



Viswanathan Anand.

## Average age dropping, but careers getting shorter: GM Anand

“I'm interested in sport, so I do watch. Like I've been following the football World Cup... I've always had a soft corner for Spain, sad they got knocked out in the last-16 stage... There are some match-ups which interest me... Argentina's campaign has been fascinating... Losing to Saudi Arabia in the first match and, now, making the semi-finals! That loss clearly wasn't the worst thing to have happened to Lionel Messi's team. Sometimes, shocks are helpful”



way to separate two individuals. Information is available to all, it's what you absorb. Chess has always been about understanding. Critical is what you keep in your head as there's a difference between information and understanding. The computer gives the same information to everybody, so you have to keep working harder and harder to separate yourself from the rest.

**Q: So, essentially, there's no difference in who you'd rate a quality player today as opposed to, say, a decade ago?**

**A:** It's more or less the same. One's understanding matters, the ability to feel things... Training methods have changed, not what the sport basically is. Chess is still a struggle between two individuals.

leaves all that to somebody else.

**Q: Reigning world champion Magnus Carlsen has decided not to defend his crown in 2023. Has mental fatigue powered that decision?**

**A:** Carlsen has an issue with the format, as far as I know. He doesn't wish to play another long Championship match. I respect his decision... It isn't about not feeling motivated, for Carlsen is still playing tournaments.

**Q: Over the years, have you ever been demotivated?**

**A:** Quite often.

**Q: How did you overcome such situations?**

**A:** I just turned up! To talk of the World Championships, I felt I shouldn't give up trying. That it was a great opportunity. Knew that a lot of players would put in the effort and energy to win.

**Q: Carlsen's first of five World Championship wins was at your expense. How great is the Norwegian?**

**A:** We've achieved a higher growth trajectory, aspirations have gone up a lot and India's a wealthier country... in many areas, we're competing with the best in the world. In other fields, the gap between India and the rest has narrowed... In sport, specifically, only high achievements matter now... Gold and so on... Once upon a time, when the struggles and challenges were different, even competing was an achievement! Sport wasn't anything more than a passion at one point in time. Today, society views sport differently... A lot more people watch sport... indeed, sport has become a career option. Now, you can be passionate and make a career out of your chosen sport. Going back 40-50 years, you couldn't have done both.

**Q: Despite India's significant progress, which is all too apparent, challenges remain...**

**A:** Agree. The challenge of inequality, the challenge of making opportunities available to all, the challenge of universalising access... Those with money (alone) can have access to most things, a fact which can't be ignored. So, challenges are there. But, in the India of 2022, you have many instances of men and women from villages setting their



Viswanathan Anand with PM Narendra Modi.



### World Choral Day

Music helps people to bond in many different ways, from making friends at different musical concerts to allowing adults and children to dance and have fun together. If there is an aspect of talent that can be said to be universally wonderful, it must be to be musically inclined. There are no words that can describe how powerful music can really be when shared in the cause of peace and togetherness. World Choral Day is dedicated to those very principles, a world-wide goal to bring peace and harmony through the musical arts.

generally, am aware of who is doing well. That's it.

**Q: Badminton, chess, boxing, weightlifting... More and more athletes from India are making headlines on the biggest platforms. Is India getting past the obsession with cricket?**

**A:** Look, my take is that no sport competes with cricket, it's still No.1. However, in India, there's now a lot more awareness - and interest - in other sport. Definitely a good sign.

**Q: Apart from your passion for chess, as a youngster, which sport did you follow with more than casual interest?**

**A:** Tennis... (John) McEnroe made an impact in so many ways.

**Q: Impact on you?**

**A:** (Laughs) Well, McEnroe indirectly inspired me... Inspired me not to break racquets! McEnroe was an entertainer, a character.

**Q: Recently, Roger Federer announced retirement. Do top-bracket athletes experience a moment within which urges them to look at a different innings?**

**A:** Such moments don't have to come... To speak for myself, I've been playing less and less for the past two-three years. A time will come when the mind and body both say 'no more'. You have to be realistic about your chances of winning... As you know, I've taken up responsibilities and my focus is on helping build the next generation of world beaters... You've mentioned Federer, maybe Rafael Nadal will soon follow suit.

**Q: Was there a turning point during your fabulous career?**

**A:** Wasn't really a turning point... Closest would be winning my first World Championship title, in 2000.

**Q: Once you do retire, the legacy bit will come into play...**

**A:** The way I see it, I served as an inspiration. Made people excited about chess... Played a part for many years like nobody had. That, I suppose, would be my legacy.

**Q: When do we get to see chess in the Olympics?**

**A:** Talks between FIDE and the International Olympic Committee have been going on. The process is on. I'm hopeful the result will be

**Q: You've interacted with global leaders, including our Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. Your take on Modi?**

**A:** I'd met Mr Modi first when he was Gujarat's chief minister. The meetings (in 2010) were in connection with the world's largest simultaneous chess event, in Ahmedabad. The meetings began on time, Mr Modi used to be well briefed, and the execution as planned and promised. He came across as somebody very happy at work. I've met Mr Modi subsequently too, before and during the Chess Olympiad, in Chennai.

**Q: Inspiration away from sport...**

**A:** Many individuals, but if I had to choose one, it would be Mahatma Gandhi. Of course, with more information, you keep evaluating people who made a difference in history. Despite the fresh perspectives, Gandhi is the one to have fascinated me the most when young.

**Q: How keenly do you watch other sport?**

**A:** I'm interested in sport, so I do watch. Like I've been following the football World Cup... I've always had a soft corner for Spain, sad they got knocked out in the last-16 stage... There are some match-ups which interest me... Argentina's campaign has been fascinating... Losing to Saudi Arabia in the first match and, now, making the semi-finals! That loss clearly wasn't the worst thing to have happened to Lionel Messi's team. Sometimes, shocks are helpful.

**Q: 'Soft corner' for Spain, but no favourite team in football?**

**A:** Real Madrid, always. Maybe because of my connection with Spain, the fact that I lived there for years.

**Q: Interested in cricket?**

**A:** I know what's happening and,



Magnus Carlsen.

fruitful.

**Q: Is catching cheats challenge No.1 for FIDE?**

**A:** The rules of chess are amply clear. No external assistance.

**Q: As we begin to wrap up, some words for the young in India...**

**A:** Follow your passion, be patient. That's it. What else to tell today's generation?

**Q: Social media's enormous spread surely has its downside. Is it not harming the young?**

**A:** Definitely can become a huge distraction if you don't get a handle on it. You have to be careful it doesn't become an addiction.

**Q: Aruna, your wife, is always by your side. Is she more of a friend?**

**A:** My journey in chess would have been different if I didn't have her support.

**Q: Finally... Five World Championship crowns... Did you achieve all you set out to?**

**A:** I've achieved most of what I would have liked to. However, I haven't had a checklist, haven't kept ticking the boxes.

**Q: Brazil scored 40 goals in 17 matches while qualifying for this tournament from an incredibly tough South American group. They finished 17 points ahead of Uruguay in third, and 19 clear of Ecuador in fourth. They conceded just five times.**

**A:** At the World Cup itself, the goals that Richardson (against Serbia) and Neymar (in the loss to Croatia) scored will never be forgotten. They were emphatic reminders of why Brazil are the neutrals' team in many parts of the world, and of the philosophy that Socrates, their 1982 captain, once spoke about. 'Beauty comes first. Victory is secondary. What matters is joy'.

If there is a criticism of Brazil and Tite, it would relate to game management. At 1-0, and with just two minutes of extra time remaining, there was little need for so many of them to pour forward. The outstanding Josko Gvardiol's tackle turned the ball over, and Luka Modric was able to release Nikola Vlasic down the left. He duly found Mislav Orsic, who charged to the edge of the box before squaring for Bruno Petkovic to beat Allison via a wicked deflection off Marquinhos.

It was Croatia's only shot on target. Brazil had 11, with Dominik Livakovic making telling saves long before his shootout heroes. But don't let those numbers fool you. Brazil never had



Viswanathan Anand with wife Aruna. They have a son, Akhil.

### #HAPPENINGS@QATAR

The best team in South America are going home, undone by Croatia's veterans. Lionel Messi and Argentina, though, march on, thanks in no small measure to his genius illuminating an often ugly game.



Croatia-vs-Brazil.

## Messi Joy After Brazilian Heartbreak

A.A. Banerjee

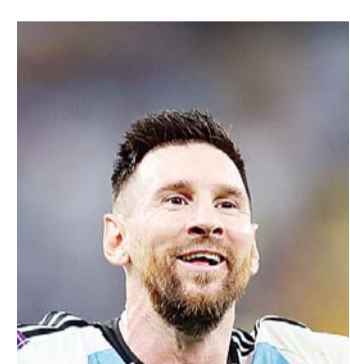
South America's best team are heading home. The world's most adored player, however, is staying on, to maintain South American interest in a competition that the continent hasn't won since 2002. Those were the key takeaways from a dramatic and bizarre night in Qatar, with the first two quarterfinals both going to the lottery that is a penalty shootout.

Their coach, Tite, Brazil's coach, harshly, just as it did Tele Santana, who was unable to pilot his magical Selecao teams into the semi-finals in either 1982 or '86. It shouldn't though. Tite assembled the most watchable Brazil side in a generation, winning 61 of his 81 games in charge and losing only seven. After the drop of the Dunga years, he restored the aura of the velvet shirt with team committed to attacking in the style of old.

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In truth, the Dutch deserved little from the game, though they did contribute one of its two gorgeous highlights with a goal that was a tribute to Argentine ingenuity from yesteryear. Teun Koopmeiners was four months old on July 1, 1988, when Juan Sebastian Veron slid a freekick through to Javier Zanetti, who crashed the ball left-footed past England's David Seaman to equalise in a match the Argentines would go on to



Lionel Messi.

control. Croatia's experienced warhorses - Modric, Marcelo Brozovic and Mateo Kovacic - set the tempo in midfield. Lucas Paqueta and Neymar got into dangerous positions a few times, but didn't otherwise give Casemiro the support he needed to take control of the midfield.

Croatia completed more passes than Brazil, and even without an exceptional striker in the Davor Suker mould to pass to, the midfield trio managed to keep Brazil at bay for vast stretches of the game. Once Petkovic scored, the denouement was almost inevitable. It was Croatia's fourth win in a World Cup shootout, and the coolness of their penalties - the first two went straight down the middle - said much about how they fancy themselves in such situations.

The Netherlands don't have any such record to fall back on. After exiting the European Championships on penalties in three straight editions (1992, 1996 and 2000), this was their third shootout loss at the World Cup, following on from semi-final defeats to Brazil in 1988 and Argentina in 2014.

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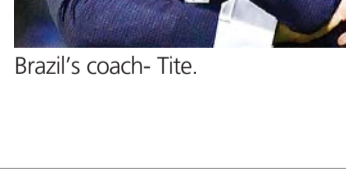
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Brazil's coach- Tite.



### #SHATRANJ KE USTAAD

Rameshbabu Vaishali and Savitha Sri. I have high expectations from each mentor.

**Q: Who inspired you to launch WACA?**

**A:** Late Mikhail Botvinnik.

**Q: To talk of the emerging generation of chess stars in India, what's the difference between them and you?**

**A:** It's a comparison between the pre-computer and post-computer eras... Night and day... I could repeat a lot of the themes, but look at the way chess is studied now. The way players train today, with the help of computers, is so unlike how I'd prepare. My notes would only be half-a-page long! Nowadays, information keeps going up all the time. Earlier, it could have taken as much as a week to analyse moves. Today, the computer does that in a matter of seconds! The average age is dropping, but careers are also getting shorter. It's harder seeing 40-year-olds hanging around for long, as players are burning out by the time they reach 40.

**Q: Why?**

**A:** One reason being computers... Chess has increasingly become a physical sport and the younger players are catching up faster in terms of knowledge. The computer has neutralised experience and skill. Games are getting longer and that takes a toll. You have to be fitter to last longer hours, need to be more energetic.

**Q: Surely, the natural ability element hasn't been reduced to zero...**

**A:** It hasn't. Indeed, at the end of the day, natural ability is the only

However, the World Championships are out for me. I'm no longer a contender.

**Q: At your Academy, are you more of a mentor?**

**A:** Guide would be better... It's more about sharing my experiences, for I feel I'm uniquely placed to do so. Telling the mentees this is what I did the first time in a similar situation and got it wrong. This is what I did the second time and got it right. I don't hold classes, though... Talking to the mentees makes me aware of their requirements. I arrange what I can... I interact quite a bit with the coaches, who are good friends, and prepare schedules in consultation with them.

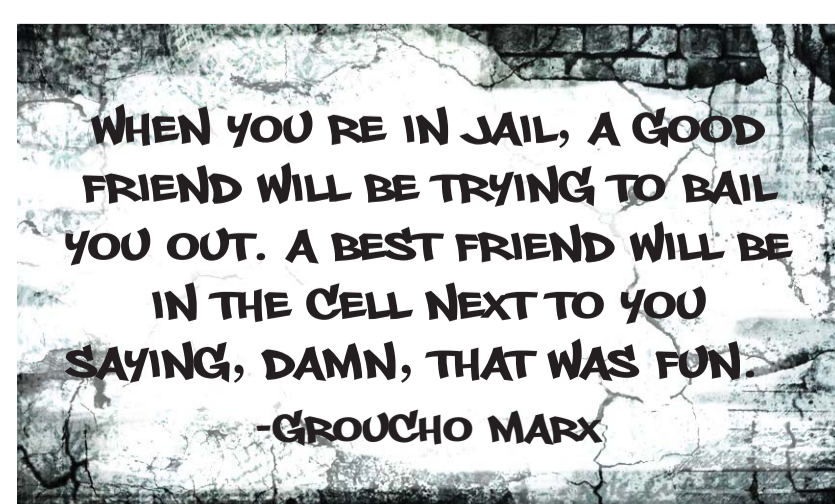
**Q: You've preferred 'guide' to 'mentor'. Whatever, you're largely responsible for the chess boom. No one better, then, to mentor or guide...**

**A:** Let me put it this way... You're never fully responsible for anything, be it the chess explosion or something else. Others play a part as well. My role has been unique, I became the trigger... But am I wholly responsible? No.

**Q: Your mentees have already starting making a splash...**

**A:** (Excitedly) As it turns out, yes. Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa, Domma raj Gukesh, Arjun Erigaisi, Nihal Sarin are part of WACA. As are Pragma's sister

### THE WALL



### BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

### ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



### Edutainment

- Mind-blowing facts about Physics every student must know
- Saturn can float on water like ice
  - Water can boil and freeze at the same temperature
  - The sun doesn't change colour during sunset
  - Steel is more elastic than rubber
  - Time goes faster at the top of the building
  - Pi is an irrational number
  - Particles can behave differently when observed
  - Light travelling faster is not entirely true
  - Theory of Special Relativity:

- According to Einstein's Theory of Special Relativity, the faster you go, the slower time passes for you relative to your surroundings. Strange? Not really!
- Dark Matter: Scientists believe dark matter accounts for more than 95% of the mass in the universe.
  - Hydrogen everywhere?: 74% of the atoms in the Milky Way galaxy are hydrogen atoms.
  - Double Slit Experiment: The mere act of observation can completely change the outcome of an event!