

# Smriti in ICC teams

Perry is Women’s Cricketer and ODI Player of the Year

## CRICKET

IAN S  
DUBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Tuesday that Australia all-rounder Ellyse Perry has been named the Women’s Cricketer of the Year as well as the Women’s ODI Player of the Year for 2019. She will take home the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Award, which was bagged by India’s Smriti Mandhana last year.

Smriti grabbed a spot in both the ICC Women’s ODI and T20I Teams of the Year. Smriti has played 51 ODIs and 66 T20Is, scoring 2,025 and 1,451 runs respectively.

Shikha Pandey, Jhulan Goswami and Poonam Yadav have also found a spot in ICC ODI Team of the Year while Deepti Sharma and Radha Yadav made it to the ICC T20I Team of the Year.

### Stellar year

Perry has had a stellar year across formats, with three hundreds, including one in the Ashes Test. She averages



Smriti Mandhana. ■FILE PHOTO

73.50 from 12 ODIs this year, where she has also taken 21 wickets, including a national record 7/22. She became the first player to complete 1,000 runs and 100 wickets in T20I cricket.

Named as the T20I Cricketer of the Year for the second year running, Healy

entered the record books in October, scoring a world record 148 not out off 61 balls against Sri Lanka – the highest score by a woman in T20Is. She reached her half-century off 25 balls and her maiden hundred came off just 46 deliveries, the fastest century ever by an Australian man or woman.

Both Perry and Healy have also been named in the Women’s ODI and T20I Teams of the Year, alongside fellow Australian captain Meg Lanning, who was named skipper of both sides.

### The ICC Women’s ODI Team of the Year (in batting order):

Alyssa Healy (wk, Aus), Smriti Mandhana (Ind), Tamsin Beaumont (Eng), Meg Lanning (Aus, Capt.), Stafanie Taylor (WI), Ellyse Perry (Aus), Jess Jonassen (Aus), Shikha Pandey (Ind), Jhulan Goswami (Ind), Megan Schutt (Aus), Poonam Yadav (Ind).

**ICC Women’s T20I Team of the Year (in batting order):** Healy (Aus), Danielle Wyatt (Eng), Lanning, Smriti, Lizelle Lee (RSA), Perry, Deepti Sharma (Ind), Nida Dar (Pak), Schutt, Shabnim Ismail (RSA), Radha Yadav (Ind).

# Cricket has few geniuses, but many foxes and hedgehogs



## BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

“The fox,” wrote the ancient Greek poet Archilochus, “knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.” This has been interpreted in many ways. The British philosopher Isaiah Berlin used it as the central theme of his essay on Tolstoy.

Some psychologists have said that foxes have different strategies for different problems and understand nuance while hedgehogs reduce all problems to one overarching principle.

So what does all this have to do with cricket? It can be the starting point of one of sport’s enduring discussions: the so-called natural player versus the non-natural (for want of a better word). It is easy to assume that naturals are consistent strikers of the ball while non-naturals are defensive and more concerned with where their left elbow finishes rather than where the ball does.

Yet, a Geoff Boycott is as much a natural as a Garry Sobers; what is natural to him is simply different from what is natural to Sobers. Likewise

with Rahul Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar. The latter could do things with the bat others could not even contemplate doing; so could the former. Not understanding this has caused young Rishabh Pant to declare “there is nothing called a natural game” following his first half-century in one-day internationals at Chepauk.

The two categories, it must be admitted, are not absolute and there are bound to be overlaps, even in the career of a single individual. But they are convenient, and as likely to explain a writer or artist as a cricketer.

Both categories contain top players. Sobers, Tendulkar, Viv Richards, Dravid, Sunil Gavaskar were foxes while Virender Sehwag, Boycott, Sanath Jayasuriya were hedgehogs.

### False debate

The natural versus non-natural is a false debate. This might have something to do with the limitation of the language which has no specific words for the degrees between the absolutely untalented at one end of the spectrum and the genius at the other. The genius probably falls into both categories; he is both fox for his range and hedgehog for his mastery.

I was once watching the video of an old Test match in England with the West Indies bowler Lance Gibbs. Sobers was fielding at silly point to the off spinner. The batsman, a left hander,

played forward and Sobers moved to his left. But the ball took the edge and went the other way, and Sobers, as if he had meant to do this all along, changed direction and swung back with a dancer’s grace to make the catch.

“Genius!” said Gibbs who got up from his chair in admiration. Gibbs must have been 80 then, and was still excited by a catch taken some four decades earlier.

“The man could do anything,” said Dennis Lillee of Sobers. “Even dance like Fred Astaire.”

The line between the fox and the hedgehog is not immovable. Nor is it left uncrossed through a batsman’s career. Some hedgehogs have been successful at the top level because of their ability to reduce everything to match their strength. “If the square cut is the only productive stroke you play, and you can square cut every time the ball is pitched short, then that’s all I ask of you,” a Chennai coach once told one of his wards. At the top level, Chetan Chauhan was an opener whose most profitable stroke was the square cut. He formed a fine partnership with Gavaskar thanks to this ability.

At the batting crease, choice can sometimes be terror. A batsman with few strokes is often more successful than one with many simply because the latter’s options call for better judgement. Gifted batsmen have

dropped out of the national reckoning because of this. Saad bin Jung was a wonderful batsman with a range of strokes who made centuries in difficult conditions but did not play at the highest level.

Late career changes often convert foxes into hedgehogs. Rohan Kanhai, the brilliant West Indies stroke player and nightmare of bowlers around the world is a good example. So too is Gundappa Viswanath, who, as he aged, changed guard from leg to middle, and played fewer extravagant, aah!-making strokes.

Rishabh Pant has been an enigma in some ways – a wonderful striker of the ball with Test centuries in England and Australia who hasn’t been as successful in what might be considered his natural habitat, the white ball game. It was an issue with Sehwag too in his early days in the shorter formats. “Since I have played the international game,” Pant explained, “I have realised that there is nothing called ‘natural game’. You have to play according to the situation and what the team needs. A good player is one who can mould his game according the situation.”

This could be a working definition of a good player: one who changes his game according to the situation. But a great player is one who changes the situation with his game. In his transition from the hedgehog to the fox, Pant should not forget that.

# 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games: India’s hockey programme announced

Men to play New Zealand and women the Netherlands in their respective openers

IAN S  
NEW DELHI

Indian men will take on New Zealand in their opening hockey match at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics while the women’s team will play Rio Games silver medallist the Netherlands on July 25 as the draw for the quadrennial extravaganza was announced in Tokyo on Tuesday.

Indian men’s skipper Manpreet Singh said: “A good start will always give the right confidence and momentum to carry on in the tournament.

“It will be important for us

to begin with a win.

“New Zealand have always posed stiff competition for us and I believe it can be a close game.

“It is important to keep our nerves in check as opening matches can be a bit overwhelming, especially at a major event like the Olympics.”

Indian men, clubbed with defending champion Argentina, world No. 1 Australia, Spain, New Zealand and host Japan in Pool A, will play Australia on July 26 and then Spain on July 28.

After a day’s break on July 29, the next opponent will be

India’s schedule and final phase matches	
<b>Men:</b>	vs. New Zealand (July 25); vs. Australia (July 26); vs. Spain (July 28); vs. Argentina (July 30); vs. Japan (July 31); Quarterfinals (Aug. 2); Semifinals (Aug. 4); Gold and bronze medal matches (Aug. 6).
<b>Women:</b>	vs. The Netherlands (July 25); vs. Germany (July 27); vs. Great Britain (July 29); vs. Ireland (July 31); vs. South Africa (Aug. 1); Quarterfinals (Aug. 3); Semifinals (Aug. 5); Gold and bronze medal matches (Aug. 7).

Argentina on July 30 and Japan on July 31.

The men’s quarterfinals have been slated for August 2 while the semifinals will be held on Aug. 4. The gold and bronze medal matches will be played on Aug. 6.

“Every game will be crucial

and we cannot let our guard down against any team, even if they are ranked below us. Each match will need to be played like it is the final,” Manpreet said.

The Indian women’s team skipper Rani Rampal said: “Draw does not matter be-

cause in the Olympics every team is equal and every team will come with an aim to win. We need to focus on ourselves and what we can do better on a given day. We are preparing well to ensure we tick all the boxes in each of our matches.”

Indian women are in Pool A along with the Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland and South Africa. They will take on Germany on July 27, followed by a match against defending champion Great Britain on July 29. They will then play Ireland on July 31 and South Africa in their



Manpreet Singh. ■FILE PHOTO

last pool match on Aug. 1. The quarterfinals are slated for Aug. 3 while the semifinals



Rani Rampal. ■FILE PHOTO

will be on Aug. 5. The gold and bronze medal matches will be played on Aug. 7.

# Kapil says he won’t meet Ethics Officer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

BCCI ethics officer D.K. Jain has asked Kapil Dev and Aunshuman Gaekwad to appear in Mumbai later this month to explain conflict of interest allegations against them even though they have already resigned from the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC).

There is no CAC in place anymore, but the two have been asked to depose on December 27 and 28.

A livid Kapil said he will not go to Mumbai.