

# Spin twins redundant?

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Back in the days when batting sides dawdled along at two runs an over or less, Indian fast bowlers were a rare species, a ten-minute opening act whose only function was to take the shine off the ball before a trio of spinners went to work on the quickly softening ball. Those days are long gone, and while those run-rates certainly aren't missed, certain aspects of Indian cricket still appear to be stuck in a time warp. Sacrosanct tradition or fetish, playing at least two slow bowlers is one of them. Those that question it are considered heretics, and it's conveniently forgotten that India hasn't unearthed a Harbhajan Singh, leave alone an Ajanta Mendis, in over a decade.

Anil Kumble and Harbhajan may have 907 wickets between them, but following the Sri Lanka series where they were comprehensively outbowled by Mendis and Muttiah Muralitharan, these four Tests will almost certainly mark the end of an era. In the 54 Tests where they have shared spin duties, Kumble and Harbhajan have taken 499 wickets, an astonishing 354 of them on home soil. But age (Kumble) and stagnation (Harbhajan) has meant that the end of the yellow brick road is in sight, with Amit Mishra and Piyush Chawla tussling to be the legspinner of choice.

It's never easy for spinners to bowl first on a slow and low pitch, but as Sri Lanka's twin terrors showed, a little ingenuity can go a long way. Australia were playing a drastically remodelled middle order, with one debutant (Cameron White) and another playing his first Test in three years (Shane Watson). Brad Haddin too has only three Tests to his name. It was the sort of line-up that Kumble would have scythed down in his

prime, but if not for sterling spells from Ishant Sharma and Zaheer Khan, it's likely Michael Hussey's sensational rearguard action would have taken Australia beyond 500, and out of sight.

The figures were damning enough. Kumble and Harbhajan bowled 84 overs, for combined figures of 1 for 232, the worst effort for India's spinners in a Test involving the duo. When you think that the even White, whose batting has always looked his strongest suit, might do better, it's enough to send a cold chill down any Indian cricket-lover's spine.

The contrast with the fast bowlers was stark. Ishant started off troubling Ricky Ponting, and his performance graph didn't dip even as the Australian top order battered the team into a healthy position. Each time he was thrown the ball, there would be a buzz of expectation, and Ponting's assessment ("He'll be troubling a lot of international batsmen for some time to come") was borne out by deliveries that would rear off a length, dart in and make the batsmen hurry. No one played him with a measure of comfort, and he showed his willingness to learn by bowling as well with the old ball as he had with the shiny new one.

Movement in flummoxed Watson, and his cricketing intelligence was then highlighted by the dismissals of Brad Haddin and White. On a pitch where the only worry for the batsmen was low bounce and boredom, Ishant soon realised that bowling full pelt would only result in rapid electrolyte depletion and exhaustion. The sharp lifters and full deliveries were soon interspersed with cleverly disguised slower balls. Both White and Haddin were far too early into the shot when they went after wide ones that invited the crashing square-drive, and the delight on Ishant's face was a reminder that even these thankless tasks (Shoaib Akhtar memorably referred to fast

bowling on the subcontinent as 'donkey's work') come with some reward.

Zaheer got his in eight balls after tea following a display that was frustratingly inconsistent. He had been superb on the opening day, but there were far too many 'hit-me' balls on the second morning as Hussey resumed with rapid accumulation in mind. Having failed to make use of the second new-ball, he was an entirely different proposition when the scarred old one started to reverse. When he gets that lovely banana-like shape going, he can be next to unplayable, and Australia's quest for 500 was swiftly ended by the three wickets, each of them heralded by the sweet sound of worn leather on wooden stumps.

It made you wonder just how much of a factor Munaf Patel might have been, on a surface where the odd ball was already keeping disquietingly low on the opening day. With his accuracy and ability to move the ball, Munaf could have maintained some sort of stranglehold on the scoring. Instead, India were never able to build any pressure. When Ishant was unplayable, the others bled runs. When Zaheer was in his element, the spinners were innocuous. With the fielding so creaky, singles were a given, and Hussey in particular targeted the soft spots with a ruthlessness that would have made the unsmiling Allan Border proud.

Thanks to the seamers, who took 9 for 168 between them, India haven't already been shut out of this game. But with Mohali likely to be pace-friendly at this time of year, it's time the selectors started thinking of doing away with out-dated traditions. Playing three fast bowlers -- there are quite a few to choose from when compared to the near-empty spin shelves -- won't mark the beginning of the end of Indian cricket. Instead, it may just herald a new beginning.



Australia batsman Michael Hussey drives the ball through point during his masterly 146 against India on the second day of the first Test at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Friday.

# Australia's MVP

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Michael Hussey must be the most calculating batsman in the game. When he goes out he carries a protractor in his mind along with an unbending desire. He thinks in degrees for runs and has proved the method works all over the world.

In Hussey's autobiography he reveals he writes lots of lists. At the crease his duties are on a sheet in his brain: Anil Kumble is bowling mostly googlies; there's an eight-metre gap between cover and mid-off; if he pitches up, hit it through 78 degrees; full face, don't try to smash it.

So Hussey was prepared when Kumble skipped in and delivered a fuller ball around off stump. He took a big step, checked his drive and stroked it with such superb timing that he pierced fielders who could almost touch each other. The boundary moved him to 82. While most of his team-mates had to wrestle for their returns, Hussey had the ability to glide.

One of the few times his precision left him was when Ishant Sharma forced an inside-edge that went for four and raised his ninth century in 26 Tests. It is an incredible record built on the add-on machine properties made famous by Bradman. Hussey now averages 70.60, sitting high above Graeme Pollock and near the feet of The Don.

His driving on the off side was exact throughout, but he was not content waiting for the opportunities to play a big shot. With India unable to force the wickets that were expected initially on a pitch offering more uneven bounce, he toyed with them by varying his speed like an all-stops train. Accelerate with a four, slow for a well-placed single, set out a deep breath, start again.

After drinks in the second session Harbhajan Singh was operating, very briefly, without a man on

the boundary in front of square leg, trying to force Hussey into a mistake. Only Hussey doesn't take unnecessary risks. When he decides to do something he has already considered the dangers and deemed them too small. If his mind was a guide for race-horse punters none of them would be in debt.

With the off side packed, he stepped back to the first vaguely short offering and pulled a boundary in front of square. Later in the over he slog-swept a six to long-on and quickly judged it time to slow down. His constant contributions eased the demands on his partners. He must be a fabulous man to bat with; solid and dependable yet always ticking things over.

After the valuable stand of 91 with Brad Haddin ended he conducted a fruitful partnership of 59 with Brett Lee. One of the concerns for Australia heading into the series was that the lower order would collapse in the unfamiliar conditions and the handy runs usually expected of them would evaporate.

Hussey was able to delay the fall until Zaheer Khan lined up Lee and Mitchell Johnson in a couple of overs after tea before focusing on the main man. Hussey knew time was running out when Lee departed, so he altered his thinking and embraced more unconventional means. A reverse-sweep was successful but soon he was facing the suddenly nasty swing of Khan. An inside-edge toppled his middle stump and, last man out, he scurried off with 146.

It was an ugly end but it was not a stain on a consummate performer. Ponting is undoubtedly the best batsman in the team, but Hussey will be his greatest ally during this series. Nothing flusters or hurries him. Not the heat, or the noise, or the bowling.

Only the sight of no more batsmen in the dressing room could force him into a lethal error. In such a taxing and distracting environment he is Australia's most valuable player.

# BHF calls open trial

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Hockey Federation has called a three-day open trial from October 16 to form the national team for the Jawahar Lal Nehru Cup.

The competition will begin from November 14 in India. The interested players have been asked to report to coach Mahbub Harun on October 16 at 2:30 pm at their playing kits at the Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium.

On the other hand the following national team players have also been asked to report to coach Harun on October 18 at 2:30 pm at the same venue. The players are Mahbub Ullah Chowdhury Shakil, Mehrab Hossain Kiron, Mamunur Rahman Chayan, Mohammad Isa Miah, Asaduzzaman Chandon, Moishur Rahman Biplab, Ferdous Goldar, Mohammad Shahidullah Titu, Mohammad Musa Miah, Khondaker Hasan Ahmed, Sheikh Mohammad Nannu, Maksud Alam Habul, Russel Mahmud Jimmy, Zahidul Islam Rajon, Rimon Kumar Ghosh, Krishna Kumar, Zahid Bin Talib Shuvo, Tapash Barman and Mohammad Iqbal Nadir.

# CUJS lift Div II football title

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Chandirchar Udiyaman Janata Sangha (CUJS) downed Manikganj City Club (MCC) by 2 goals to nil to win the Second Division Football League title at the Shaheed Miraz-Tapan Stadium in Manikganj yesterday.

Masud and Rubel scored the goals for the champions.

Alamgir Hossain of CUJS was adjudged best player of the final while Faruk of Bandutia Progoti Sangha was the top scorer in the league with nine goals.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Manikganj GM Saleh Uddin, Police Superintendent (SP) Sheikh Muhammad Maruf Hasan, former national footballer Dewan Shahful Arefin Tutul, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFA) vice-president Shawkat Ali Khan Jahangir and District Sports Association (DSA) secretary SMM Iqbal Hossain distributed prizes among the winners.

# Chittagong

FROM PAGE 17

clubhouse, 1450 for special enclosure have been printed. The tickets will be available at every branches of AB Bank in the port city from today.

The price of the ODI tickets has been fixed at Tk 100 for gallery, Tk 300 for clubhouse and Tk 200 for special enclosure. Price of tickets for the Test match is Tk 50 for gallery, Tk 100 for clubhouse and Tk 150 for special enclosure.

Besides, two of the eleven special hospitality boxes would be sold at Tk 50,000 each, said the organisers.

It was learned that tight security will be maintained during the matches considering recent incidents of bomb blasts in different countries of the sub continent.

# 'ICL-ICC mutual in 2 years'

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

As the ICL gears up for its second season, Subhash Chandra, chairman of the Essel group, which owns the league, has said he is confident of the conflict with the sport's global administrators being sorted out "within two years."

"I met David Morgan, the ICC president, on October 7," Chandra said on Thursday. "I don't promise you anything, please don't have any hopes ... It took Kerry Packer two years to resolve the resolution (with the Australian board). I am confident our issue will be resolved within two years."

The meeting, which took place in London, was in response to a request from ICL officials who are seeking official sanction from the

ICC. Morgan is expected to report on the meeting to the ICC Board, which meets in Dubai on October 14 and 15.

Chandra also had cause to cheer closer home, revealing that three sponsorships contracts out of four worth \$8 million that had been cancelled were revived after a meeting with Sharad Pawar, the former Indian board president. Chandra met Pawar, currently the ICC's president-elect. "I spoke to Pawar, my friend of the last 25 years, last Friday. I was very categorical that such attacks had to stop henceforth. Out of the four (sponsorship) contracts three have been revived after the meeting."

He said he had conveyed to Pawar his disappointment over what he called the "unethical" tactics used against the ICL and those associated with it. "I asked him, 'Is it good for you? Is it ethical?'"

Does it fit you that a 21-year old boy from a college in Mumbai is picked up physically by the joint secretary of the Mumbai Cricket Association and pulled out of the ground?"

Chandra and Tony Greig, a member of the ICL executive board, also had cautionary words for the league's players on the "possibilities of corruption" during the second season. "You have seen lots of press that Twenty20 cricket has possibilities for corruption," Greig said at a pre-tournament meeting with players and officials on Thursday. "So please be very careful. There will be people who will approach you. It happened last time; it will happen again. We will dig ourselves into a hole if it happens."

"People who didn't want the ICL to succeed ICL would say, 'What ICL? It's not going to succeed,'" Chandra said. "They said, 'Match fixing happens there'."

# Abahani take solo lead

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ARAMBAGH-BROTHERS

Arambagh failed to hold on to a 2-0 first-half lead as the substitutes inspired a Brothers comeback with two late goals in an entertaining match.

Brothers went on the offensive from the word go but Arup shot over the bar in the first minute while Michael Oniya's superb header was denied by woodwork.

Quick on counter attacks, Arambagh who defeated Muktijoddha in their last match with goals inside the last four minutes, stunned the opposition in the 37th minute when Nayan fired an angled drive into the far corner just outside from the penalty area after meeting Turjo's cross-field pass.

Monu doubled the lead on the stroke of half-time when the Arambagh rightback's diving header on a cross by Kenyan playmaker Nicodemus gave Shakil no chance at the Oranges goal.

Wasim Iqbal brought Zahid and Manju early into the second half and Zahid's darting runs at the right flank kept the Arambagh

backline busy but they defended doggedly.

It needed Brothers' third substitute Abdullah Parvez's touch to reduce the arrears when the midfielder's corner unsettled the rival defenders in the 75th minute for Shuvra to scramble past the ball through a forest of legs.

Arup rattled the crossbar six minutes later from the top of the box after a tremendous run but the lone Chittagong goalkeeper Thuan. Chittagong Abahani coach Mohammad Kashem was happy with their second draw that took them to five points.

"Injury and bans forced us to play without five regular while Nepalese striker Santosh was dropped for poor form. So I am happy for the understrength side's performance," said Kashem.

Russel's assistant coach Milon Mollah was disappointed over the field and referee after failing to win in both their attempts in the portcity.

"We repeatedly asked the authority to better the condition of the field which is not quite okay for playing. The refereeing has also been poor," alleged Milon.

In the very second minute, the

hosts were denied by woodwork when Rony fired onto the crosspiece.

In the 37th minute, Alfaz then shot wide from close and saw another weak effort gripped by the Abahani custodian.

The tourists got a golden chance in the 49th minute when their Moroccan captain Touati Youness, playing after two matches, failed to beat the lone Chittagong goalkeeper Thuan.

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BCB president Maj Gen Sina Ibn Jamali (3rd from R) shakes hands with Chittagong paceman Kamrul Islam (fourth from L) during the inauguration of the 10th National Cricket League at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

# New Zealand try

FROM PAGE 17

and sticky nature of the wicket and fielding better as well. So all three departments we have looked at and I am sure tomorrow we will give a better performance," said the right-handed batsman.

Jamie said that the conditions will be more or less same in the second match.

"I think same as yesterday (Thursday). But may be a bit better with the more sun on it, we are expecting similar conditions and hopefully we have learnt a lot from the first game to take it to the second game," he said.

The 27-year old Jamie however said that Mohammed Ashraf's men deserved the victory in the first game as the better side on the day.

"I think they (Bangladesh) were smarter than us. We didn't bat particularly well and Bangladesh bowlers also did an excellent job.... I think a combination of them playing very well and we played very poorly. They deserved their victory," said Jamie praising the Tigers.

# Warriors add

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ICL executive board member and former Indian wicketkeeper Bharath Reddy told reporters that the league this time would offer Rs 1.4 crore more as prize money than last year.

The winners will get Rs 2 crore and the runners up one crore rupees.

Each man-of-the-match will get Rs 2 lakh and the man-of-the-series Rs 40 lakh.

Winners in the preliminary league will get Rs 25 lakh and the losing semifinalists Rs 5 lakh.

Reddy also unveiled the winners' and runners-up trophies in the presence of four captains: Inzamam-ul-Haq, Habibul Bashar, Chris Harris and Stuart Law of Australia who is leading Chennai Superstars.

The competition, concluding on November 16, will be played in Ahmedabad, Gurgaon, Panchkula and Hyderabad which will also host the final.

Other teams in the competition will be led by Damien Martyn (Ahmedabad Rockets), Chris Cairns (Chandigarh Lions), Marvan Atapattu (Delhi Giants), Nathan Aspinall (Mumbai Champs) and Craig McMillan (Royal Bengal Tigers).

# Nabil lights up

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stretch of Khaled Mashud's illustrious playing career as the country's most successful wicketkeeper returned to his home district to play as a retired international.

BRIEF SCORES

KHULNA: First innings 178 all out in 61.2 overs (Sadat 43, Rabiul 22, Mostafizur 48, Tushar 28, Sahagir 11, Raihan 1, Masud 7, Ziaur 0, Dollar 3, Rabiul 5, Aslam 0; Roy 2-34, Nabil 8-63).

SYLHET: First innings 42-6 in 21.1 overs (Imtiaz 0, Saikat 1, Mithun 13, Rahman 0, Rajin 0, Mowla 1, Sharifullah 4, Abul 17; Ziaur 3-9, Dollar 1-8, Aslam 1-7, Rabiul 1-11).

BARISAL: First innings 186-7 in 90 overs (Uttam 15, Hannan 15, Faruque 3, Imran 53, Nasir 10, Rony 5, Arafat 12, Shahin 10, Sajidul 43; Alamgir 6-53, Suhawardi 1-34).

# Stanford gets thumbs up

Cricket

AFP, St John's

The 20-million-dollar Stanford 20/20, the world's richest cricket match which had been in danger because of a bitter row over commercial rights, will go ahead as planned, organisers said on Thursday.

The match, between the Stanford Supertars and England, had been thrown into doubt after a High Court hearing had backed objections made by West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) sponsors Digicel.

The telecommunications company argued that the WICB had entered an agreement with Stanford that "wholly compromises the exclusive rights granted to Digicel as principal sponsors of West Indies cricket."

That legal decision meant that either the match would have to be called off or that the Stanford Supertars side would be weakened by the withdrawal of most of the leading West Indian players.

But the match, the highlight of the weeklong Stanford Super Series, will now take place as scheduled on November 1 after talks between the two sides proved successful.

Sir Allen Stanford, the man behind the cricket revolution in the Caribbean, said: "I am pleased with both parties' solution-oriented approach and most importantly that this matter has been finally resolved."

"We look forward to welcoming fans from around the world to the Stanford Cricket Ground to enjoy a fantastic week of cricket."

Reports in the Caribbean media earlier Thursday claimed a "commercial agreement" had been reached after a trans-Atlantic telephone conversation between Stanford and Digicel's Irish boss Denis O'Brien.

"Digicel is delighted to confirm that negotiations have been successful and that arrangements have been put in place to allow for the Series to continue for at least the next three years," said a statement.

"As such, the match scheduled between the West Indies and England on November 1 will now

proceed.

"Digicel has at all times supported the Stanford initiative and from the outset sought a negotiated compromise with the relevant parties."

England all-rounder Paul Collingwood said he was looking forward to the match.

"It's going to be interesting, it's going to be certainly a good spectacle," said Collingwood.

"I'm sure there will be a lot of pressure on the day."

The row over the match began when the WICB originally agreed to make all their players available to play for Texan billionaire Stanford's select side.

But Digicel went to the High Court in a bid to establish that, as the contracted official sponsor of the WICB until 2012, it enjoyed commercial rights associated with a game that was, in effect, a West Indies XI v England.

The High Court upheld that argument and ruled that the Board would be in breach of its contract with Digicel if it sanctioned the match without granting commercial rights to its sponsor.

# India hit back

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Harbhajan Singh went for 1-103 from 41.

Australia, who resumed their overnight score of 254-4, lost all-rounder Shane Watson in the third over of the day, bowled off-stump by a sharp inswinger from Sharma.

Wicketkeeper Brad Haddin put on 91 for the sixth wicket with Hussey, contributing 33.

Sharma removed Haddin and debutant Cameron White in the space of three overs after lunch but Brett Lee (27) helped Hussey along by adding 59 for the eighth wicket.

Sharma had Haddin and White caught in the cover region off deliveries that came off the barren pitch slowly, an indication that batting may become difficult as the Test progresses.

Hussey, who was on 49 when Watson was out, took charge with three boundaries off Zaheer, two of them exquisite cover drives and the third a ferocious pull to square leg. Zaheer claimed the last three Australian wickets in the space of 14 runs after tea, shattering the stumps of Lee, Mitchell Johnson and finally Hussey.

Australian skipper Ricky Ponting Thursday notched his 36th career Test century, just three behind record holder Sachin Tendulkar's tally of 39.

The visitors were helped along towards their big total by shabby Indian fielding, highlighted by retiring former captain Sourav Ganguly letting the ball pass through his legs at mid-off.

Ganguly, 36, said on Tuesday he will retire from international cricket after the four-Test series ends.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the first Test between India and Australia at the Chinnaswamy Stadium on Friday: AUSTRALIA: First innings (over-night 254-4) Hayden c Dhoni b Zaheer 0

Katich c Dhoni b Sharma	66
Ponting lbw b Harbhajan	123
Hussey b Zaheer	146
Clarke lbw b Zaheer	11
Watson b Sharma	22
Haddin c Laxman b Sharma	3
White c Harbhajan b Sharma	6
Lee b Zaheer	27
Johnson b Zaheer	1
Clark not out	0
Extras: (b-1, lb-10, nb-3, w-1)	15
Total: (All out in 149.5 overs)	430
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-166, 3-226, 4-254, 5-259, 6-350, 7-362, 8-421, 9-429, 10-430.	

<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Zaheer	29.5	4	91	5
Sharma	30	7	77	4
Harbhajan	41	8	103	1
Kumble	43	6	129	0
Schwab	6	0	19	0
<b>INDIA: First innings</b>				
Gambhir not out				20
Schwab not out				43
Extras: (b-4, nb-1)				5
Total: (For no loss in 18.1 overs)				68
To bat: Dravid, Tendulkar, Ganguly, Laxman, Dhoni, Kumble, Harbhajan, Zaheer, Sharma.				

<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Lee	5	1	12	0
Clark	7	1	28	0
Johnson	4.1	0	23	0
Watson	2	1	1	0

Toss: Australia

Umpires: Rudi Koertzen (RSA) and Asad Rauf (PAK)

Third umpire: Amish Saheba (IND)

Match referee: Chris Broad (ENG)