

Experts back Murali

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralitharan should be allowed to bowl his controversial 'doosra' as he does not gain "unfair advantage" with his bowling action, experts have recommended in a report.

"It would be unrealistic to ban Murali's 'doosra' delivery without the benefit of proper research having been undertaken into normal spin bowlers," former Western Australian coach Daryl Foster said in the report, published by India's Hindu newspaper on Thursday.

Foster was part of a four-member team that tested Muralitharan's bowling action early this month after the Sri Lankan was reported for his 'doosra', a delivery which spins away from right-handers instead of coming into them.

The Sri Lankan off-spinner went to Australia for scientific tests after being reported by English match-referee Chris Broad in the third and final Test against Australia in Colombo last month.

Muralitharan, 32, is now just seven victims short of breaking retired West Indies paceman Courtney Walsh's world record of 519 Test wickets, a feat he is set to achieve in next month's two-Test series in Zimbabwe.

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The ICC accepts that a country can cancel a tour if directly ordered to do so by its government, but the British government, despite its concerns about Zimbabwe, has said it is leaving a final decision to the ECB.

Des Wilson, chairman of the ECB's Corporate Affairs and Marketing Advisory Committee, resigned on Tuesday over the Zimbabwe tour and the ICC's new penalties.

In his resignation letter Wilson accused the ICC of imposing "draconian and disproportionate" penalties on countries which refused to tour other nations for moral reasons.

He said the ECB should only under protest while seeking "to change the protocol so that no other country can be coerced in this way".

Also on Thursday, the Daily Telegraph said Australia had been the principal driving force in ensuring the sanctions became part of the ICC regulations.

The tests were conducted at the Biomechanics Laboratory of the School of Human Movement and Exercise Science in Western Australia by a team comprising Professor Bruce Elliott, Jacque Alderson, Siobhan Reid and Foster.

"A straightening of 10 degrees when he (Murali) bowls his 'doosra' is not excessive and that should not therefore be deemed advantageous," Foster said in the report which is in two parts - Bowling and Remediation.

The experts said Muralitharan initially straightened his arm 14 degrees while bowling the 'doosra' during tests, which was nine degrees more than what is permissible for spinners under the International Cricket Council (ICC) guidelines.

The tolerance limits set by the ICC are five degrees for spinners, 7.5 for medium-pace bowlers and 10 for pacemen.

Muralitharan was tested again a week later after going through a remediation process, straightening his arm 10.2 degrees this time which was still five more than what is permitted.

The report recommended that Muralitharan's level of acceptability be set at the 10-degree mark because of the speed of his upper arm rotation as it is not believed to give the Sri Lankan an "unfair advantage over batsmen or other

bowlers".

"We contend that because the speed of his upper arm rotation is as fast, and in some cases quicker than fast bowlers, his level of acceptability for elbow extension should also be set at the 10-degree mark," it said.



MUTTIAH MURALITHARAN

"A case can certainly be made for some spin bowlers such as Muralitharan to have the same range of acceptability in elbow angle to that of fast bowlers."

"With no spin bowling data base to make a comparison, this would seem both a wise and prudent recommendation."

The ICC, however, has already said it will not relax its stipulated

tolerance levels.

The report also questioned the ICC's tolerance figures, querying why 10 degrees of extension was acceptable for pacemen and only five for a spinner whose arm speed was similar.

"Without knowing what the situation is with other spin bowlers, it would seem unrealistic to ban Murali's 'doosra' without the benefit of proper research having been undertaken into 'normal' spin bowlers."

"Other off-spin bowlers, in particular Harbhajan Singh (India), Saqlain Mushtaq and Shoaib Malik (both Pakistan), all bowl the 'doosra' delivery which suggests for comparison purposes their 'other one' should also be analysed," he said.

Foster was all praise for Muralitharan, saying the Sri Lankan knew his "body and technique" very well and was able to adjust to the technical changes easily.

"In conclusion, Murali, has been tested more than any other bowler in the history of the game - 1995, 1999 and now - possesses different physical characteristics which make him a unique bowler."

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PCB in for embarrassment

Cricket

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar

Thursday claimed to have shown to an inquiry commission a "medically documented" rib injury that prevented him from bowling against India in the Rawalpindi Test recently, which may acutely embarrass Pakistan's cricket bosses who had suspected him of faking the injury.

The controversial speedster underwent scans at the Shaheed

Khanum Memorial Hospital on Wednesday and reports indicated swelling in the rib.

"The scans have proved the truth that I did not feign injury during the match. I have swelling on the 11th rib," Shoaib was quoted as saying in Pakistani daily The Nation.

"I have always done justice to my job and given my 110 per cent. I had a fall during bowling in the first innings and I injured my hand as well as my back. I informed about my injury to the captain and the manager," he said.

The daily said the four-member

medical inquiry panel had detected the injury, and if it is officially confirmed, it could turn out to be a major embarrassment for top PCB officials including its chairman Shaharyar Khan.

The injury in Shoaib's rib was confirmed by sources close to the commission.

Asked about how he managed to bat on the fourth day of the Test if he was really injured, Shoaib said bowling requires a run-up from 40 yards and delivering the ball with certain force while batting involves less strain.

"During the bowling the whole body has to be pushed very hard but the case of batting is different and before batting I had taken some pain killers," he said.

He also denied any differences with skipper Inzamamul Haq, who had questioned his sincerity, and said, "We play for our country not for personal gains."

All-rounder Abdul Razzaq, who had also appeared before the medical commission on Wednesday, told reporters that he would not play in the English county season in view of the injury and take

a month's rest instead.

"I am feeling 70 per cent fit now although I have started light training. I will go all out for bowling practice from next week. I will not be traveling to play in the English county this year and will be staying with the team," he said adding that he had explained about his injury to the commission.

Meanwhile, Shoaib's former coach Sabir Azhar has given his charge the clean chit.

"I know him since he was a child and I can tell you that he will never feign an injury," said Azhar, who now coaches the Rawalpindi team.

"He has won us many matches from hopeless situations and I can tell you he is hard working and will never shy away from a challenge. Although I haven't met him for long, I am sure injury would have forced him out. Otherwise, it is hard to believe that he would do such a thing."

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