

Virat Kohli Not Talking To Gautam Gambhir? Batting Coach Reveals Truth Behind Rumours

New Dlehi, 17 July: Speculations that Virat Kohli and Gautam Gambhir have not been communicating with each other since the start of the ODI series between India and England set social media abuzz. A few visuals from Team India's training ground added fuel to the fire. But now, batting coach Sitanshu Kotak has busted the claims. Speaking at the press conference after India's defeat to England in the 2nd ODI in Cardiff, Kotak said that Kohli and Gambhir have spoken to each other at least 10 times on Thursday.

This is not the first time that theories of Kohli and Gambhir being at odds with each other surfaced on social media. Quite often, videos and photos are taken out of context. Kotak explained the same as he spoke to the media after the match.



"Virat and Gautam, they must have talked 10 times today. I don't think they need a bridge," Kotak told reporters in the post-match media conference. Kotak was also asked about the conversation that took place with Kohli. The response was strictly technical. He said, "Virat, basically, before going into batting, he talked about certain things. Because, Virat,



I honestly say, as a batting coach, till the time he doesn't feel anything, or if he doesn't see anything, his batting shouldn't be disturbed. And we shouldn't say much about the way he bats.

"But, mainly, how is his footwork going? Certain things, he asked me before. And then, after the nets, he was talking. Apart from that, what you are saying, I don't

know, where do the rumours come from, but they do come," he added.

After his failure to fire in the first ODI against England, Kohli bounced back to score a fifty in the second match. Kohli and Shreyas Iyer forged a brilliant partnership of 67 runs before the veteran batter was dismissed by Jofra Archer for a knock of 65. Iyer added 66 off 71 but India were bowled out for just 233. England chased down the target with more than 5 overs to spare and 4 wickets in hand.

Kotak continued to play down the chatter around Rohit being under pressure to secure his future in ODI cricket. "See, honestly, I have played a lot of cricket, and I have seen a lot of cricket. On any given day, there are a lot of batters I have seen who don't get the momentum that

they are looking for, and that can happen. You might see a completely different innings from Rohit Sharma at Lord's," said Kotak.

As for Rohit's form, Kotak does not think the former captain is struggling in England but was not comfortable seeing others like Shubman Gill get off to a quick start. "So, I wouldn't use the word 'struggling', but, maybe the shots he normally plays on the up and all, because of the double bounce, probably he felt it was not comfortable. Shubman got a quick start, then Virat got a quick start, but he didn't get balls in his slot, or he didn't get going. That's what I felt. So, I wouldn't say that, because you could definitely see a completely different innings from a player like Rohit, and I think that I have seen that happening to a lot of batters.



Casper Ruud of Norway in action during the Round of 16 match against Jaime Faria of Portugal, at the Swiss Open tennis tournament, in Gstaad, Switzerland.

RRohit Sharma vs Ajit Agarkar And Gautam Gambhir: A Case Of Mutual Mistrust

New Dlehi, 17 July: Beyond his quintessential easy-going exterior, Rohit Sharma is one of the toughest blokes in the global cricket arena, someone who is not known to pull back punches. If he decides to dig his heels, some of that fighting spirit would be needed. Especially after it came to light that the national selection committee headed by Ajit Agarkar wants to give a long rope to Yashasvi Jaiswal in the ODI set-up going forward and the plan has the tacit support of the Indian team management, most significantly head coach Gambhir. Only Rohit would know whether and how much fight is left in the tank.

After 513 international games, 20, 289 runs and 50 centuries across formats, Rohit Sharma has earned the right to bow out on his own terms. But the selectors also have the right to select the best squad which they think will be a title contender in the 50-over ODI World Cup in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia in 15 months' time.

Post July 19 at Lord's, India would next play an ODI on September 27 against the West Indies at home, which is the same window in which the T20 squad will compete in the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya. If Rohit decides to hang in there, it would be interesting to see how the selection committee goes about its job.



The relationship between Rohit and the Gambhir-Agarkar duo can be only be described lacking in mutual trust. The story of Rohit, Agarkar and Gambhir is a saga of three individuals, who have a mind of their own.

Perhaps a slightly flexible individual could have acted as a bridge between the three. Till a couple of years ago, Rahul Dravid was the glue that held Rohit and Agarkar during two highly successful campaigns -- the 2023 ODI World Cup in India and the 2024 T20 World Cup in the West Indies. India won the latter trophy under Rohit.

Gambhir, with his strong convictions, is very different from what Dravid brought to the table. A Deja Vu moment for Old Timers

The apparent Rohit versus Gambhir battle has eerie similarities with the Sourav Ganguly-Greg Chappell fracas back in 2005. During the 2024 IPL, Kolkata Knight Riders were playing an away game at Wankhede against

Mumbai Indians and it was already known that Dravid was leaving the head coach position after the ICC event. The BCCI was looking for a new head coach and Gambhir was a runaway favourite.

A person close to former India captain recalls, it was Rohit who actually went up to Gambhir during that evening training session at Wankhede and said: "Gauti bhai Indian team mein aa jao" (Gauti bhai join the Indian team), and Gambhir in return had apparently said: 'If you remain captain, I will definitely join'." However, there were also naysayers who warned Rohit with probing questions: 'You are so used to Rahul Dravid school of man management. This will be a different challenge. Are you up for it?' he said.

By the time it was 0-3 against New Zealand at home, the cracks started appearing and by the time the Australia Tour happened, the breakdown in relations was complete.

World Cup Destiny: Lionel Messi Bathed Lamine Yamal As A Baby, Now They Face Off For Football's Top Title

Mumbai, 17 July : Almost two decades ago, photographer Joan Monfort didn't think much of his photo shoot of a teenage Lionel Messi bathing a cute baby boy in a plastic bathtub. Not until the remarkable twist of fate became clear years later, when that infant blossomed into Lamine Yamal. Now those images of the long-haired Messi, his hands covered in soap suds as if anointing Yamal as soccer's Next Big Thing, have become the most talked about - and gawked about - in the runup to Sunday's World Cup final, when Messi's Argentina will play Yamal's Spain for the biggest trophy in the sport.

"I have never been a believer or thought that anything was destined to occur, but I am beginning to have my doubts. This is beyond all reasonable explanations," Monfort told The Associated Press from his home in Barcelona on Friday. Monfort, who works as a freelance photojournalist for the AP, took the photos in 2007 as part of a charity calendar produced by local newspaper Sport and UNICEF.

Luck dictated that Yamal's mother, who appears in the calendar photo, won a raffle of families in the city of Matarn, near Barcelona, who wanted to participate. Soccer destiny then deemed that her baby boy, who would become a star for Barcelona some 15 years later, was paired up with the Argentine who would become the greatest of all time. A tearful Messi left Barcelona in 2021 when the club was in financial trouble.

Top IPL Coach Turns Down England Test Coach Job, Won't Replace Brendon McCullum

Mumbai, 17 July: Royal Challengers Coach Andy Flower has ruled himself out of the race for becoming the next head coach of the England national team after Brendon McCullum's exit, saying he is happy with his current coaching stint with the Indian Premier League franchise RCB and The Hundred team London Spirit. "The bottom line for me is that I'm very happy in the work that I'm doing at the moment... I'm really comfortable with what I'm doing, I have [ruled myself out], yes," Flower said at Spirit's media day according to Cricinfo.

Flower was considered among the frontrunners to replace McCullum. He previously coached England between 2009 and 2014, winning home and away Ashes series as well as a tour to India. After England's stint, Flower has gone on to become one of the most successful coaches in franchise cricket as he won back-to-back titles with RCB.

Flower also revealed that he has



conveyed his decision not to become Test coach to the England cricket board managing director Rob Key.

"Yes, obviously that is a topic that's being talked about at the moment. Yes, I have spoken with the ECB. We're all aware of the vacancy for the head coach job of the England national team, and I have spoken with Rob [Key] and the ECB on that topic. The bottom line for me is that I'm very happy in the work that I'm doing at the moment. I work for a couple of really good organisations.

I've got really good teams around me and good people around me, and I'm really comfortable with what I'm doing at the moment," he said.

"I've worked with England before and I had an amazing time when I had the privilege to be England head coach and represent England as one of their leaders a number of years ago, and I remember those years really fondly, and it would be a privilege for me or anyone else to be the Test coach, but for me at this time, I'm really comfortable with what I'm doing. I'm going to stick with doing that," he added

The decision comes as another setback for the ECB, which has been forced into a major rebuild following Ben Stokes' retirement from international cricket and McCullum's exit as Test coach after England's 2-1 home series defeat to New Zealand. However, the New Zealander is still serving as the white-ball coach of the team.

Big Blow For India As Star Player Ruled Out Of 3rd England ODI. Not Rohit Sharma

Mumbai, 17 July: In a big blow to the Indian cricket team, all-rounder Washington Sundar has reportedly been ruled out of the third and final ODI of the series against England. The decider will take place at Lord's, London, on Sunday. The Shubman Gill-led side won the first game by six wickets before the hosts bounced back with a four-wicket victory. Sundar was injured in the second match. During his innings at Sophia Gardens, the player had his thigh strapped by the physio during a break. Sundar was dismissed for 2 off 5 balls and looked uncomfortable while walking off.

The news of Sundar missing out on the final game was reported by IANS. After the second match, India bat-



ting coach Sitanshu Kotak spoke about Sundar's injury. He said, "Washington's injury which he had when he ran his first run to mid-off. His hamstring, I think, it looks like a bad injury, and next ball he got out."

A steadfast Joe Root anchored England's series-levelling four-wicket win over India in the second ODI after the visitors' batting once

again seemed vulnerable, with senior player Rohit Sharma's struggles triggering fresh speculation around his future.

Root delivered an unbeaten 99 off 133 balls to steer England home and keep them alive in the three-match series, which will conclude at Lord's on Sunday. That game could well be Rohit's final in India colours after he strug-

gled to a 47-ball 26, adding to the pressure on him, PTI reported.

He looked out of touch as India were dismissed for 233 in 44 overs on Thursday. Virat Kohli (65) and Shreyas Iyer (66) ensured that the bowlers had something to fight for after the other batters disappointed. In reply, Root's was a model innings that showed how to control a chase on a track that offered sharp bounce, making the Indian pace troika menacing during the early part of the run chase.

His 72-run stand for the sixth wicket with Will Jacks (30) sealed the game after England had their own struggles and were reduced to 125 for 5. The chase was completed in 44.1 overs.

Oliver Kahn Says "No Rivalry And No Duel" Between Lionel Messi And Lamine Yamal, Gives reason

New Delhi, 17 July : Legendary German goalkeeper Oliver Kahn has dismissed suggestions that Sunday's FIFA World Cup final is a battle between Lionel Messi and Spain's teenage sensation Lamine Yamal, saying the two are at completely different stages of their careers. The defending champions Argentina will take on Spain in search of their fourth World Cup title and a second consecutive when they clash in New York.

"There's no rivalry and no duel between these two guys because there's one player who is 40 and the other one is 19 (years-old). Messi is the big role model of Yamal, both are very interesting (and they) both come from the same academy," Kahn, a member of the Zee 5 expert panel on the World

Cup, told reporters.

"Yamal is admiring him for years and wants to be the same like him. It's a very, very special situation for the young guy." He won the Euros two years ago and now he has the chance to win the World Cup. For a 19-year-old guy, on one hand, yes, it's huge, but on the other hand, he has to handle that in his life and for the future and all that's coming on him. That's not easy," Kahn said.

Kahn said the role that Yamal has played in the Spain side is a lot different than he is used to, something that makes a little more to be desired from him. "He has played very well this tournament, but he can play much better. In Barcelona, (it) is a little bit different. He (has) had a little bit more freedom, and maybe in the Spain sys-



tem, he feels a little bit constrained. He has to fulfil a special role. But that's what he has to work on in the next years," Kahn said.

"... because if he's playing for the national team, there are big guys like Rodri and he has to be respected and he has to show that he has earned this freedom," he added. Kahn likened Messi's aura in front of the goal to his

playing days.

"If he has a chance, mostly it's a goal. If you see Messi in front of you as a goalkeeper, I think it was the same when some players see me as a goalkeeper. There is this kind of aura, this kind of respect. If Messi is in front of you, your chances are really, really small," Kahn said.

Kahn praised Spain coach Luis de la Fuente for

expanding the national team's skills beyond the 'tiki-taka', terming it a "little boring".

"It's better to come slowly into a tournament, to get better and better game to game - and that's what Spain did," he said. "... permanently relying on their system, on their organisation, on their tactical scheme. For me, which is the big difference today - if you compare Spain to 10 or 15 years ago; it's not the tiki-taka football, which is partly a little bit boring.

"It's always (about) building a lot of width on the field. De la Fuente further developed this, he refined the game. It's more vertical, it's more attacking and very important (fact is that) they integrated a number nine with (Mikel) Oyarzabal, a player which was missing in Spain," Kahn added.



New Delhi, 17 July : India captain Shubman Gill blamed his side's middle-order collapse after England chased down a modest 234 with four wickets in hand in the second ODI in Cardiff on Thursday to level the three-match series 1-1. Joe Root anchored the chase with a patient 99 not out as England chased down the target in 44.1 overs. Gill admitted India were well short of the total they had targeted at the halfway stage of the innings. From 178 for 3 at one stage, India slumped to 193 for 7 in a space of 26 deliveries and never recovered.

"We thought 300-310 would be a good total after 25 overs when we were in a good position, but we lost too many wickets in the middle overs," Gill said. The skipper expected greater contribution from the lower middle-order after the top-order had laid a solid platform. "Our tailenders are not the best batsmen, but we expected more from the lower middle-order batters and they were not able to capitalise on their starts," Gill said. Gill also lamented the injury of Washington Sundar, saying it robbed India of bowling option at a crucial stage.

"Never a good feeling when you ping one to cover. (Washington) Sundar is a key part of our team. Maybe it

would have played a part, squeezing in the pressure." The India captain said the visitors had little option but to rely heavily on their frontline pacers after Washington's departure, though he felt the conditions continued to favour the seamers.

"We had to bowl our main bowlers throughout the innings. I don't think it would have made a huge difference because the ball was doing more for the fast bowlers, but when you lose a key player, there is some momentum loss." Gill reserved special praise for Root, saying England's batting mainstay never allowed India an opening in a chase that suited his strengths. "We always knew that if the run-rate was five or more, we could have got a false shot out of him, but this kind of chase, he's a master of these totals."

Player-of-the-Match

Root was delighted with England's response after the opening defeat, saying grinding out wins in testing conditions was a hallmark of good teams. "That's what the game is all about. 1-1 in the series going to Lord's. In those conditions, staying till the end and getting the win, that's what it's all about. Getting the win was the important thing." The former England captain said batting was far from straightforward and partnerships were the key to absorbing India's pressure.

"Conditions were difficult to bat on, and we needed those partnerships to soak up the pressure. Sometimes you have to scrap for it and win ugly." Root also brushed aside criticism surrounding England's recent ODI form, saying the side had once again shown its ability to bounce back after a defeat.