

## Conspiracy behind Dravid axe?

NEW DELHI, October 29: Is there more behind Dravid's ouster than poor form? Two days after the ex-skipper was sacked, many former colleagues of chief selector Dilip Vengsarkar have come out in support of Dravid, and hinted that there could be an element of intrigue behind the decision.

Ex-cricketer Sandeep Patil said on Monday that he felt Dravid performed poorly against Australia because he was "under pressure". "I suspect he is a victim of conspiracy," he said. Manjrekar had this to add: "If anyone deserved a lifeline in troubled waters, it was Dravid. Rested has become an interesting word."

There were reports that Dravid had annoyed Vengsarkar by not informing him when he quit captaincy. According to reports, during the selection meeting in Ahmedabad, Vengsarkar reacted strongly to a suggestion from a colleague that Dravid be informed about the decision by saying: "Did he inform us while resigning?"

Close associates of Dravid, including those who have a fair idea of the recent turn of events, are shocked by Vengsarkar's reported stance. One of them said, "Dravid kept quiet about his decision to quit the captaincy because of the launch of the Indian Premier League. But then he wrote to Pawar and sent CCs to the chief selector (Vengsarkar) and to the secretary (Niranjan Shah). Vengsarkar's behaviour has been bizarre."

Reading a clear conspiracy behind Dravid's ouster, those who have known Dravid for years maintained that he was disturbed by recent events and was keeping his own counsel.

"He has withdrawn into his shell," one of them said, "Dravid oozes dignity. He is proper and correct, which is not the way the system works. He won't lobby or jostle for anything. Was this kind of treatment necessary?"

They added that Dravid was also upset about the questions raised by Vengsarkar about his fitness. "He is as fit as ever," they said, "And if he was dropped on the basis of form, why was he not asked to play in the Challenger series? And why say he has been 'rested' for two games when he was clearly dropped?"

Quite clearly, the last word hasn't been heard yet on this issue.

## About the Author

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