

SPORTING LEGENDS: KAPIL DEV

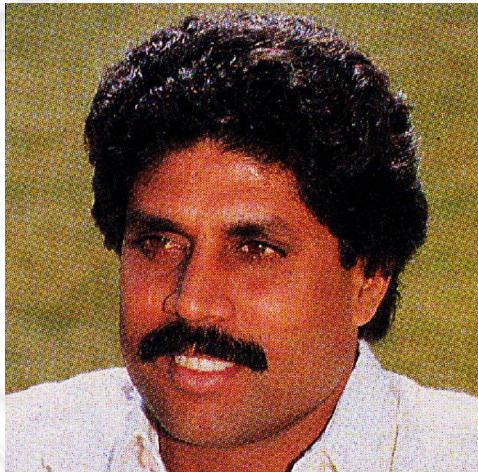
SPORT: CRICKET

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1978 - 1994

Kapil Dev Ramlal Nikhanj, better known as Kapil was born on January 6, 1959, in Chandigarh, India.

Along with Garfield Sobers, Imran Khan, Richard Hadlee and Ian Botham, he is one of the greatest all-rounders ever seen in the game.

He led India to its only World Cup victory in 1983. In addition, he held the record for the most Test match wickets, between 1994 and 1999.



As a bowler Kapil was notable for a graceful action and a potent outswinger and was India's main strike bowler for more than ten years. He also developed a fine inswinging yorker during the 1980s which he used very effectively against the tailenders.

As a batsman he was a natural striker of the ball who could hook and drive effectively. A naturally aggressive player, he often helped India in difficult situations by taking the attack to the opposition, such as in a match on route to the World Cup finals of 1983, when he smashed a captain's knock of 175 against Zimbabwe helping India recover from a tenuous 5/17 - surprisingly, this was his only ODI hundred. Incidentally, this was also the first century by an Indian in an ODI.

Kapil made his international cricket debut against Pakistan at Faisalabad in 1978-79 and became an instant success with the Indian masses when he hit two clean sixes on his way to his first half-century in the 3rd Test of that series. When Pakistan returned for a six-Test series in 1979-80, Kapil was the man of the series and the main factor behind the 2-0 win for India.

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Kapil Dev was a sweet hitter of the ball, and extremely powerful as well.

More success followed in the next season in Australia, where he helped India defend a small second-innings score at Melbourne against a formidable Australian batting line-up. He was the man of the series against England, both in the home series of 1981-82 as well as the "away" series in 1982.

At his best, Kapil was the most destructive batsman in the world other than Viv Richards. During the series against Pakistan in 1982-83, he demolished Abdul Qadir's legspin, which the English and Australian batsmen had great difficulty in reading, earlier the same year.

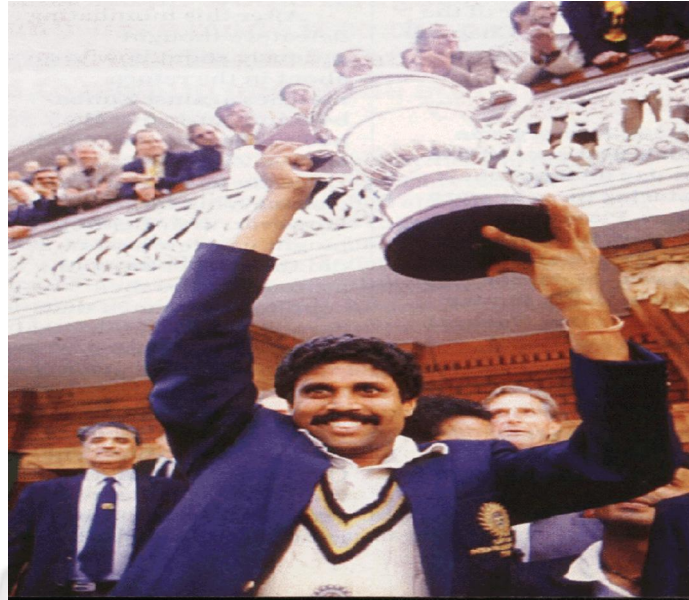
He was also fearless in taking apart the world's best fast-bowlers, during a WC match against West Indies in 1983, he drove Michael Holding straight over his head for a six, a shot that would have been considered unimaginable by most against a bowler of Holding's pace.

Another memorable incident relates to a Test match against England in 1990. When India needed 24 runs to save the follow-on, Kapil met that target by hitting four consecutive sixes. This proved to be the right decision, as in the next over itself, the no.11 batsman was dismissed with no further addition to the score.

Another example of his competitive spirit was during a match against West Indies at Sharjah in November 1986, when he tried to cajole Viv Richards into bowling the last over of the match with India needing 36 runs to win. Not surprisingly, Viv Richards didn't give-in to his request!

Kapil's talent as a batsman, as well as his competitive spirit was evident till as late as 1992, when hooked and pulled Allan Donald on his way to a brilliant century when all the frontline Indian batsmen were struggling against Donald's pace.

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Kapil Dev's leadership led to many Test victories for India.

However, following a knee surgery back in 1984, his bowling declined as he lost some of his majestic jump at the crease. He continued to be effective, if not devastating for another ten years and became the second bowler ever to take 400 wickets in Test cricket in 1991-92.

In early 1994, he became the highest wicket taker in the world, breaking the record held by Richard Hadlee.

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Scott Burton's Final Thought

While it can be said of Kapil that he reached his full potential as a bowler, the same cannot be said of him as a batsman.

A Test average of 31 did not do justice to his talent where on one hand he was one of the cleanest hitters in the game and on the other hand possessed the classical "Indian wrist" with which he could place the ball almost anywhere on the ground.

He often failed to bat responsibly and therefore remained glued to the no.7 spot throughout his career.

As compared to him, Ian Botham and Imran Khan proved to be more responsible batsmen and moved to higher spots in the middle order.

Nevertheless, he remains a legend in India for his sporting achievements, and rightly so. He was a truly great leader for the Indian cricket team of his era.



Kapil Dev ferocious bowling helped him achieve more than 400 Test Wickets.