

# Retiring Gautam Gambhir jots down not-to-do list

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Gautam Gambhir on his final day of professional cricket.

(Express Photo by Amit Mehra)

After announcing his retirement on social media, Gautam Gambhir wished he had smiled a bit more during his playing days. In a career spanning close to two decades, Gambhir played with a lot of passion, a consequence of which he donned an almost perpetual scowl on his face. The Ranji Trophy league encounter between Delhi and Andhra at the Feroz Shah Kotla ended in a draw with the hosts taking three points for the first innings lead, but that was a mere footnote on the day.

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This was Gambhir's farewell match, and he hogged considerable limelight. Every shot he played en-route his century in his final innings was applauded by ardent fans. After the game ended on Sunday, the 37-year-old finally let his guard down.

This was the first time Gambhir had looked so relaxed. He smiled beatifically during the felicitation ceremony organised by the DDCA. In fact, he kept smiling while posing for shutterbugs with wife Natasha and two doting daughters, Aazeen and Anaiza. In many ways, it was just the kind of farewell that Gambhir had always hoped for – a firefighting century in his final fixture on home turf. As the veteran of 198 first-class matches walked into the sunset, speculation was rife about his post-retirement plans. Gambhir, though, kept everyone guessing on his next move.

Unlike most of his contemporaries, who use Twitter and other social media platforms to shower platitudes and showcase their wit, Gambhir has been fiercely vocal and forthright in his opinions on a plethora of issues. Some have speculated that this was a precursor to a possible foray into politics, more specifically joining BJP in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

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Gambhir, however, quelled such talk. "These are just rumours which I have heard as well. All this has probably emanated from the fact that I have taken up a lot of social issues on Twitter. I am not that kind of a person who will use social media as a platform to joke around. As a citizen of the country, I take up a lot of social issues, which is why people are saying that I will take up politics after retirement," he explained.

Photos: Gautam Gambhir felicitated after farewell match

He said he had not yet found time to chalk out what he wants to do after retirement.

Gambhir assured that no matter what he decided, he would give his full commitment. "I really don't know what I will do now... will have to sit down and figure that out. I have been playing for the past 25 years, and don't know what I'm really good at. But whatever I do, there will be no half-hearted measures from my side. This will be the most important decision that I will have to take in my life," he said.

### **'Thick of the action'**

Gambhir elaborated that a stint in the commentary box did not excite him as he preferred to be in the thick of action. "One thing that excites me is action, and I'm sure that action is not there in AC rooms doing commentary." This may come as a surprise to many, as Gambhir was part of the commentary team for the recent T20 series between India and Australia.

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Having said that, he didn't rule out the possibility of taking up coaching assignments in the future. Ever since he made his first-class debut in 1999, Gambhir has always punched above his weight as a gritty batsmen, laying emphasis on strategy and man-management, all of which came to the fore during his

stint as captain of Kolkata Knight Riders, leading them to two IPL triumphs. "I will have to evaluate if I can be good as a coach. If I have the energy, passion and commitment then I might think about it," Gambhir offered.

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Much more than plum coaching assignments, helping some of the young and upcoming players in the DDCA stable is what will give Gambhir utmost fulfilment. Well before his retirement, his appointment as the government nominee invited criticism from several quarters as it flouted conflict of interest norms. Now that he has quit competitive cricket, fulfilling this role makes sense. Gambhir put things in perspective when he said: "See, I'm still a government nominee. So, I can still contribute to Delhi cricket. There won't be any criticism about conflict of interest anymore now that I have retired. I think the boys need a lot of good things in the DDCA, and from a cricketing point of view, my job will be to get the best from these boys."

Apart from politics and broadcasting, there's something else that Gambhir is sure to refrain from. That's the high-profile and maze-ridden world of cricket administration. "I am too straightforward a person to accept the offer of an administrative job in the BCCI. Don't think they will accept me," he concluded.

**Brief scores: Delhi 433 & 41/2 drew with Andhra 390 & 130 (Shoaib Khan 44; S Vashisht 5/49, Vikas Mishra 3/15).**

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