thoughts in my mind, & I hope I am able to ink the right ideas to inflow in the national discourse of current time.