

Analysts: Cricket’s invisible energy

MAZHAR UDDIN



In modern-day cricket, while players are battling it out on the field, it has become a common sight to see someone -- not necessarily a cricketer -- in the dressing room hunched over a laptop analysing all the technical aspects and providing probable solutions, which helps the coach to make a quick decision.

Video analysts or performance analysts are now an integral part of any international cricket team. Things were different in the very early days for Bangladesh -- the inclusion of a professional video analyst took place in 2003, three years after the country had already gotten Tests status, when Nasir Ahmed Nasu became the first to work as a regular analyst for the national team.

“I was the first ever video analyst of the Bangladesh national team back in 2000 but it was not regular back then. I just went to a cricket match for coding, which is like scoring with video and recording. It became regular from 2003, when we started to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the opponents and the different deliveries of opposition bowlers,” Nasu told The Daily Star.

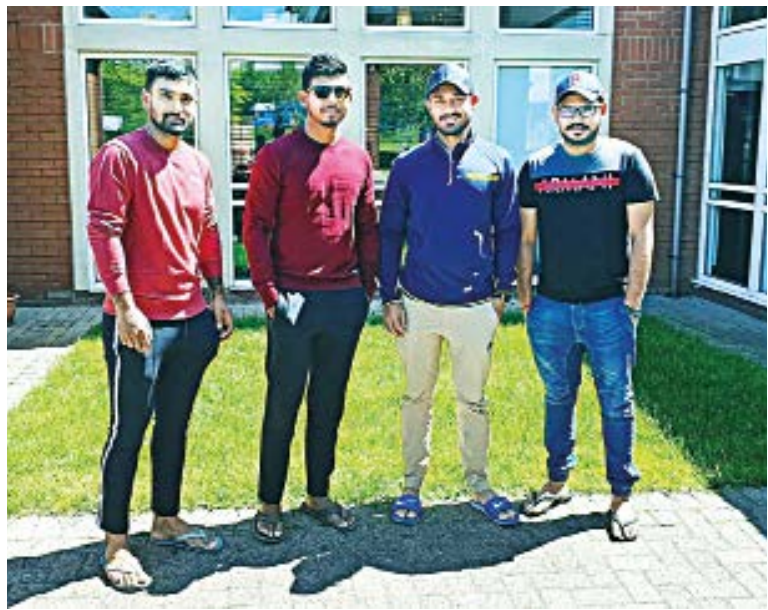
Many say that an analyst is the best friend of a player, someone who helps them realise their mistakes in the field or even relive their best performances by watching videos to feel uplifted during difficult times.

“Recently Shakib [Al Hasan]

called me from the United States and asked for all his milestone videos such as his hundreds, five-wicket hauls, 50th wicket and others since his international debut, perhaps to cherish his memories,” he added.

The Tigers’ current performance analyst Shrinivas Chandrasekaran has been a vital cog in Bangladesh’s

“Gone are those days when a video analyst was just sitting to record a game. Today we [video analysts] play a huge part in helping with selection, the playing eleven, scouting players, game plans for opposition bowlers and batsmen, and also helping our players to counter the opposition technically and tactically,” said Shrinivas.



performances in the last couple of years. He was also part of the Sunrisers Hyderabad team that won the Indian Premier League in 2016 and has been with the side for the past three seasons.

According to the 29-year-old, who is an electronic and communications engineer, nowadays an analyst plays a big part in the game both technically and tactically.

Analysts now no longer just give players and coaches feedback after the game but also offers real-time analysis and solutions while the game is going on.

However, according to Shrinivas, natural instinct plays a big role in making decisions and not just a set of mathematical theories.

“I feel it is still not used that much since the game of cricket has a lot of variables, so the outcome

of it [analysis] is not fool-proof and also, I personally feel captains should be allowed to go by instinct as well and not just by a set theory,” he added.

Shrinivas, who is currently in Chennai during the lockdown amid the Covid-19 pandemic, is in constant touch with a majority of cricketers in the national team and providing all support to work on their game.

“I have been in constant touch with most of them and we have been going through footage of times when they have been successful and times when they have not, and chalking out the reasons for both,” said Shrinivas.

The huge improvement in technology in the modern era has also made life easy for cricketers, coaches and even the analysts. The Bangladesh Cricket Board’s (BCB’s) server now has the back-end service by which they receive all videos of any televised cricket match worldwide, so that players can watch and analyse their opponents easily.

Although other big cricketing nations have analysts even in domestic cricket, Bangladesh is yet to follow suit. BCB have analysts for the national men’s and women’s teams, as well as the age-level and high-performance sides, but the value of an analyst is still an unknown for the budding club or first-class cricketer.

It has now become obvious that an analyst is an essential tool for a cricketer, and just like batting, bowling and fielding, exposure and utilisation of this resource should now become essential at all levels of the game.



Lionel Messi recovered from a thigh strain and returned to full training yesterday along with Luis Suarez as Barcelona trained in full swing ahead of their match against Mallorca on Saturday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Messi boost for Barca

AFP, Madrid



Lionel Messi trained again with his teammates on Monday to give Barcelona a massive boost ahead of their La Liga return against Mallorca on Saturday.

Messi has been suffering from tightness in his right thigh and had not trained fully since last Tuesday. He sat out sessions on Wednesday and Friday before working alone at Camp Nou on Saturday.

But Barcelona said in a statement their captain has re-joined “the rest of the team in the week of the return to competition in the Spanish league”.

Asked if Messi would be able to face Mallorca, Barca coach Quique Setien told Movistar on Sunday night: “Messi is not the only one that has not trained and felt

some discomfort.

“It’s what has happened to everyone or practically everyone since they have been back.

“It is some minor tightness and we have it under control. He is doing perfectly and will not have any problem.”

Setien also gave an update on the fitness of Luis Suarez, who has been given the green light by the club to return after undergoing surgery on his right knee in January.

“He is better than we expected,” Setien said. “But the question is how ready he is after so long out and whether he is ready to start.”

Barcelona sit two points clear of Real Madrid at the top of La Liga, which will resume on Thursday with Sevilla against Real Betis after a three-month break due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Shakil benefitted from break

ANISUR RAHMAN



While most athletes have found themselves sitting at home for months due to the coronavirus pandemic, famed shooter Shakil Ahmed feels he has been benefited by the break in competitions as it gave him opportunity to work on

fitness issues.

The Bangladesh Army shooter, who won gold medal in South Asian Games and silver medal in Commonwealth Games, was in Dhaka cantonment for more than two months, working on his fitness, meditation and respiration as there was no opportunity to hit the electronic target with ammunition.

The 25-year-old believes the training helped his fitness, concentration and breathing which will eventually help him a lot when competitions start.

Since the start of the shutdown due to coronavirus, 20 shooters of Bangladesh Army trained two sessions a day before being given a month’s vacation in May.

“It was though tough to focus on training amid such a situation but I got some benefit in the confinement as I worked hard to lose 10 kilos. I also improved my concentration through meditation and increased my breathing power with breathing exercise,” Shakil told The Daily Star from Sirajganj.

“As shooters, we always want continuation of training at the range but the situation forced us to limit the practice. I think what training I have done in shutdown was not



good enough but it was satisfactory because I was overweight,” Shakil said. “Besides, we need to hold breath for 30 to 50 seconds while shooting at the target. I lacked in holding breath in 60-shot games and I have improved in this aspect.”

The promising shooter from Khulna is, however, worried about maintaining his performance as he has been out of practice for a long period.

“As there was no opportunity to use the Army shooting range during this time, the rhythm of my performance has been damaged. Now, I have to work harder in the next two to four months to get back to my regular performance level when everything gets normal,” said Shakil, who also praised Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation’s general secretary Entekhabul Hamid for being constantly in touch.

Shakil came into limelight from after winning 50m free pistol gold in 2016 SA Games and then won silver medal in the same event during the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in 2018. But he has gradually shifted his focus to the 10m pistol event after International Shooting Sports Federation dropped the 50m pistol event from Olympics roster.

“I am now focusing on 10m air pistol because of the omission of 50m pistol event from the Olympics. With scores I have in 10m air pistol, I believe I can win a medal in World Cup. I am scoring 575 to 585 out of 600 in practice and if I can continue setting such scores, I can compete in eight-shooter final round and, you know the final is anyone’s game,” said Shakil, who also won silver and bronze medals in 10m pistol events of the South Asian Games.

Shakil, however, feels the need to have a quality foreign coach to improve his performance level.

BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTESTS



Bundesliga teams continued to show solidarity with protests raging across the US over the death of George Floyd as players of Werder Bremen and Wolfsburg took a knee prior to the start of their match in Bremen on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

‘Speak out against injustice’

REUTERS, Undated

England fast bowler Jofra Archer has urged victims of racial abuse to speak out following the death of an unarmed black man in police custody in the United States.

Video footage showed a white police officer kneeling on the neck of George Floyd, 46, for nearly nine minutes before he died on May 25, triggering outrage and protests across the world.

“I’m very glad the Black Lives Matter campaign has got as vocal as this,” Archer, who was racially abused by a fan during a test against New Zealand in November last year, wrote in his column for the Daily Mail.

“As an individual, I’ve always been one for speaking out, especially if something bothers you. My personal view is that you should never keep things bottled up, because racism is not okay.”

Archer has played seven tests and 14 one-day internationals for England and has lauded the team for its diversity.

“We all live in the country and if you are English, you have as much right to play as anyone else,” the 25-year-old added.



‘White silence bothers me’

AFP, Paris

Yannick Noah, the last French winner of a Grand Slam tennis title, on Sunday lashed out at “the silence” of his white compatriots over racism.

Noah said he was concerned that the sportsmen in France condemning police brutality and discrimination in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd in the United States were all black.

The 60-year-old, a son of a Cameroonian father and French mother, saluted the stands taken by fellow tennis players Gael Monfils and Jo-Wilfried Tsonga as well as World Cup winning footballer Kylian Mbappe.

“It’s good that the young people are involved, but what bothers me is that they are all either mixed-race or black,” Noah, who captured the Roland Garros title in 1983, told France 2 television.

“Why? It’s an injustice which should make everyone aware. I am certain that in general police do a very good job but there are bad apples.” Noah said it was important that white sports stars in France also got involved in protests.

“Yes, because their silence bothers me, but it goes further than that.”



‘Racism only disease right now’

AFP, London

Manchester City and England footballer Raheem Sterling on Sunday insisted that racism is “the only disease right now”.

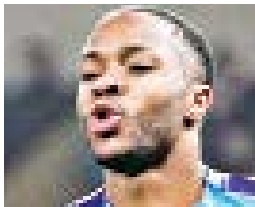
The 25-year-old, who has often and powerfully spoken out on discrimination, admitted his remarks may appear ill-chosen as the globe fights the coronavirus pandemic.

“I know this might sound a little bit cheesy but the only disease right now is the racism that we are fighting,” said Sterling in a BBC TV interview to be broadcast on Monday.

Sterling is the latest sports star to voice support for protests against racism in the United States and across the world following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis last month.

“This is the most important thing at this moment in time because this is something that is happening for years and years. Just like the pandemic, we want to find a solution to stop it,” he added.

“At the same time, this is what all these protesters are doing. They are trying to find a solution and a way to stop the injustice they are seeing, and they are fighting for their cause.



KP prefers Buttler as captain

AFP, London

Kevin Pietersen does not think Ben Stokes should captain England if Joe Root is forced to miss a game against the West Indies because it would heap too much pressure on the all-rounder.

Root’s wife is due to give birth in July, meaning he risks missing one of the three behind-closed-doors Tests against the Caribbean side next month.

Root has backed vice-captain Stokes to do a good job in his absence, but former England skipper Pietersen is wary about the all-rounder assuming even more responsibility.

Pietersen, who said he “hated” the responsibility of being captain of England for a brief spell, would prefer wicketkeeper-batsman Jos Buttler to take over.

“Do I want to see Ben Stokes change from who he is and the current player he is? Probably not. Jos Buttler would be my guy,” he told talkSPORT.

Neesham hails NZ’s Covid-19 victory

AGENCIES

New Zealand appears to have completely eradicated the coronavirus for now after health officials on Monday said that the last known infected person had recovered.

Cricketer James Neesham congratulated his fellow citizens on the massive achievement and attributed their success to three things – planning, determination and teamwork.

“Coronavirus free NZ! Congratulations everyone. Once again those great kiwi attributes: planning, determination and teamwork do the job,” Neesham twitted.

As of Monday, New Zealand hadn’t recorded a new infection for 17 days.