

# THE HINDU

## Competition helps Rahul raise his game

CRICKET / Says it's not easy to switch to different formats in a short time

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**BENGALURU** On the recent tour of the Caribbean, K.L. Rahul caused a few welcome selection headaches for the Indian team management. When regular opener M. Vijay was forced to sit out of the second Test due to an injury, it opened the door for Rahul. He took the opportunity with both hands, scoring 158.

Though Vijay was declared fit to play the third Test, Rahul and Shikhar Dhawan retained their spots at the top of the order. The Karnataka lad made 50 and 28, which helped him keep his place for the final encounter.

Dhawan, however, was replaced by Vijay, but a wet outfield curtailed play.

Rahul opined that the competition among the three openers helped him raise his game. "I welcome competition, as this is one of the main reasons players succeed.

"All of us know that there are others ready to play for India. It makes us focus more, especially on fitness. If you get injured, there is a good chance that someone will come in and make it difficult for you to get back into the side," Rahul said,

at the Jain University's sports award ceremony here on Saturday. Just a few days after finishing his Test commitments, the Indian team travelled to the USA to compete in two Twenty20 Internationals.

Rahul came to the party once again, smashing an unbeaten 110 off 51 balls — the joint second-fastest T20 International century — in the first outing.

A hurricane fourth-wicket partnership with skipper M.S. Dhoni nearly took the unit past the stiff 246-run target, but a terrific final over by Dwayne Bravo gave the West Indies a one-run victory.

Rahul's effort typified the stiff standards expected of modern-day batsmen — seamless transition from one format to another. "It is never easy to switch to different formats in a short time. But, the more matches we play, the easier it gets," he said.

The 24-year-old added that customised training regimens go a long way.

"In the off-season, I train a certain number of hours on certain days for each of the three formats," he said.



**GUARD OF HONOUR:** K.L. Rahul is welcomed to the Jain University sports awards function by sports director U.V. Shankar and students of the university in Bengaluru on Saturday.

— PHOTO: ASHWIN ACHAL