

Time has come to empower the third umpire

**Instead Of Players, The Man Watching Replays Should Call For Referrals,
Writes Sunil Gavaskar**

26th June 2011

England's 1-0 series win over Sri Lanka keeps them in the hunt for the No. 1 ranking in Test cricket. They now await the No.1-ranked team India, who have just increased their lead on the points table by winning the first Test against the West Indies.

England now play the T20 and the One-Day series against the Lankan's, but that may not be easy since the runners up in the World Cup are a different team when they play in coloured clothing and with a white ball. The mind games though have already begun from the England side with comments on the refusal of the BCCI to accept the 'DRS' for the series against England. Firstly let us get it clear that unless specified by the ICC, the playing conditions for any tour are a matter between the two boards.



Many years ago, in 1974 to be precise, India toured England in the first half of the summer with Pakistan playing in the second half. India had beaten England on their previous tour in 1971, where the English batsmen had struggled against the Indian spin bowlers. To counter the Indian spinners there was a playing condition put forward by England that there would be a restriction on the number of fielders on the leg side. This was obviously a ploy to handicap the Indian spinners for the batsmen could now play the blind sweep without worrying too much about being caught on the leg side.

Funnily, the playing conditions for the second half of the summer did not have the field restriction. As one can see from this, teams will do whatever they need to do to get the advantage. If anything, India are at a disadvantage by not having the 'DRS' for as we have seen over the years, when it comes to umpiring errors it is India who suffer more than other teams. By not having the 'DRS' India are telling the World that they

can suffer wrong calls and yet win without it while other teams are so obsessed by it because an umpiring error costs them more. The Indian players also suffer since the slightest display of surprise and disappointment over an umpire's decision sees them being fined.

Cricket has always been a game where the umpire's decision is final and players have to abide by that. What the 'DRS' does is give players the license to question the decision and have it reviewed and that's why I feel that instead of the players asking for a review, it should be the third umpire who is watching slow motion replays, who should be the one making the call to have a review rather than the players. This way the players respect for the umpires call will stay and it will only be an umpiring colleague, who will ask for the review.

As it is, we have seen that even when a batsman is bowled if the umpire feels that the bowler may have bowled a no ball, he refers it to the third umpire and similarly he himself can ask for the third umpire's assistance when he is unsure. The unsightly vision of players asking for a review will thus be gone and nobody including the BCCI will have any objections to this system of decision review.

The two standout performers of the week were Chris Tremlett who bowled well in the Test against Sri Lanka and Rahul Dravid who got his 32nd century to help India beat the West Indies in the first Test of the series. These two share the accolade of the CEAT international cricketer of the week.