

ODI WORLD CUP SOME DISTANCE AWAY, BUT INDIA NEED ROHIT AROUND

PTI, NEW DELHI: There were two instances during Rohit Sharma's lengthy post-tournament press conference on Sunday when the issue of his retirement cropped up.

The first time the subject was broached with him after a triumphant campaign in the Champions Trophy in Dubai, the Indian captain gave an open-ended answer, "No future plans, jaise chal raha hain, chalta rahega (the way it is going, it will continue that way)."

When he next mentioned the dreaded 'R' word, it was more voluntary and was an afterthought to a completely different question.

Just before concluding the press meet, he said: "One more thing, I'm not going to retire from this format, just to make sure that no rumours are spread moving forward."

FIXTURES AHEAD

- Bangladesh** (away, August, 2025)
- Australia** (away, October 2025)
- South Africa** (December, 2025, home)
- New Zealand** (January, 2026, home)
- England** (3 ODIs, away)
- Afghanistan** (June, 2026, home)
- West Indies** (September-October, 2026, home)
- New Zealand** (October, 2026, away)
- Sri Lanka** (December, 2026, home)

Rohit's statement was a loaded one as the stress was on "this format", which is 50-over cricket.

He retired from T20Is after the World Cup triumph in Americas last year, and questions remain over his future in Test cricket, with the Indian team set to tour England this summer.



He spelt out his ambitions loud and clear and obviously, he has some unfinished business with an eye on the 2027 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. The World Cup is still some distance away and the Indian skipper is a bonafide legend of the ODI format.

By laying emphasis on "this format", Rohit has made his intentions clear and as long as he is scoring runs, age wouldn't be a barrier although he would be close to 40 by the time the marquee event comes calling.

While ODI is still his preferred format, Rohit has in no way said that he doesn't want to play Test matches. In fact, except the Australia tour and the series before that against New Zealand at home, he has been the team's best Test batter.

Rohit's best overseas performance came against England during the 2021 series where he scored a century at the Oval. Jasprit Bumrah has shown his

While retirement is very much a cricketer's individual call, the counter point will be if the national selectors or the BCCI feel that they need to look at the bigger picture and have only one among Rohit and Virat in the ODI set-up going forward.

Waiting in the wings is the prolific Yashasvi Jaiswal, who has a fabulous average of 52.82 and a strike-rate of 85.97 in 33 List A games, in which he has five hundreds including a

COUNTER-ARGUMENT

double.

If the selectors are looking at Jaiswal for the 2027 World Cup, he would have to be played in these 27 games. It is a common practice that irrespective of format (T20 or ODI), if one is a contender to play the global tournament, he must get at least 25 games in the lead-up to the event.

The role of chief selector Ajit Agarkar and head coach Gau-

tam Gambhir will be important here. If they feel that they must go in with more experienced players, then Jaiswal is unlikely to fit in. But the last word was said by a former national selector, who didn't wish to be named. "When it comes to calls on players as big as Virat Kohli or Rohit Sharma, the national selection committee never takes the decision on their own. It will be the BCCI top brass and certainly someone whose word is final in the board," he said.

mettle as a Test skipper but Rohit is still the most revered leader in the Indian dressing room.

Owing to Bumrah's fitness concerns and the selectors' preference to groom Shubman Gill for some more time in the role of a deputy, Rohit remains the ideal candidate to continue leading the side as it goes through a transition phase.

Virat Kohli, Rohit's longtime teammate, aptly put it after the Champions Trophy final that the team's core is ready to play

for the next eight years but it is his duty to put Indian cricket in good hands "as and when" he decides to call it a day.

The question is whether Rohit wants to continue playing the traditional five-day format in the new World Test Championship (WTC) cycle starting against England at Headingley from June 20.

If Rohit wants to play only the ODI format, then he can feature in a maximum 27 international 50-over matches until

the next World Cup, which will be held in February-March. As far as additional game time is concerned, he will also have the IPL besides playing the occasional Vijay Hazare Trophy matches.

In case Rohit doesn't play the Tests in England, then he would be featuring in only nine international series of three ODIs each in the next two years from now. Fitness will also be taken into account in the coming time.

LIST OF ICC TOURNAMENTS WON BY INDIA

India have been one of the best teams in world cricket having made it to knockout stages consistently, including entering the summit clashes in 2003 ODI World Cup, 2017 Champions Trophy, 2023 ODI World Cup and twice in the finals of the World Test Championship in the 2019-21 and 2021-23 cycles.

Overall, Australia are the most successful team across formats having won the ODI World Cup six times (1987, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2015 and 2023), T20 World Cup once in 2021, Champions Trophy twice in 2006 and 2009 and the WTC once in the 2021-23 cycle, to take their trophy count to 10 in global cricket events.

The PTI takes a look at the ICC tournaments won by the Indian team in the past:

1983 ODI WORLD CUP

With India's first-ever triumph in a global cricket event, Kapil Dev's team proved their mettle against all odds and brought down the mighty West Indies, who had won the competition twice in a row, in a low-scoring summit clash at Lord's.

2002 CHAMPIONS TROPHY (SHARED WITH SRI LANKA)

Despite having co-hosted the 1996 ODI World Cup, India fell short in the semifinal in crushing circumstances and bowed out with the resolve to get better. The team under the captaincy of Sourav Ganguly entered the final unbeaten, but persistent rains in Colombo on September 29 and 30 (reserve day) forced India and the hosts Sri Lanka to share the trophy.

2007 ICC WORLD T20

At a time when perhaps no cricket board including India took the shortest format seriously, a young squad under a young leader in MS Dhoni created history when they pipped arch-rivals Pakistan in a tense final to win in the inaugural edition of the competition.

2011 ODI WORLD CUP

The pressure was immense on the Indian team to end a long and elusive wait for the ODI World Cup trophy. Dhoni's team,

with Sachin Tendulkar as the cynosure of all eyes, accomplished their mission when they beat Sri Lanka in the final in Mumbai by six wickets to win their second 50-overs World Cup, after a wait of 28 long years.

2013 CHAMPIONS TROPHY

Dhoni's leadership and his reputation as India's most successful captain when it came to ICC events got a solid boost when his side beat England in a rain-curtailed final at Edgbaston. In a low-scoring contest in which Ravindra Jadeja's late 25-ball 35 pushed India to 129/7, Dhoni's tactical acumen combined with brilliance in the field gave them a five-run win.

2024 T20 WORLD CUP

With two of their biggest superstars Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma at the brink of retirement in the shortest format, India were desperate to end another drought of winning an ICC event despite being favourites in each competition invariably every time. It took a lot of hard work, for Rohit and head coach Rahul Dravid had to bring out the players from the disappointment of losing the final of the 2023 ODI World Cup at home a few months ago. Unarguably the best team in the competition once again, India held their nerves to beat South Africa by seven runs to win the trophy for the second time.

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