

Who remembers my role in hiring Kirsten?

SUNIL GAVASKAR On Why The Entire Controversy Surrounding His Kochi 'Connection' Is Baffling

The one good thing that happened with this controversy over Kochi was that, it allowed the Indian cricket team to prepare for the New Zealand series without any distractions. Whenever there is a gap between the international matches, the Indian players are in dread of what new controversy they are going to be dragged in simply because, there are some who believe that they have to write and talk about some cricket 'masala ' everyday. Much of which could well be imaginary. I was quite happy to help Indian cricket again by being in the centre of last week's controversy and thus, the players be left alone. However, it was totally baffling why a controversy was created in the first place though by now, I know that despite playing for India for a decade and half and then batting for Indian cricket in various forums, a negative angle is invariably created. That is unfathomable and bemusing too, because I know that 99% of the time the stories are the imagination of someone in any thing I say or do to get in a sensational piece. Surely I have made some contribution to Indian cricket but the positives are hardly mentioned. I could give plenty of examples but one will do for the moment. The other instances could be left, may be for a book which I was never keen to write, but may now have to, if only to give the real story.

Remember the fiasco about the appointment of the coach in 2007 when Graham Ford got cold feet and declined to accept the job despite being selected. Dav Whatmore was the media favorite at that time to be the coach, but the panel was told that the India team 'think tank ' after their interaction with their Bangladeshi counterparts were not keen on him. We were told that there was enough of Whatmore in the sub-continent and that a fresh perspective was perhaps required. We were also

informed that they Indian team think tank had already directly spoken to Ford and had got his acceptance to be the coach, which was clearly the reason why Dav Whatmore was no longer wanted. I did not say a word in whole matter as it was already decided that Ford was the man. Yet, when the announcement was made to the press, no guesses for who was made responsible for Dav Whatmore not getting the job of the coach. Sunil Gavaskar of course.



Now the search for another candidate was on and I immediately thought of Gary Kirsten who I had interacted with as a selector to pick the ICC teams of the year. Gary also was a cricketer after my heart, a tough guy under the soft spoken exterior and thought deeply about the game & how to make things better. However I just wanted to make sure that he would be interested & available so a quick call and he confirmed his interest in the job. And thus it was that, he came on board and the today Indian players themselves are crediting him for taking the team to the number one ranking and helping them to develop as cricketers. The inner glow that I get from seeing this Indian team do so well under Kirsten and Dhoni cannot be dimmed whether my role in getting Gary is acknowledged or not.

Just like the Whatmore case where I was made the villain, I am currently being pilloried just for ratings and eyeballs as the modern world says. Every allegation is done anonymously, with no sources mentioned and

may just be the imagination of the fevered mind, but as they say, the truth will out and I am sure the cricket follower is intelligent enough to know who to believe and whom to dis-believe.

Anyway to the game now. The only international cricket is the T-20 matches between Pakistan and South Africa and the Proteas have dumped the 'hosts' quite convincingly in both the games. They would be delighted that their youngsters are doing well. The tall seamer Tsotsobe and the newcomer Ingram both have been impressive and its Tsotsobe who is this week's CEAT International Cricketer of the Week for his bowling and fielding that contributed hugely to their teams win.