

India great Kohli retires from Test cricket

AFP

New Delhi

Batting great Virat Kohli announced his immediate retirement from Test cricket yesterday, just days before India name their squad for a tour to England.

Kohli, who scored 9,230 runs in 123 matches at an average of 46.85, posted his decision on Instagram five days after India captain Rohit Sharma called time on his own Test career.

Since making his debut in 2011, Kohli struck 30 hundreds and 31 fifties with a highest score of 254 not out, mainly batting at number four in the order.

"It's been 14 years since I first wore the baggy blue in Test cricket," the 36-year-old Kohli posted on his official feed, which has 271 million followers. "Honestly, I never imagined the journey this format would take me on. It's tested me, shaped me, and taught me lessons I'll carry for life.

"As I step away from this format, it's not easy - but it feels right. I've given it everything I had, and it's given me back so much more than I could've hoped for." An inspirational figure, Kohli was India's most successful Test captains with 40 wins and 17 defeats in 68 matches before

stepping down from the role in 2022.

The next best are Mahendra Singh Dhoni with 27 wins from 60 and Sourav Ganguly with 21 from 49.

"I'm walking away with a heart full of gratitude - for the game, for the people I shared the field with, and for every single person who made me feel seen along the way," Kohli said.

"I'll always look back at my Test career with a smile."

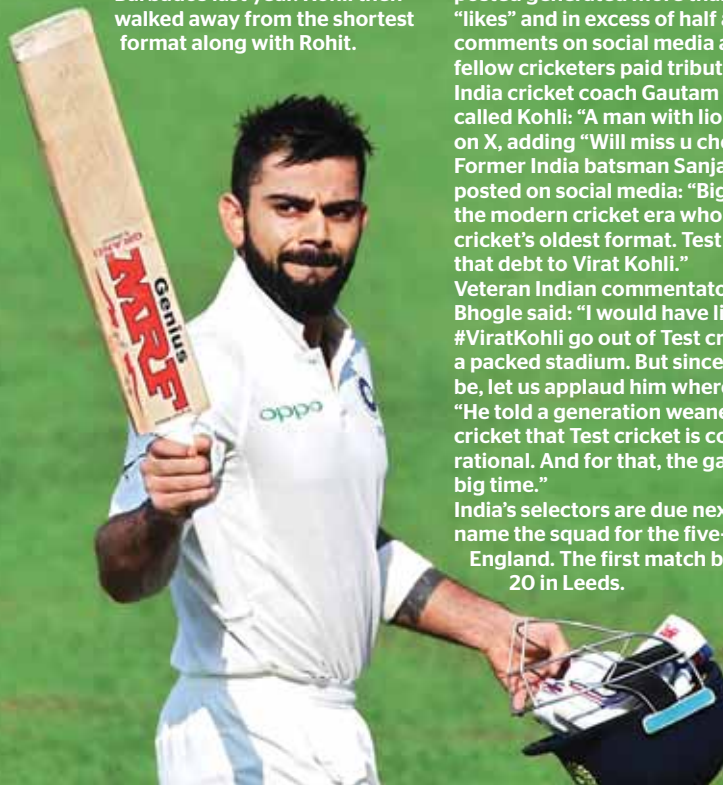
The fiercely competitive Kohli's declining form in the five-day game may have prompted his decision to call it a day. After averaging close to 55 at his peak between 2011 and 2019, he could muster only 32.56 over the past 24 months. Kohli's last Test was in Sydney in January when India lost the match and with it the series 3-1 to Australia.

Apart from an unbeaten century in the second innings of the first Test in Perth, Kohli managed just 90 runs from eight innings in the five-Test series.

The 36-year-old Kohli was part of the "Fab Four" quartet of batting greats who dominated Test cricket over the past decade, alongside Steve Smith of Australia, Kane Williamson of New Zealand and Joe Root of England.

Nicknamed "King Kohli", he was India's batting backbone across three international formats and ended his Twenty20

career with a match-winning innings in his team's World Cup final victory in Barbados last year. Kohli then walked away from the shortest format along with Rohit.



The hugely popular Kohli's retirement statement had within an hour of being posted generated more than six million "likes" and in excess of half a million comments on social media as fans and fellow cricketers paid tribute.

India cricket coach Gautam Gambhir called Kohli: "A man with lion's passion!" on X, adding "Will miss u cheeks..." Former India batsman Sanjay Manjrekar posted on social media: "Biggest brand of the modern cricket era who gave it all for cricket's oldest format. Test cricket owes that debt to Virat Kohli."

Veteran Indian commentator Harsha Bhogle said: "I would have liked to see #ViratKohli go out of Test cricket before a packed stadium. But since that is not to be, let us applaud him wherever we are. "He told a generation weaned on T20 cricket that Test cricket is cool and aspirational. And for that, the game owes him big time."

India's selectors are due next week to name the squad for the five-Test series in England. The first match begins on June 20 in Leeds.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"As you retire from Tests, I'm reminded of your thoughtful gesture 12 years ago, during my last Test. You offered to gift me a thread from your late father. It was something too personal for me to accept, but the gesture was heart-warming and has stayed with me ever since. While I may not have a thread to offer in return, please know that you carry my deepest admiration and very best wishes. Your true legacy, Virat, lies in inspiring countless young cricketers to pick up the sport."

**SACHIN TENDULKAR,
FORMER INDIA CAPTAIN**

"In my time playing and broadcasting no individual has done as much for Test cricket as Virat Kohli. His passion, energy and commitment to the greatest format has helped so much. I hope the next generation of Indian players take on his mantle!"

**MICHAEL VAUGHAN,
FORMER ENGLAND CAPTAIN**

"Absolute legend of our game. I'll never forget our first game against each other when we were young. I thought this guy was a serious competitor and going to be great, someone everyone would admire. You had to fill the shoes of some great players to ever play for India and carry the nation. Wow, did you not disappoint? Thank you for being you, which got the best out of all of us who competed against you."

**DAVID WARNER,
FORMER AUSTRALIA BATTER**