

SPORT



TIGERS DOWN UNDER

An unorthodox specialist

BISHWAJIT ROY

His non-textbook batting technique and lack of footwork have been questioned by many. But these uncomfortable issues mainly land at opener Anamul Haque's feet during Tests, as his run-scoring ability in the limited-version of the game distances minds from those questions.

Forming a consistent opening pair still remains a headache for the Bangladesh team think-tank, but the 22-year-old Anamul, with three hundreds and three fifties under his belt and an average of 35.68 in 27 ODIs, provides some relief.

Many may doubt whether the right-hander will be successful in the unfamiliar conditions of Australia and New Zealand during the ICC World Cup, especially when it has been vindicated several times that he is suspect against quality pace bowling. His batting in the Test series at home in 2013 against New Zealand would certainly allow these doubts settle in.

Former Bangladesh national team coach Sarwar Imran, who had closely watched the batsman during the 2012 ICC Under-19 World Cup in Australia as coach, was confident that Anamul would be successful in this World Cup as he believed that Anamul was a different batsman in limited-overs cricket.

"He has matured since I saw him with the U-



ANAMUL HAQUE

19s. He made hundreds against Sri Lanka and Pakistan to single-handedly turn the matches in our favour during that Youth World Cup. I know it will be altogether a different ball game when he plays the real World Cup next month, but that experience will help him," said Imran.

"He depends on balance rather than foot

movement and he can play cut and pull shots with ease on bouncy tracks. He hardly has any problems with incoming deliveries, but he has some problems with outside the off-stump deliveries. In one-day cricket he however manages his shortcomings to score runs and I am confident he will contribute significantly to the team during the World Cup," hoped the former national coach, adding that Anamul was also mentally strong and had the hunger for runs.

The batsman himself was not ready to comment on the technical aspects of his batting, rather exuded confidence as he spoke of doing something for his team during the World Cup.

"I know it's a big challenge to perform in Australia and New Zealand but I am confident. My main focus will be to contribute as much as possible to my team and I believe if we can play to our potential then reaching second round is not impossible," said a confident Anamul.

"A lot of talks are going on about the conditions but in such a multi-national event I don't think it will be as difficult as we are thinking. My experience of playing in Australia with the junior team can give me some confidence, if nothing else," he added.

And if Anamul can make his first World Cup a memorable one, his team will also be nothing short of it.



BITTER HAPPY: Policemen escort Bangladesh pace bowler Rubel Hossain (top) from a Dhaka court to the Central Jail after a metropolitan magistrate rejected his bail petition yesterday against a rape case filed by Naznin Akter Happy (R). Rubel has recently been named in the 15-member Bangladesh squad for next month's World Cup down under.



PHOTOS: STAR

Sachin's shooting going on

AGENCIES, New Delhi

After a stellar cricketing career which spanned over two decades, iconic Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar is all set to play himself in a film made on his life.

A Mumbai-based production company 200NotOut is working on the movie to be directed by award-winning British director James Erskine.

"It will be mostly about his personal life since his cricketing career is well known," a spokesman of the production house was quoted as saying in the media.

The retired batsman, who played an astonishing 200 Tests and scored 100 centuries across all three formats of the game, retired in 2013.

Awarded India's highest civilian honour -- the Bharat Ratna -- last year, Tendulkar is a sitting Rajya Sabha MP.

The planned film is expected to be "between 90 minutes and two hours" and could be released by the end of this year or early next year.

"Shooting for the film has been going on for the past year and we aim to continue filming through the year," the spokesperson was quoted as saying.

Tendulkar scored 34,357 runs in the 664 international matches that he played.

World Cup's final squads

New Zealand and South Africa on Thursday announced 15-man squads for the World Cup, to be played in Australia and New Zealand from February 14 to March 29.

NEW ZEALAND

Brendon McCullum (captain), Corey Anderson, Trent Boult, Grant Elliott, Martin Guptill, Tom Latham, Mitchell McClenaghan, Nathan McCullum, Kyle Mills, Adam Milne, Luke Ronchi, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Daniel Vettori, Kane Williamson.

SOUTH AFRICA

AB de Villiers (captain), Hashim Amla (vice-captain), Kyle Abbott, Farhaan Behardien, Quinton de Kock, JP Duminy, Faf du Plessis, Imran Tahir, David Miller, Morne Morkel, Wayne Parnell, Aaron Phangiso, Vernon Philander, Rilee Rossouw, Dale Steyn.

KOHLI on a par with Smith

AFP, Sydney



Skipper Virat Kohli and Lokesh Rahul carved out centuries to share the stage with "spidercam" as India clawed back on the third day of the final Test against Australia on Thursday.

Kohli joined Australian counterpart Steve Smith with four tons in the series, while Rahul rode his luck including some help from spidercam, to raise his maiden ton in only his second Test.

Chasing Australia's 572 for seven declared, the tourists were 342 for five at the close with Kohli posting his 10th Test hundred to be unbeaten on 140 with Wriddhiman Saha not out 14.

In the process Kohli surpassed Rahul Dravid (619) as the highest-scoring Indian batsman in a series in Australia with 639 runs at an average of 106.50.

The home attack kept the lid on the Indian scoring on a flat, lifeless Sydney Cricket Ground pitch with all the runs hard-earned but helped along by some ragged Australian fielding.

Smith put down two chances, one when Kohli was on 59 and the other off Rahul, which was tinged with controversy over the positioning of the spidercam television camera hovering above the ground.

Rahul also gave chances on 41, 42 and 46 but the final opportunity was the day's major talking point with Smith appearing to blame spidercam for putting down the skied catch.

It got no better for Smith nearing tea when he bungled a two-handed chance over his head from Kohli, who was on 59, at second slip off Mitchell Starc.

Rahul also had a lucky escape on 42 when he charged down the pitch for a run and was sent back by Kohli only to tumble to the ground and lose his bat.

Yet he still managed to scramble to safety and beat Brad Haddin's delayed throw to the non-striker's end.

Exasperated skipper Smith stood glaring at Haddin with his arms outstretched at the farcical blunder as



PHOTO: REUTERS

India skipper Virat Kohli hits a boundary during his unbeaten knock of 140 on the third day of the fourth Test against Australia at the SCG yesterday.

India had a big let-off.

Rahul survived another scare earlier in the morning session when the Australians appealed for a catch by Joe Burns at bat-pad off spinner Nathan Lyon but umpire Richard Kettleborough was unmoved.

Infrared television replays showed the ball may have brushed a glove and

off the thigh guard to Burns.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 572 for 7 decl (Rogers 95, Warner 101, Watson 81, Smith 117, Marsh 73, Burns 58, Harris 25; Shami 5-112)

INDIA: First innings 342 for 5 (Rahul 110, Sharma 53, Kohli 140 not out; Starc 2-77, Watson 2-42)

Gazi gets a test date

SPORTS REPORTER

The bowling action of Bangladesh off-spinner Shohag Gazi will be reassessed in Chennai in India on January 24.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has arranged the date and venue for the spinner after Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) requested them to reassess his bowling action.

"As Gazi is confident we requested ICC and accordingly they arranged the test in Chennai on January 24," informed BCB's cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan yesterday.

Gazi's bowling action had been deemed illegal by ICC in October last year as the 23-year-old bowler's elbow had a flex of more than the permitted 15 degrees, and as a result he had been suspended.

He however played the recently concluded Dhaka Premier League.

De Kruif coach for Bangabandhu Cup

SPORTS REPORTER



Barely two-and-a-half months after being sacked, Lodewijk de Kruif is set to make a return as head coach of the national team during the Bangabandhu Gold Cup International football tournament.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), which fired the Dutch coach following a lengthy payment dispute in October last year, has offered him a one-month contract to work with the national team during the proposed six-team invitational tournament.

The 43-year-old Kruif, who previously coached the national team for 15-and-a-half months, will arrive in the capital before the start of the tourney, which is likely to start in the third week of this month. He led Bangladesh to 12 international matches of which he won four, drew two and lost six.

"Kruif has agreed to coach the Bangladesh national team in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup as we have offered him a one-month contract. We will send him an airticket as soon as we get the confirmation of the starting date of the tournament from the BFF President (Kazi Salahuddin)," BFF vice-president Tabith M Awal told reporters yesterday.

Salahuddin, now attending the AFC Congress in Australia, was supposed to finalise the schedule of the tournament after discussing the matter with the participating teams last night.

Spotlight on spidercam

AFP, Sydney



Television's "spidercam" found itself at the centre of controversy over a dropped Australian catch on the third day of the final Test against India on Thursday.

Australia skipper Steve Smith put down a skied chance off Lokesh Rahul on 46 before lunch, and then appeared to blame spidercam for missing the catch.

Smith was seen mouthing dirty words to teammates after his line of sight was affected by the cables connecting the aerial TV camera.

Cricket Australia and the Nine Network later confirmed that Smith had been "distracted by one of the wires in his eyeline".

"We [CA and Nine] have spoken about the matter involving spidercam and the dropped catch before lunch and it's clear the ball did not hit the camera or its supporting wires," the joint statement read.

"Captain Steve Smith was distracted by one of the wires in his eyeline. Both CA and Nine will continue to work together on the use of spidercam in the broadcast coverage and will take on board any player feedback as necessary.

"As it stands, if any player has a concern about the placement of spidercam they can ask the umpires for it to be moved."

"I like watching it, but I think they have to get the position right when the bowler's bowling, particularly on the off-side which we are speaking to Channel Nine about it, making sure we get that right moving forward."

Spidercam is a camera system which gives viewers a bird's eye view of the action and uses cables to carry a camera-platform along a track between two mounting-points. It is also able to change its altitude at any given moment.

Federer survives a scare

AFP, Brisbane

Swiss tennis star Roger Federer won his 997th match on the ATP Tour on Thursday, but not before surviving an almighty scare from Australian wildcard John Millman at the Brisbane International.

Playing his first match of the year after receiving a first round bye, world number two Federer had to come from a set and a break down to overhaul Millman 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 in just over two hours.

Federer now plays another Australian wildcard, James Duckworth, in the quarterfinals following his 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 win over Finland's Jarkko Nieminen.

Top seeds Maria Sharapova and Ana Ivanovic booked their places in the semifinals in vastly contrasting fashion on Thursday.

While world number two Sharapova cruised past Spaniard Carla Suarez Navarro 6-1, 6-3, Ivanovic was forced to recover from a horror start before edging Kaia Kanepi 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.

The top seeded Russian hit 32 winners in the match, 20 of those from forehands, as she set up a semifinal against unseeded Ukrainian Elina Svitolina, who upset third-seeded German Angelique Kerber 4-6, 7-5, 6-3.

If Windies can make amends

Twenty20I series from today

AFP, Cape Town



Outplayed in a Test series, the West Indies will seek to turn the tables on South Africa in a three-match Twenty20 International series which starts at Newlands on Friday.

While South Africa have rested several key players, the West Indies T20 squad boasts more experience than the Test squad which was beaten 2-0 in a three-match Test series.

Proven campaigners such as Chris Gayle, Kieron Pollard, Andre Russell, Dwayne Bravo, Dwayne Smith and captain Darren Sammy have joined the touring party for the short-form matches.

Pollard starred for the Cape Cobras, who won South Africa's domestic T20 competition this season, while Gayle, Russell, Bravo and Sammy all played for South African franchises.

South Africa, on the other hand, will be missing star players such as AB de Villiers, Hashim Amla, Dale Steyn and Morne Morkel, who are being

rested ahead of a one-day series and next month's Cricket World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

JP Duminy, one of South Africa's most consistent T20 performers, was named in the host country's squad but his return from a knee injury has been put back again.

Originally expected to appear during the Test series he is now only expected to play in the one-day internationals which start on January 16. Justin Ontong has been added to the squad.