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—WIT— AND THE WICKET

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In conversation with Gaurav Kapur, the host of Extraa Innings T20, we discover why he's loved so much. Hint: It's his constant pursuit of perfecting the art of bridging the gap between cricket experts and spectators with his quick wit and charm

I "I'll behave myself, I'll try". Gaurav Kapur owned this Q&A with his curly hair, impish smile and comic timing. With several years on Extraa Innings T20, he has emerged as a new-age cricket expert who perfectly balances the IPL fever with the thrill felt by millions who follow it. He has the rare ability to disarm everyone around him, something we've seen him do with the guests on the show. And we can't get enough.

What's your definition of perfection?

• Perfection is unattainable. I think all of you should just go to bed. I'm kidding *[laughs]*. Perfection to me isn't a destination. It's a journey, a pursuit. It's about chasing something with the sincerity of process, and therein lies its beauty.

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Which batsman, according to you, is in perfect form?

• Virat Kohli. He's a joy to watch. He just doesn't put a foot wrong. And I hope he continues to play this way during this IPL season, not just for India and his fans, but also for his friends, like me.

Which cricketer do you think is in constant pursuit of perfection?

• Everybody's in constant pursuit of perfection - be it the batsmen, the bowlers or the fielders. They know that the game is about inches, the margins for error are very small. And unless you're striving for perfection with every moment and every ball, you aren't going to win.

What are the elements of the perfect cricket match?

• Firstly the weather's got to be great.



Rain is bad news for everyone - the players, the organisers and those who've feigned food poisoning at work to watch the match. Next, the batting has to be brilliant on both sides. The bowlers and fielders need to take wickets with equal aggression. In a 20-over match, 220 runs, all out and five spectacular catches would do it for me. But nothing beats watching the team that's chasing the target win on the last ball with their last wicket.

What are team owners looking for when they select their players?

• I'm not a team owner. Listen, those are offshore accounts, I have nothing to do with them [*jokingly*]. But if I were a team owner [*laughs*], I would create a fine blend of the perfect 11, which includes opening batsmen, middle-order batsmen, all-rounders, wicket-keepers and bowlers. You also need a backup team, in case of unforeseen circumstances.

What's the most thrilling chase in the IPL, since its inception?

• A few years ago, Mumbai Indians were chasing a target set by the Rajasthan Royals. I remember it was about 190 all, they had to get it in 14-and-a-half overs to qualify. And somehow, against the odds, they managed that. It was a very thrilling chase - totally off the hook.

What makes the perfect anchor for a live TV show?

• Just blatantly copy me, and you'll be fine! A live broadcast takes teamwork and it's important to be a team player. While all of us want to shine, the man of the match doesn't go to anyone from the losing team. So, once you make each other look good, you will automatically shine. But never at somebody else's expense. So, make it friendly, make it approachable and interactive.

That's a great answer

• Thank you. [*Points to himself*] Not just a pretty face.

Is there anything you would like to change about cricket commentary?

• I like the fact that in shorter formats, the commentary is more conversational than technical, which appeals to the fringe cricket fans.

JUMPER BY SCOTCH & SODA. SHIRT BY CELIO. JEANS BY ARMANI EXCHANGE. BRACELET BY BEING HUMAN. SHOES BY CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN

SHIRT BY DIESEL. JUMPER BY MASSIMO DUTTI. JEANS BY ZARA. JACKET BY DIESEL. BLAZER BY BROOKS BROTHERS. JUMPER BY ZARA. TROUSERS BY MASSIMO DUTTI



What gives you a buzz?

• Being in front of the camera, beside the camera, behind the camera - as long as I am around a camera, I'm very happy. Apart from that, my biggest buzz comes from watching sports - morning, noon and night.

What are you chasing next?

• I think I'm constantly chasing my tail, actually. But the one thing that I do want to do, is make my content company the gold standard for sport stories. The best way to create fandom for sports is to give people a perspective that they can relate to. I want to be a part of transforming India into an involved sporting nation. That's what I am chasing.

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