

V.V.S. Laxman, Very Very Special

'Treat success and failure on the same wavelength'

"Success and failure are parts of anybody's life. The key is self-belief and performing consistently in tough conditions," V.V.S. Laxman tells V. V. Subrahmanyam.

One of the finest players in contemporary cricket has called it a day. For someone who delighted cricket lovers with his brilliance with the willow for 16 long years in Test cricket, Vangipurapu Venkata Sai Laxman announced his retirement at a crowded media conference in Hyderabad, ahead of the two-test series against New Zealand.

The 37-year-old star batsman, who was part of the fabulous batting line-up which helped India become the No.1 Test team, shares his experiences and thoughts in an exclusive interview with Sportstar.



Sportstar: When you look back, how has the journey been in the world of cricket?

V.V.S.Laxman: It has been wonderful. I was lucky that the Hyderabad Cricket Association promoted me and Zaki (Syed Moinuddin Zaki) from the under-16 level itself. They made us play in the under-19 grade the same year. It was a huge leap for us and very encouraging. Fortunately, by 18, I was on the verge of playing for Hyderabad in the Ranji Trophy.



Honestly, I feel that all the hard work and commitment I put in from the start of my career have culminated in 16 long years of international cricket. It has been an immensely satisfying feeling to have contributed to Indian cricket in my own way.

SS: Who has been the biggest influence on you?

VVS: My parents (Dr. V. Shantaram and Dr. V. Satyabhama), no doubt about that. Especially, given the fact that sports was never an integral part of our family. But, the guiding philosophy which they taught was handling success and failure with equal ease.

SS: What did the sport teach you?

VVS: Character. To treat success and failure on the same wavelength. It also taught me to be very balanced and obviously whatever I am today is because of cricket.

SS : What was the most difficult phase of your career?

VVS : It was when I had to prefer cricket to academics. That was the toughest moment of my life. Though there was always the dream to play for my country, I also had a natural desire to be a doctor, coming from a family of doctors. Luckily, my father gave me the complete freedom to choose any one of the two. Here the role of my uncle Baba Mohan was very crucial along with some of the coaches then.

SS : Do you believe that it will be difficult for the modern-day young talent to make it as big as you did? Have things changed a lot in this regard?

VVS : Frankly, now-a-days it is more easy to perform and be recognised because of the media glare. There are many platforms for real talent to come good and the IPL is one such which pushes you into national reckoning. If you perform you are bound to get recognized.

SS : From where did you draw the strength to emerge as a giant every time there was an effort to dwarf your achievements?

VVS : My parents and my entire family again. They, along with my well-wishers, were always the source of inspiration. The best part is that they never changed irrespective of whether I was performing or not.

SS : What were your biggest moments as a cricketer?

VVS : There were many. But some stand out. Though I never played the World Cup that saw India as the No.1 team, being a member of the Indian team, which was the world No.1 in Test cricket was one of them. The 281 against the Aussies in Kolkata in 2001 was another. That Test remains the most memorable match for me. In fact, that Test series was very special for all the players for it was also the best and the most memorable series. That series gave us the confidence that we can be the best. Clearly, that was the turning point of Indian cricket itself.

(In a poll published in January 2016 issue of ESPN's digital magazine the Cricket Monthly, V. V. S. Laxman's masterly innings of 281 against Australia at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata was rated as the greatest test performance of the last 50 years. A panel with the world famous cricketers, commentators and journalists participated and voted in favour of Laxman's innings in the poll conducted by ESPN's digital magazine.)





SS : When you look back, what were the reasons for India becoming the No. 1 side?

VVS : It is important to remember that it was not a sudden transformation which had come in one year. It all started in early 2000 when Sourav (Ganguly) became the captain. I feel lucky to have played under Sourav, my first captain Sachin and M.S (Dhoni). They all led by example. Everyone was a true performer and all of them had traits of leadership.

SS : How different was Sourav Ganguly as a captain?

VVS : I must say that the combination of Sourav and Coach John Wright was influential in changing the mindset of Indian cricket itself. For, it was then that we started doing well consistently, especially abroad. And we had some amazingly talented individuals with the hunger for success, who played with great pride, worked really hard and showed great commitment levels.

SS : What has been your funniest incident on the field?

VVS : Well (with a big smile), when Sourav and I collided while taking a single in an Oval ODI. It is still amusing and embarrassing, when I look back as to how it could have happened.

SS : What was the most disappointing moment for you?

VVS : There was nothing like that. But, I would feel terribly disgusted whenever I dropped a catch. I would feel sorry for the bowler who puts in such a great effort and the chance is floored! That hurt me the most.

SS : What are your hobbies?

VVS : I love to spend time with the members of my family. It gives so much of peace. I do love reading biographies of successful individuals. For, they help us know how they handled different aspects in life and in sport.

SS: You are a complete family man now. Outside you are a celebrity and at home a normal caring father...

VVS: I am lucky to have such a wonderful well-knit family with a wonderful wife. And it's a great feeling to see the kids grow up so fast. It's a real joy to be with them.

SS: Who are the cricketers whom you admire?

VVS: In my early days, Azhar. Well, Sachin is such a role model in every aspect. Kapil was a great inspiration too.

SS: What is your favourite cuisine?

VVS: I am vegetarian. I love to taste all sorts of dishes. Thai cuisines are my favourite.

SS: What kind of music do you normally listen to and who are your favourite singers?

VVS: India has been very fortunate to have seen so many great musicians and singers. And, I love listening to Kishore Kumar and our own S. P. Balasubrahmanyam, with whom I fortunately enjoy a special, personal relationship.

SS: Which TV programme do you love to watch?

VVS: Generally I don't miss any big sporting events and Wimbledon is one such that I love to watch without fail. And, with the family members I do enjoy watching the singing and dancing competition programmes. I am amazed at the talent actually.

SS: Who was your childhood hero?

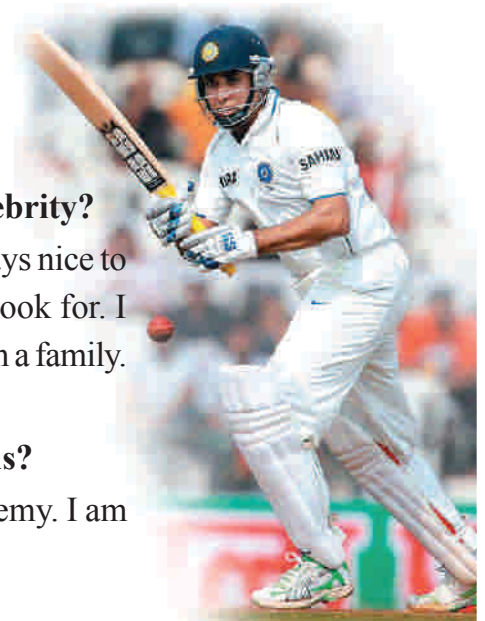
VVS: Childhood and current hero -- it is my dad.
I owe everything to him.

SS: What is that you miss by being a cricketing celebrity?

VVS: I never thought of myself as a big cricketer. It is always nice to be with my family. My wife has all the qualities I look for. I have two wonderful kids and I am blessed to have such a family.

SS: Have you given thought to post-retirement plans?

VVS: Well, I have a dream to set up a school and an academy. I am confident of realising this big dream.





Glossary

call it a day (<i>idm</i>)	:	decide or agree to stop doing something, temporarily or permanently
on the verge of (<i>idm</i>)	:	close to the point where something new begins
immensely (<i>adv</i>)	:	to a great extent or extremely
integral (<i>adj</i>)	:	essential
glare (<i>n</i>)	:	a focus of public attention
reckoning (<i>n</i>)	:	recognition / calculation
mindset (<i>n</i>)	:	attitude / way of thinking
commitment (<i>n</i>)	:	assurance/ dedication
collide (<i>v</i>)	:	crash
embarrassing (<i>adj</i>)	:	uncomfortable
cuisine (<i>n</i>)	:	a style of cooking; food cooked in a certain style



Answer the following questions.

1. What is Laxman's philosophy of life as per the interview you have read?
2. What role did Laxman play in making India, No. 1 test cricket team?

On the basis of your reading of V.V.S. Laxman's interview with Sportstar magazine, complete the following table.

Sl. No.	Events / incidents in his life	Your responses
1.	Home ground	
2.	Teams he represented	
3.	Levels he played at	
4.	People who influenced him	
5.	Things he likes / his hobbies	
6.	Memorable events	
7.	His message	



Writing

Write personal views and reflections on V.V.S. Laxman in a paragraph of about 75 – 100 words.

Discuss the following questions in groups before writing the paragraph individually.

- What is the main idea that you wish to project?
- What are the supporting ideas that you think of?
- How do you organize your ideas?
- How do you link your thoughts?
- How do you conclude?



Project Work

Collect the information from newspapers, magazines, periodicals and books about two famous Indian sportswomen and prepare their profiles.

Fill the details of the following information and you may use them as tips for profile writing and speaking.

Name	
Date of Birth	
Height	
State / Team he / she represents	
Sports / Game he / she are associated with Debut (first entry)	
Best in the career	
Hobbies	
Awards / Medals received	

Talk about one profile in the class.

Self Assessment

How well have I understood this unit?

Read and tick (✓) in the appropriate box.

Indicators	Yes	Somewhat	No
I read and understood the text:			
A. True Height.			
B. What Is a Player?			
C. V.V.S. Laxman, Very Very Special.			
I was able to do the exercise given under ‘Vocabulary’.			
I was able to identify and use ‘the main clause and the subordinate clause’ in a sentence given under ‘Grammar’.			
I was able to write a biographical sketch.			
I listened to and understood the cricket commentary and answered the questions.			
I was able to develop an oral conversation.			
I was able to write my personal views and reflections on V.V.S. Laxman in a paragraph.			
I was able to prepare the profiles of two famous Indian sportswomen under ‘Project Work’.			

SHRINKING WORDS (Language Game)

The object of this game is to make each word shorter by taking away one letter at a time (keeping the remaining letters in their original order) to form a new word. Do this as many times as you can, each time forming a new word as a letter is deleted.

Example: FORUM, FORM, FOR, OR.

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. PLATE. | 8. PAINT. |
| 2. STAND. | 9. BOUNCE. |
| 3. WAIST. | 10. BOARD. |
| 4. STOOP. | 11. BEREFT |
| 5. SNORE. | 12. FRIEND |
| 6. CHASTE. | 13. SHINGLE |
| 7. THINK. | 14. DINNER |