

Kohli and Smith win big at ICC awards

DUBAI, JAN 18 /- Indian skipper and batting mainstay Virat Kohli on Thursday dominated the ICC annual awards clinching both the cricketer and captain of the year honours - a much expected windfall of accolades for his phenomenal run across formats. Kohli, who is currently leading India in an away Test series against South Africa, was named recipient of the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for Cricketer of the Year and also the ODI Cricketer of the Year. Besides he was picked the captain of both the ICC's Test and ODI teams of the year. Ironically, this comes at a time when his leadership has been called into question in the ongoing three-match series against South Africa, which India are trailing 0-2 after heavy losses. However, in the qualification period from September 21, 2016 to the end of 2017, Kohli scored 2,203 Test runs at an average of 77.80 including eight centuries, 1,318 ODI runs including seven centuries at 82.63, and 299 T20 runs at a strike rate of 153. He also captained India to the top of the ICC Test rankings.

"It means a lot to win the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for becoming the ICC Cricketer of the Year 2017 and also the ICC ODI Player of the Year. Kohli was quoted as saying in an ICC statement. "I won that back in 2012 also but it's the first time winning the Garfield Sobers Trophy, and it's a huge honour for me. It's probably the biggest of my world cricket and two Indians getting it back-to-back makes it more special," he added. This is the second time in succession that an Indian has won the overall cricketer of the year award. Off-spinner R Ashwin had claimed the honour last year. Apart from Kohli, there were four other Indians who were picked in the ICC's Test and ODI Teams of the Year. While the Test team featured Cheteshwar Pujara and Ravichandran Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah and Rohit Sharma found a place in the ODI side. Kohli surprisingly pipped Australian skipper Steve Smith for the ICC's Test team captaincy. Smith had led his team to a dominating 4-0 win over England in the Ashes. Smith, however, claimed the Test Player of the Year award after scoring 1875 runs in 16 matches at an average of 78.12, with eight hundreds and five 50s. "It's a great honour

ICC ANNUAL AWARDS WINNERS

- Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year - Virat Kohli
- ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year - Steve Smith
- ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year - Virat Kohli
- ICC Men's Emerging Cricketer of the Year - Hasan Ali
- ICC Men's Associate Cricketer of the Year - Rashid Khan
- ICC Men's T20I Performance of the Year - Yuzvendra Chahal
- David Shepherd Trophy for ICC Umpire of the Year - Marais Erasmus
- ICC Spirit of Cricket - Anya Shrubsole (England)
- ICC Fans Moment of the Year - Pakistan stun India to win the ICC Champions Trophy 2017
- ICC Men's Test Team of the Year 2017: Virat Kohli (captain) (India), Dean Elgar (South Africa), David Warner (Australia), Steve Smith (Australia), Cheteshwar Pujara (India), Ben Stokes (England), Quinton de Kock (wicketkeeper) (South Africa), Ravichandran Ashwin (India), Mitchell Starc (Australia), Kagiso Rabada (South Africa), James Anderson (England).
- ICC Men's ODI Team of the Year 2017: Virat Kohli (captain) (India), David Warner (Australia), Rohit Sharma (India), Babar Azam (Pakistan), AB de Villiers (South Africa), Quinton de Kock (wicketkeeper) (South Africa), Ben Stokes (England), Trent Boult (New Zealand), Hasan Ali (Pakistan), Rashid Khan (Afghanistan), Jasprit Bumrah (India). (PTI)



to receive this award for the second time, having won it in 2015 as well. It's called Test cricket for a reason, and I've enjoyed that test of my ability over the past 12 months," Smith said. Kohli became the first non-South African since 2013 to win the ODI Cricketer of the Year award since 2013. Quinton de Kock received the accolade for 2016 and AB de Villiers won it in 2014 and 2015. In the nominations for ODIs this year, Kohli was placed alongside Pakistan paceman Hasan Ali, Afghanistan leg-spinner Rashid Khan and his own teammate Rohit Sharma.

Smith, meanwhile, beat off competition from last year's winner Ashwin, who took 111 wickets at 25.87, Cheteshwar Pujara, who scored 1,914 runs, Kohli, and Ben Stokes, who hit 1,000 runs at 40.00 and took 35 wickets at 27.68. Among other awards, Yuzvendra Chahal's incredible haul of 6/25 against England in Bengaluru last year was named as Twenty20 International performance of the year. Chahal was named Player of the Match and Player of the Series for his performance - the best by an Indian bowler in T20I history, and the third-best of all time. He is behind only Sri Lanka's Ajantha Mendis, who took 6/8 and 6/16 against Zimbabwe and Australia respectively. Afghanistan's Rashid Khan was adjudged ICC Associate Cricketer of the Year after taking 60 wickets in 2017 - a record for an associate player in a calendar year. The ICC's Test team of the year includes three Australians - Smith, opener David Warner and fast bowler Mitchell Starc, three South Africans - opener Dean Elgar, wicket-keeper Quinton de Kock and pacer Kagiso Rabada, English pacer James Anderson and all-rounder Ben Stokes also found a place in the Test team. Of these, Warner, de Kock and Stokes made the ODI squad as well. The others in the 50-over team included South African former skipper AB de Villiers, Afghanistan's teenage leg-spinner Rashid Khan and two Pakistani cricketers in Hasan Ali and Babar Azam. The ICC selection would come as a morale-booster for Stokes, who had been embroiled in a disciplinary mess after being caught up in a brawl outside a bar last year. The incident had cost him a place in England's Ashes squad and he has also been charged with affray recently by the Crown Prosecution Service. (PTI)

Virat Cocktail: Where change is the only 'Constant'

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /- Virat Kohli wasn't exactly amused when a South African scribe decided to give him his choice of 34 different playing XIs in his three years as Test captain but a statistical lowdown on his points at distinct lack of consistency in team selection. Whether it is by choice or compulsion of injury, Kohli's fetish for tinkering with playing XI is well documented - something that wasn't questioned until the South African debacle happened. The scissor happy Kohli has changed at least one player in seven Tests, two players in 16 Tests, three players in six Tests, four players in four Tests and five players in one Test (his debut Test as captain in Adelaide, Australia in 2014). At the onset it is fair to mention that Kohli never had a settled opening pair with either of the three Murali Vijay, KL Rahul or Shikhar Dhawan in a single or out of form. In Kohli's regime, Vijay played 25 Tests, Rahul 20 and Dhawan 17. Kohli's seven openers in this period - Vijay, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rahul, Dhawan, Faf du Plessis, Gautam Gambhir and Abhinav Mukund. However during these three years only six players have received India Test caps. They are Karn Sharma, Naman Ojha, Jayant Yadav, Karun Nair, Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah. While Ravichandran Ashwin's head was under chopping block often during

Rohit's defensive skills letting him down in Tests: Dean Jones

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /- Former Australia batsman Dean Jones feels Rohit Sharma's rare talent is undisputed but his defensive skills are letting him down in Test cricket. Barring captain Virat Kohli, none of the specialist Indian batsmen could negotiate the potent South African pace attack in the two Tests that the visitors lost to complete their debut in Adelaide. Ashwin has taken 193 wickets and scored 1159 runs in these 33 matches. Now 34 Tests under Kohli. Only once did he forego his place in the side when leg-spinner Karn was selected in the 2014 Adelaide Test. Kohli's defensive skills are letting him down, "Jones told PTI. "In Test cricket, 70 percent of batting is about your defence and in one-dayers it is 40 percent. So his defensive skills are letting him down. He has got to take pride in his defensive skills like Sunil Gavaskar, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar and even Virat Kohli," he said further. Sharma went into the South Africa series at the back of scintillating form against Sri Lanka at home, where he smashed a third double hundred in ODIs and a joint-fastest century in T20 Internationals. Considering the touch he was in, the team management preferred him over Rahane. Jones said India needed a tough tour like South Africa to sort their team selection. "You need to have these kind of tours to sort out your composition, to find out whether they are good enough or not. So maybe there has been too much reliance on his (Sharma's) ODI form but all in all you have to have a series like this to find out if they are good enough. "If he misses out in the next series, Ravi (Sharma) and Kohli can say 'we gave you the opportunity,' said the 56-year-old, who was in the capital to promote the 'Visit Victoria' education and tour-

ism campaign. Former India captains like Ajit Wadekar and Bishan Singh Bedi attributed India's surrender in South Africa to lack of preparation and the fact that they went into the series opener at Newlands without a warm-up match. Jones, however, has a different take on the touchy topic. "The modern-day schedules are such that often there is no time for a warm-up game. But why should you only rely on that? I have spoken to the likes of VVS Laxman, who tell me, Dravid and Tendulkar used to start preparing three months before touring Australia. "Dealing with the bouncing ball and so on. So the players have got to take the responsibility individually (when it comes to preparation)," said Jones, who represented Australia in 52 Tests and 164 ODIs. In India, he is best-known for his 210 in only the second Test in history, at Chennai in 1986. The series in South Africa out of their grasp. Jones feels it is still not time to judge the current Indian team, which is scheduled to tour England and Australia later this year. "I think the restructuring of the series (with no warm-up games) and so do Kohli and Sharma. You don't teach them how to come back. You don't have many teams winning overseas anyway. I was researching on this, probably South Africa is the only team which has done well overseas in the past 10-15 years. "You can be a hit bash but if (series loss in SA) is not the be all and end all. No doubt Kohli and Ravi would have wanted things to go a bit better: South

Africa is a hard place to win in. Australia have won on their last two tours there. " Looking ahead, Jones said the England tour will be a sterner test for the Indian batsmen as the pitches in Australia have become flat. "Kohli can only make so many runs, you need other players to stand up. England tour is going to be interesting. There are some question marks about the guys' techniques. They can play well. Like Tendulkar and Dravid, you got guys like Rahane and Pujara who stay side on and watch the ball late. "And you got bowlers now who can bowl over 140 kmph and swing the ball. So would like to judge this Indian team by how they do over the next two-three years. They have had just one bad tour," opined Jones. Asked about his thoughts on modern-day greats Kohli and Steve Smith, Jones said the Indian captain is his favourite player though Smith is a genius and his numbers are better. Kohli averages 53.51 in 65 Tests and Smith 63.75 in 61 games. "His (Smith's) numbers are better and he is different. All the greats are genius and they are different. Bradman was different, he played with split grips and so do Kohli and Sharma. You don't teach them how to play with split grips. Smith reads the length better than most, he has got an eye like a dead fish. How do you teach that? And my favourite Kohli is bringing in the traditional style of play in all three formats but Smith is different. It is okay to be different," he summed up. (PTI)



Dehradun likely to be Afghanistan's second home ground

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /- Nestled in the mountain ranges of the Himalayas, the idyllic Dehradun could soon become the second 'home' ground of the Afghanistan cricket team, fast emerging as a unifying force in a war-ravaged country. Dehradun is likely to be Afghanistan's second home ground, a BCCI official told PTI. The south Asian nation's first home ground in India when the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) and the BCCI signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority in 2015 to use the Shahid Vijay Singh Pathik Sports Complex. Afghanistan cricket had received a massive fillip with the country securing Test status last year. India will host Afghanistan's maiden Test match from June 14 to 18 in Bengaluru. The decision was taken after officials from the BCCI and the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) met on Tuesday. BCCI acting secretary Amittabh Choudhary had said Bengaluru emerged as the best possible venue for the historic match. For the venue at Greater Noida, a working agreement between the stakeholders saw the under-19 cricket teams of Afghanistan and Zimbabwe play their first one-day match on December 13 there.

31 RCA units accept BCCI diktat on Lalit Modi

New Delhi, Jan 18 /- The Rajasthan Cricket Association has taken a giant leap towards getting back into the BCCI fold as 31 out of 39 units of the state association have agreed to accept the conditions laid down by the parent body. The two votes that were not counted were also in favour of the BCCI diktat. But those two votes were not counted since proxy voting was not allowed. Last December, the BCCI at its SGM had decided that it would give the suspended state cricket association relief if it complied with the apex body's terms, which included not allowing disgraced former IPL commissioner Lalit Modi to return in the state fold. The conditions also included that if he tried to re-enter the state unit in future, then BCCI will overrule the revocation of the ban. "Today RCA had their SGM and 31 out of the 39 state association's decision has noted in favour of implementing the BCCI terms and conditions. The RCA will submit their minutes to the High Court during the next hearing on January 25," a senior BCCI official told PTI. The decision could well mean that Rajasthan Royals will stay back and play their IPL games at the Sawai Man Singh Stadium. (PTI)