

KING KOHLI RUBBISHES RETIREMENT RUMOURS

'Don't get nervous, I'm not making any announcements, as of now everything is fine, I still love playing the game, I no longer aspire to achieve milestones, but I am playing cricket for the 'pure joy' of it'

PTI, BENGALURU: Champion batter Virat Kohli on Saturday emphatically said he is not mulling retirement at the moment as he has been enjoying the game, and the "competitive streak" inside him is very much intact.

Kohli displayed the old spark while playing an important hand in India's recent Champions Trophy victory in Dubai, after which skipper Rohit Sharma too dismissed the retirement talks surrounding him.

"Don't get nervous. I'm not making any announcements. As of now everything is fine. I still love playing the game," Kohli said during a talk session at the RCB Innovation Lab.

Kohli said he no longer aspires to achieve milestones, but he is playing cricket for the "pure joy" of it.

"It's pretty much come down to just the pure joy, enjoyment, competitive streak, and love for the game. And as long as that is there I will continue to play. As I said today I am not playing for any achievement," he said.

Kohli said that innate "competitive streak" makes it tougher for a sports person to find the right time to move away from the game.

"You know the competitive streak doesn't allow you to find the answer (for the retirement question). I had a very interesting conversation about this with Rahul Dravid. He said you always have to stay in touch with yourself."

"Figure out where you are placed in your life and the answer is not that easy. You might be going through a lean phase and you feel like this is it. But it might not be. But then when it is time my competitive streak would not allow me to accept it. Maybe one more month."

"Maybe six more months. So I think it's

a fine balance. At this point of time in my life I feel pretty happy," he explained.

But Kohli admitted that the advancing age has made the whole process of staying at the top of his game a bit more tough.

"I want to be able to have all my energy in place. Now, it takes much more effort as people who have played the game for a long period of time understand. You can't do so many things in your mid to late 30s that you can in your mid 20s. I'm at a bit

of a different place in my life as well."

"I think for me it's a natural progression. I'm sure all these young guys will hopefully get to that place. But now, the energy that's coming out of me feels very peaceful and calm," he said.

The 36-year-old said he has adjusted mentally to the batting failures, which have become an increasingly regular part of his game in the last few years.

Kohli cited his ordinary run against Australia in an away series as a case in

point, as he went downhill after making a hundred in the first Test at Perth.

"If you ask me the intensity of how disappointed I've been... for me the most recent Australia tour would be the one that's most fresh. So, it might feel the most intense to me. But I can't look at it that way. I might not have an Australia tour again in me in four years' time."

"I don't have the chance to correct it. So you have to make peace with whatever's happened in your life. Like in 2014



BEING AN OLYMPIC CHAMPION WILL BE MAGNIFICENT AND IPL HAS A ROLE: KOHLI ON CRICKET IN LOS ANGELES 2028

Ace batter Virat Kohli was thrilled by the inclusion of cricket in Los Angeles Olympics 2028, and said the Indian Premier League has played a massive role in giving the sport a place in the global sporting extravaganza. Cricket will return to the hallowed arena of Olympics for the first time since the 1900 Games in Paris.

"To be Olympic champion would be an absolutely magnificent feeling. The IPL has definitely played a massive role in that as well. Now, it has gotten us to a stage where it's part of the Olympics. It's a great opportunity for some of our guys," Kohli said in the RCB Innovation Lab talk show here on Saturday, moderated by former England cricketer Isa Guha.

"The athletes will be able to taste it. First of its kind. And I'm sure we'll be somewhere close to that medal. Both men and women play side by side as well," he

added. By 2028, it is unlikely that Kohli, by then around 40, would be playing the game but he gave a thought of playing in the Olympics, but only in jest.

"For the Olympics, I don't know, maybe, if we are playing for the gold medal. I just might sneak in for one game, get a medal and come back home. But I think it's a great thing for the sport, overall," Kohli said amidst peals of laughter. Kohli also said the Women's Premier League has brought in a remarkable transformation in the women's cricket landscape in the country.

"Oh yeah, the perception has changed massively. I think all the other sports have had individuals coming up and doing amazing things."

"And they've been appreciated all over the nation because of their achievements."

"But I think what the Indian women's

cricket team has done over the last few years, they are the ones who were the catalyst to kind of put the attention onto them," he said.

Kohli said the success of WPL has also increased the standards of women's cricket in the country.

"I literally saw it happening in a time span of 6-7 years. The way they started playing. You could see that belief and then people started engaging in that a lot more. And the standard of the games as well. It just feels like 2-3 levels higher than what it used to be."

"Just the power hitting, just the skill levels and everything. This is what happens. You take a sport or even a part of a sport to that level of competition. In two seasons you see a completely different women's game today. It's going to keep growing because you can't just cater to looking at men," he said.

(against England) I still had the chance to go in 2018 and do what I did. It might not have been the case."

Kohli said the key to keep away from pressure will be to shut himself out of the outside noises.

"Once you start thinking of the disappointment from the outside, then you start burdening yourself way more. That's something that I've surely experienced in Australia as well. Because I got a good score in the first Test. I thought, right, let's go."

"There's going to be another big series for me. It didn't turn out that way. How do you cope up with this? For me, it's just about acceptance. This is what happened. I'm going to be honest with myself," he noted.

I want to be able to have all my energy in place. Now, it takes much more effort as people who have played the game for a long period of time understand. You can't do so many things in your mid to late 30s that you can in your mid 20s. I'm at a bit of a different place in my life as well. I think for me it's a natural progression. I'm sure all these young guys will hopefully get to that place. But now, the energy that's coming out of me feels very peaceful and calm

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