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Tensions Flare Between India Head Coach and Oval Pitch Curator Over Training Session

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Tensions briefly overshadowed cricket preparations this week when India's head coach Gautam Gambhir and The Oval's chief groundsman Lee Fortis reportedly clashed over pitch access during a training session ahead of an upcoming match.

According to Indian batting coach Sitanshu Kotak, the team acted within all venue regulations. "There was nothing done that would damage the pitch. We respect the grounds and their conditions," he told reporters, confirming there are no plans to escalate the issue or file a complaint.

Witnesses at The Oval, a historic cricket ground in London, observed a fiery exchange when Fortis objected to the Indian squad's use of certain pitch areas. The disagreement allegedly escalated, with Gambhir becoming visibly agitated and raising his voice. Indian sports journalist Boria Majumdar (New Delhi Television, or NDTV) described the interaction as “tense and uncharacteristic for a pre-match session.”

Groundsmen like Fortis are tasked with maintaining strict standards to preserve pitch integrity, particularly before major fixtures. While teams often push for maximum preparation, curators hold authority over how much access is permitted on match strips and surrounding practice zones.

Neither the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) nor the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has issued a formal statement, suggesting both sides aim to keep the matter from escalating publicly.

Gambhir, recently appointed head coach, has long been known for his direct and assertive approach, traits that may have contributed to the heated exchange. While his leadership has energized India's national team, this incident highlights the occasional friction that can emerge when strong personalities meet strict venue protocols.

With the issue unlikely to affect the scheduled match, the team will now shift its attention back to performance on the field, where the stakes remain high and the spotlight brighter than ever.