

'Symonds' absence will ease tension between India and Australia'

Andrew Symonds' likely absence from the upcoming Test series between India and Australia will ease the tension between the two teams, feels Indian coach Gary Kirsten.

Symonds has been involved in many controversies in the last two series against India, the most notorious among them was the racism row with Harbhajan Singh in the explosive series earlier this year. The intensity of the monkeygate scandal was so much that the cricketing world stood on the verge of a deep divide. World Champion Australia had to cope with a lot of criticism for behaving like a whining baby.

'There is a lot of hype around him (Symonds) and the quality of player that he is, and also I gather there is a lot of tension around from what happened in the last series,' Kirsten said.

'To not have him around, does that alleviate it? Does it make it better? I don't know the answer. But I don't think it takes the gloss off the Test series. One thing we must always be aware of is the game is bigger than the individual,' Kirsten was quoted as saying in *The Australian*.

Kirsten also felt that Australia will miss out on the experience of Symonds, who has the knack of raising his performance against India.

'To not have those types of individuals means they are going to be replaced by more inexperienced players, so we will hopefully be able to exploit (that),' said Kirsten.

'We all know with the Australian set-up that they always replace those individuals with quality players, but in the heat of Test match battle sometimes experience counts for a lot.'

Symonds was an influential figure with the bat in the most recent series, striking 162 not out in the Sydney Test, and a protagonist in the drama that followed, as the target of Harbhajan's monkey taunt.

His apparent disenchantment stems partly from the feeling he was not fully supported by Cricket Australia and the racial-abuse charge against Harbhajan was downgraded.

His enforced break follows a series of incidents ending with the fishing trip that kept him from attending a team meeting in Darwin.

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