

# Tour Down Under was a success: Raman

Indian women's team coach says it's also time to identify a couple of fast bowlers and groom them

## INTERVIEW

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

A week after returning from the Indian women's tour of Australia, where Harmanpreet Kaur's young bunch made it to the final of the tri-series featuring Australia and England and followed it up by reaching the T20 World Cup summit clash, head coach W.V. Raman recalls the journey with *The Hindu*. Excerpts:

**How would you sum up the tour Down Under?**  
In both the tournaments, the girls definitely did well. They were in the tri-series against two better sides and in the World Cup, we were placed in a tough group.

To have won all the league games and qualify was quite an achievement given that it's a young side that's still on a learning curve in T20s. If you take all this into account, the tour was definitely a success. Yes, winning the final would have been great but these things happen in sport. You can't help it.

**What exactly went wrong in the final? Did the packed house at MCG get to the girls? Or was it the big-match pressure?**

The point is, in a T20 game, you can hardly make a comeback. When the first 30-40 minutes go away from you, it's very difficult for you to make a comeback.

Just to make a point, when I was with KKR (as assistant coach), we were playing the CLT20 final (in 2014) against CSK. Raina made a mockery of a chase of 180-plus when



**Candid observation:** W.V. Raman, while praising the efforts put in by the women's team in Australia, says being overkeen could have affected Harmanpreet, in pic., and Smriti's performances. ■ AFP

he got off to a start and never looked back. A similar innings was played by Alyssa Healy. Whatever she tried that day, it came off. All other factors, and other reasons we can think of, are just incidental. The long and short of it is that in T20s, these things will happen.

**Would you say the rise of three teenaged batters is the biggest gain from the tour?**

Of course. I mentioned before leaving India that we have players who can go on to become match-winners on their own and the batting side is definitely far well-

equipped than it was when I took over.

We have identified the talent, and players who can measure up to what is required at the top level. And also worked on their skills as well as fitness. That gives you a bit of confidence than it did some time ago.

**While the spinners continue to come good, the pace bowling, barring Shikha Pandey, remains a concern ahead of next year's ODI World Cup...**

Spinners have been calling the shots for a couple of years now. We need to iden-

tify a couple of fast bowlers and it will take them some time to become consistent performers. It's not an easy job, bowling fast, especially for the Indian girls who are comparatively frail than Caucasian girls. Fast bowling is a lot of hard work, be it man or woman. The challenges are going to be slightly more in women's cricket.

**The two senior batters – Harmanpreet and Smriti – had a mediocre World Cup. What would you attribute it to?**

I personally felt that they were overkeen to do well. I

think once they saw the team perform in the tri-series, they thought this may be a great chance to claim the summit and must have probably felt they needed to up their game.

Sometimes, even for the most experienced or acclaimed performers, a tendency to get overkeen comes in. That was probably the reason because you can't attribute it to anything else. Both of them have performed, for long, across formats. Perhaps, they got too eager and desperately wanted to do well.

# The day Tendulkar completed a century of centuries

He achieved the feat on March 16, 2012, in the Asia Cup game against Bangladesh

IANS  
DHAKA

March 16, 2012 will be etched in the minds of cricket fans across the globe as the day when Sachin Tendulkar scored his 100th international century.

During the Asia Cup clash against Bangladesh here, Tendulkar played a brilliant knock of 114 to bring up his 49th ODI century.

The maestro already had 51 hundreds to his name in the longest format.

His century was also special in the sense that he breached the three-figure mark after a gap of one year.

However, Tendulkar's knock was not enough to

seal victory for India as it was unable to defend 290 and the host won the match with four balls to spare.

The century record of Tendulkar still stands untouched. The 47-year-old also has 164 half-centuries to his name, while he amassed a whopping 34,357 runs during his stellar career.

Former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting, with 71 hundreds, is second in the list of players with most international centuries.

Virat Kohli is third with 70 international hundreds and he is the only one who seems to be in line to break Tendulkar's record of 100 hundreds.

# Only Rohit capable of 200 in T20, says Hogg



Rohit. ■ FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SYDNEY

India's swashbuckling batsman Rohit Sharma is the only player capable of scoring a double hundred in the T20 format, says former Australia spinner Brad Hogg.

"At present, Rohit Sharma is the only player I think is capable of it. He has a good strike rate, timing, and plays cricketing shots finding options to score sixes all around the ground," Hogg said, while responding to questions from fans on Twitter.

Rohit made his T20 debut against England at Durban in September 2007. He has played 94 T20s for India so far and scored 2,331 runs with an average of 32.37 and a strike rate of 137.68, including four centuries and 16 half-centuries. The India opener's highest score in T20s is 118.



**Ton machine:** The shot that took Sachin Tendulkar to his 100th hundred. ■ AP

# CAB's precautions for SA's safe return

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA

The Quinton de Kock-led South African team on Monday had checked into a city hotel near the airport as the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) took all precautions for their safe return home amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

After their three-match ODI series against India was called off due to the virus outbreak, the South African players and support staff stayed in Lucknow where the second match was slated to be held. They had the option to fly to Delhi, but preferred the 'safest city' Kolkata as the Eastern metropolis was yet to record a single positive case for COVID-19.



**Taking care:** The South African players preferred to stay in Kolkata, the safest city, on their way home. ■ TWITTER

# IPL franchises' con-call raises eyebrows

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

Top executives from the eight Indian Premier League (IPL) franchises interacted in a conference call on Monday evening.

While multiple franchise representatives referred to the call as a "stock-taking exercise", the teleconference has raised a few eyebrows.

After suspending the IPL till April 15 due to COVID-19 outbreak, the BCCI hierarchy had had a detailed meeting with owners of all the eight teams.

While the BCCI had agreed to provide a weekly update to the franchises,

Monday's con-call came as a surprise to the IPL authorities.

"Perhaps it's a ploy to create an impression of posing as a united front, should it come to the worst possible scenario of cancelling the IPL and negotiating with the BCCI for possible financial losses," said an IPL insider.

## Work from home

Meanwhile, the BCCI has asked its employees to work from home till Friday. A circular was issued to the staff on Monday. The Mumbai Cricket Association, too, has decided to keep its office closed till Saturday.

# Kapil and Laxman advise caution

VIJAY LOKAPALLY  
NEW DELHI

For Kapil Dev and V.V.S. Laxman, it is "time to spend time with family" and they also advocate caution and restraint even as the world battles the coronavirus pandemic.

With more and more sporting activities being cancelled or rescheduled, there is a rare lull among the players' fraternity. "Yes, forced to stay indoors but we all have to understand the seriousness of the situation," said Kapil, who is a compulsive outdoor person, ready to tee off at a golf course at the break of dawn.

"I know it would be a new experience for many of us to



Kapil Dev. ■ FILE PHOTO: PTI

be confined to our homes. But this is the time to tend your injuries or just get rest, even if forced, to be prepared for the events ahead.

"You have to stay positive and remember that God is kind to us. So here is the time

## Gravity of the situation

For Laxman, it was "important" to understand the gravity of the situation. "We have to stop venturing out and have to be behave like responsible citizens. For sportsmen, it can help them get the rest they would have desired. We must stay as much time at home as possible.

"Let us be responsible and disciplined."

# I played my best in the final: Sharath Kamal

Feels that the coronavirus threat has put a question mark over Olympic qualifications

## TABLE TENNIS

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

Sharath Kamal never ceases to surprise. At 37, Sharath provided another evidence to his undiminished hunger to win as he claimed the Oman Open title in Muscat on Sunday. The surprise triumph ended a 10-year international title-drought following his victory in the 2010 Egypt Open.

On Monday, World No. 38 Sharath spoke at length to *The Hindu* on how well he played to win in a strong field and the impact of coronavirus on the process of qualification to the Olympic Games.

"Winning on pro tour is fantastic. Actually, I didn't think about winning the Oman Open when I went in to it. But looking at the draw looking and my form, I thought... okay, I should be able to make it to the semifinal at least, probably, even to the final.

"In the final, I thought playing (World No. 26, top seed from Portugal) Marcos (Freitas) will be quite difficult because he's really been in very good shape and doing very well."

Speaking about the quality of opposition, the nine-time National champion said, "There were a lot of



**Getting lucky:** Sharath says he had a favourable draw though the competition was stiff at the Oman Open. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

top-level players who didn't withdraw because of the forthcoming Olympic Games. Though I was the fourth seed, around 16 players were pretty close to me.

"So I think the competition was pretty stiff. I was just lucky to have a draw which was more suitable to me and I did well."

## Phenomenal backhand

Reflecting on his performance in the final, which he won 4-2, Sharath said, "I played one of my best table tennis in the final. My backhand, I think, was phenomenal. I was surprised how I could hit those backhands so hard, with such good timing.

Even Marcos appeared very, very surprised by the way I was hitting the backhands, and he really didn't know where exactly to play.

"I think throughout the tournament, especially the semifinal and final, I played much better when I was trailing than when I was ahead.

"I think, I was very composed, especially when I was trailing. And even in the end, I saved five game-points in the sixth set. But all these five-six game points I gave away, were points which I could have converted myself."

Looking at the impact of coronavirus that has sent the schedule for a toss, Sharath said, "It's been huge. Olym-

pic qualifiers are supposed to happen three weeks from now.

"But then, for the next six weeks, there is no tournament. And we don't know when the next tournament will be held. In May, there are tournaments in Hong Kong and China, which I doubt if they will be organised at all. So, we really don't know what is the fate of the tournaments in the next couple of months.

"And also what will be the qualification process for the Olympic Games because if the qualifying tournaments don't happen, then what will be the process for qualification to Tokyo? Everything is a question mark."

# Caruana favoured to come out on top

COVID-19 notwithstanding, Yekaterinburg all set to host Candidates meet

## CHESS

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Cinemas are closed. Shutters are down on malls. Stadia are empty. Coronavirus has pressed the pause button on the world.

Every day dawns with the news of the cancellation or postponement of a major sporting event. On Tuesday in Russia, though, one of the biggest tournaments of the year in chess will get underway.

The Candidates tournament opens at Yekaterinburg, which boasts some of the tallest buildings in Russia.

## Three weeks of action

The next three weeks will tell who, from among the eight players, will stand the tallest and stake a claim to challenge Magnus Carlsen for the next World Championship, to be held later this year.

Imagine the defending champion at Wimbledon getting a direct passage to the final!

However, the World chess champion has the privilege of playing the title match directly and this has been the custom in chess for decades.

So it is indeed extremely difficult for someone to emerge as the new champion. In its 134-year-history, there have only been 16 un-

**I think Caruana is too strong for this field. As he proved in the last World Championship, he could pose the toughest challenge to Carlsen**

—PRAVIN THIPSAV

disputed champions.

Carlsen became the 16th when he dethroned Viswanathan Anand in 2013 in the latter's hometown of Chennai. In late 2018 at London, the Norwegian genius was given a tough fight in the title match by Fabiano Caruana.

The match was tied 6-6 and it was through the tie-breakers that Carlsen emerged victorious.

Caruana is very much the favourite to be the challe-

ger once again.

## Watch out for Liren

The Italian-American is World No. 2, with 2842 Elo points. He could face the stiffest challenge from Ding Liren, the World No. 3 from China with a rating of 2805.

Russians Alexander Grischuk (2777), Ian Nepomniachtchi (2774) and Kirill Alekseenko (2698), Dutchman Anish Giri (2763), France's Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (2767) and China's Wang Hao (2762) are the others in the fray.

"I think Caruana is too strong for this field," says Mumbai-based Grandmaster Pravin Thipsav.

"As he proved in the last World Championship, he could pose the toughest challenge to Carlsen," Carua-



**Front-runner:** Fabiano Caruana has the credentials to emerge as Magnus Carlsen's challenger yet again. ■ AFP

## Anand's new role

One can follow the tournament live online and on *chess.com*, one can listen to the commentary of Anand, who is stuck in Germany, after competing in the Bundesliga chess league, because of travel restrictions.

The five-time World Champion is making his debut as a commentator. Given his deep knowledge, experience, the ability to analyse quickly, articulation and sense of humour, Anand should be a treat to listen to.