



# Tri-series or try-series?

Virat Kohli comes out with a once-in-a-lifetime performance, writes Navroze D Dhondy

Imagine a wedding where the bride marries the best man...

Well, that is what happened to Cricket Australia in the very first Benson & Hedges tri-series (1979-80) when they watched from the sidelines as West Indies and England squared up for the finals. And it happened again and again when at times the hosts were left to be mere spectators as Pakistan, South Africa, New Zealand crashed the party, and the finals became 'home' games for the visitors.

Exactly three years ago, the same three teams met for the last tri-series...India, Sri Lanka and Australia. It was announced as the last of such a format. And one rued the death of such an exciting tournament. But over the last few weeks the same three teams clashed again...and again... to resurrect the tri-series. And this time Australia have made sure they are definitely there as the groom, waiting for the bride, either Sri Lanka or India, to join them at the altar.

Kerry Packer, the man who dreamt and created this concept more as a "cock-a-snook" with the Australian Board, could never have imagined that the last match of the qualifying round would actually declare who would be there to play the finals.

Since the first B&H World Series in 1979-80, when the West Indians played the English in the finals, and

the Australian players watched the prize-battle on their TV screens, to 2006-07 when England stunned the Aussies again, by winning the first two of the three finals, this end of season jamboree has always caught the fancy of the Australian crowds and the cricket world at large. Luckily for them this time the Yellow and Green jersey will battle it out with a shade of Blue.

Over 33 years, there have been 29 such awatars. The B&H World Series, The Carlton & United, The VB series, the Commonwealth Bank series, Though names may have changed and players may have come and gone, the Indians finally celebrated a tri-series in Australia when they beat Sri Lanka on the way, and Australia in the finals. And guess what? The Indians won the best-of-three finals, by not even playing the third match. What a way to get their first tri-series title!

Sachin Tendulkar has scored 48 ODI centuries. And has just one in Australia: the special one that made India win the 1st tri-series final, making it a memorable end to a series Down Under in 2008-2009. Out of the hundreds of hundreds (a hundred and nineteen to be exact) scored through 29 tri-series, India have had only eight: Sourav Ganguly (2), VVS Laxman (3), Gautam Gambhir (2), and Yuvraj Singh (1) who got to that magical figure. And on Tuesday Virat Kohli joined the gang.

What was Kohli thinking when he walked into the park? Was it premeditated? Was it a once-in-a-lifetime performance? Was he in the 'zone'?

India got lucky that everything fell into place. Virender Sehwag got his highest score of the series, and Tendulkar stroked freely to reach 39. Gambhir settled in, and one thought he would be the anchor, but a run out shattered that dream, or may be ignited a new dream for 'New India'.

Kohli, the young pup, had enough yelps, and wanted to show he had a mean bark and a bite...here was the perfect stage, he didn't disappoint.

His 133 off 86 balls was a blitz. The target just shrank with every heave, and with the ball almost stuck to the boundary ropes (could be a good ad for Fevicol).

The Indians did what they had to do - to keep their hopes alive - mathematically.

There is a chance of sneaking through to the finals, if Sri Lanka capsize to the Aussies on March 2. It will be strange to find a billion Indians rooting for an Aussie win... But if Sri Lanka win, then of course no calculators will be needed, no analysis done, and the Indians will 'pack their bags' and head home.

—The writer is the founder & managing director of *Creativities Communications* and an avid cricket nut

## 'Let's accept the team selectors have given us'

Gavaskar feels Kohli should have been given more chances to gain experience before handing him deputy's role

**New Delhi:** Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar on Wednesday said the selectors should not be afraid of dropping non-performing players but refused to criticise the selection of the side for the upcoming Asia Cup.

There was a speculation that some senior players may be dropped in the wake of team's poor show in Australia. However, the selectors refrained from making such changes in the side. Asked if the players should be dropped, if their performance is not up to the expectations, Gavaskar said, "Of course..."

"If you don't do that, then it would mean that you can lose Test series 4-0. Asked if the players should be dropped, if their performance is not up to the expectations, Gavaskar said, "Of course..."

"If you don't do that, then it would mean that you can lose Test series 4-0. Gavaskar, was in no mood to criticise the selectors for not making such changes to the side.

team is selected, do not criticise it. It will affect their morale. If they don't perform then the players should be criticised," he said.

"Personally, I would have had some more changes. That's the way to look forward. We'll have to see about 2015. We're not in a position to determine the fitness of the players at that time but we can see, if there will be the same hunger, zeal, focus. They got to move on."

Selectors on Wednesday 'rested' Virender Sehwag and Zaheer Khan but retained Sachin Tendulkar in the squad while Virat Kohli was elevated to vice-captain.

Reacting to it, Gavaskar said may be the selectors could have given Virat more chances to get experience before being given additional responsibilities.

"It's a reward for his performance. It's tad unfair to Gautam Gambhir, Virat has plenty of cricket ahead of him. He is future India captain but he needs to firmly establish himself in the team. In the meanwhile, let him get experience and exposure, so that when he becomes



### FIGURE THIS

Antonio Di Natale has kept Udinese's chances of qualifying for the Champions League alive with his scoring spree. The diminutive striker has so far scored 18 goals in 25 matches to top the scoring chart in the Serie A. Below is the list of top-10 scorers in Italy

Player	Team	Goals
Antonio Di Natale	Udinese	18
Zlatan Ibrahimovic	AC Milan	15
Edinson Cavani	Napoli	15
German Denis	Atalanta	15
Rodrigo Palacio	Genoa	14
Miroslav Klose	Lazio	13
Diego Milito	Inter	12
Stevan Jovetic	Florentina	12
Fabrizio Miccoli	Palermo	11
Alessandro Matri	Juventus	10

### SHORT STORIES



Ducati's Valentino Rossi poses with the fans during a MotoGP testing at Sepang Circuit in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday. —Getty Images

### Arsenal to play City

Arsenal will play Manchester City in a pre-season friendly in Beijing's Bird's Nest Stadium on July 27, the opening day of the London Olympics. Arsenal chief executive Ivan Gazidis says it is "fitting that two English clubs are playing each other on the opening day of the London Olympics, in the stadium which hosted 2008 Olympics."

### Fifth award for Cech

Chelsea goalkeeper Petr Cech has been named Czech Player of the Year for a record-equalling fifth time. The 29-year-old, who also won the award in 2005, 2008, 2009 and 2010, earned 627 points in the poll. VfL Wolfsburg midfielder Peter Irlach came