



Is Fizz being typecast?

SAKEB SUBHAN from Taunton

On Wednesday, Mohammad Amir recorded the best bowling figures of the 2019 World Cup so far when he picked up five wickets for 30 runs against Australia in Taunton. He picked up four of his wickets in the last 10 overs, mixing in slower deliveries, cross-seam deliveries with his seam-up stock deliveries to confuse Australia. Known more as a new-ball bowler, his performance showed that there are no absolute fixed roles for bowlers in this bat-dominated tournament.

In a mirror image, Bangladesh's Mustafizur Rahman is known more as a bowler who excels in the death overs with his slower cutters. But like Amir, there is another side to Mustafizur. Against India in the practice match on May 28, he troubled both Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli with his new-ball spell, and in the World Cup opener against South Africa, his four-over opening burst had the South African openers playing and missing.

In the two matches since, Mustafizur has been given just one over in the first 10 overs. After the narrow two-wicket loss to New Zealand, skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza said that Mustafizur was more effective with the old ball. There is a lot of data to support that position -- in the last year, Mustafizur has the most wickets in the last 10 overs worldwide with 20, at an average of 17.9 and a strike rate of 16.6 balls for every wicket. In the first 20 overs, his numbers suffer -- an average of 49 and a strike rate of 57.9. But a deeper look into the amount Mustafizur has bowled in the first 20 overs raises the question of whether his lack of utility up front is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In the first 20 overs in 21 innings over the last year, Mustafizur has bowled 402 balls -- which works out to around 19 balls on average per innings. His corresponding figures in the last 10 overs is 18 balls on average in half the amount of overs. Bowling 19 balls on average when the batsmen are more intent on preserving wickets than going hell for leather denies a bowler enough opportunities to take wickets with good balls

Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza seemed a bit worried while talking to someone on the phone. While the reason behind that remains unknown, the skipper was surely concerned with the ongoing match at that time between New Zealand and India which was on the verge of another washout due to persistent drizzle in Nottingham yesterday.

RAIN NOT THE ONLY CLOUD

ERKUSH TAPADER from Taunton

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's eyes were firmly on the game at Nottingham between India and New Zealand although the match had not yet begun due to rain. He was ready to go out with his family but the worry and tension in his eyes were apparent.

Mashrafe explained the reason behind his unease a bit later.

He was sure about semifinal berths for India, England and Australia, which meant thwarting the Kiwis and usurping the fourth and final spot. Although a lot remains to be played out, this one point grants New Zealand a key advantage.

Rain has disrupted quite a lot of equations at the World Cup. It is bringing different kinds of fates to the teams here.

While New Zealand had the ability to win against India under normal circumstances, India were heavy favourites. The skipper's demeanour suggested that in cricketing terms, the 'Big Three' [England, India and Australia] could not be thwarted and plans were being developed with that scenario in mind.

Even as New Zealand won their first three games, they faced relatively easy opponents in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. What remained were tougher prospects. Mashrafe's concern lay with whether rain ultimately



favoured the Kiwis in that regard.

Bangladesh are on the other end of that spectrum. The Tigers had tough opponents in their first three outings. They started with a win against South Africa and fought valiantly against the Kiwis before losing heavily to England. The loss of one point against Sri Lanka in the last match is bothering the players at this point. While they are enjoying a relaxed time within the mega-event due to a few off days, that reality is a plugging away at their mental wellbeing.

Although Mashrafe was not straightforward about his concerns, his demeanour suggested that it was the New Zealand game that was still on his mind.

"Losing a point in that match [against Sri Lanka] was

disastrous. Yet, that would not have been an issue," said the skipper before shifting his focus to the New Zealand game. What were the shortcomings? Much had been made of Mushfiqur Rahim's missed run out of Kane Williamson. If the Tigers do not fulfill expectations in this tournament, more will be said. Apparently the skipper was disturbed by the tactical blunder that took place in that game.

He was not ready to explain in full detail but said: "In no way was that a 300-plus wicket."

What we learned from sources within the team management is that the team flayed their bat aggressively in order to achieve a bigger total. They however lost tempo in the middle overs trying to up the ante. Mohammad Mithun sacrificed his wicket trying to meet the team's demands. The focus could have been more on a 270-280 score. In the end Bangladesh's innings stopped at a middling 244.

The tranquil town of Taunton attracts Mashrafe in particular, but he was not in a position to enjoy it. The washout and the blunder from the New Zealand linger on his mind.

The West Indies match is now a do-or-die game. It is time to focus on the upcoming challenges. After the miss against Sri Lanka, the Tigers do not want to miss out on another target in West Indies.

Translated from Bengali by Abdullah Al Mehdi

The Export Leader

and also the time to set up batsmen with a ball that is swinging.

In the first three years of his career since mid 2015, his average in the first 20 overs was 32.28 and his strike rate was 41.93. He took 14 wickets bowling more than 22 balls per innings in the first 20 overs. These figures show that while he is more effective with the old ball in the death overs, he still has some value up front, and Bangladesh could do with that option. He can now bowl consistently above 135 kmph and often crosses 140 -- a positive sign that he is close to the level he was before a shoulder injury in summer 2016. In the practice match against India, he got Shikhar Dhawan out by swinging the ball both ways at pace.

The new ball will always swing in England, and as he showed in his limited opportunities so far, he can be a threat. It may give the firepower and early sting that Bangladesh have seemed to lack so far. That does not mean that he cannot bowl at the death, just that a little more flexibility may give the Tigers the early wickets that they often crave, and the lack of which set them back decisively in the hammering against England.

Spin is our main weapon: Joshi

SPORTS REPORTER from Taunton

It was another wet and grey day at Taunton, where the Bangladesh team were enjoying the second day of a two-day break from cricket and practice yesterday. But from today, the Tigers will get back to the serious business of practising hard for their next World Cup challenge -- the match against West Indies at the Cooper Associates County Ground in Taunton on June 17. The forecast for today is a little more promising than it has been for the past two days and the team may get in a full practice session, which their spinners in particular will be hoping for desperately.

With the spin bowling of Shakib Al Hasan, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and even part-timer Mosaddek Hossain proving to be their main strength in this World Cup, Bangladesh are in a bit of a quandary. As seen in home and away series last year, West Indies are not adept at playing spin but they also have power hitters who can send mishits out of the small ground.

There has been a clear divide between Bangladesh's spinners and pacers so far in the three matches of this World Cup. Mehedi, Shakib and Mosaddek are the three bowlers with an economy rate of less than six, while pacers Mustafizur Rahman, Mohammad Saifuddin and skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza have all been conceding runs at more than seven runs an over -- a bit of a surprise given that the small straight boundaries and English conditions were expected to help the pacers more.

Mehedi has consistently been the most economical, with the lowest economy rate of 5.26 for Bangladesh, and second best after Australia's Patrick Cummins among bowlers who have bowled a minimum of 30 overs.

"Our spinners have done exceptionally well in the challenges and situations that they have faced," Bangladesh spin bowling consultant Sunil Joshi told reporters at the team hotel in Taunton yesterday. "I think it is especially important for our bowling unit, because spin is our main weapon."

Joshi thought that the spinners' performance was commendable even in the match against England in Cardiff on June 8, when Bangladesh conceded 386 for six.

"We have seen the best example when England were 100 for no loss. Mosaddek and Miraz came and bowled to two right-handers [Jonny Bairstow and Jason Roy]. They are bowling the best to the right-handers as well," Joshi said.

As far as the West Indies threat is concerned, Joshi did not appear too worried. "I think you have to assess the situation, who you are bowling to -- top-order or middle-order batsmen. Based on that, we will make our plans."

The former Indian spinner also informed that despite the washout against Sri Lanka in Bristol on Tuesday setting the team back in the race to the semifinals, the Tigers were in good spirits. "They are absolutely fine, in good spirits. We have a high energy team with us. We have played back-to-back games so we will be energised after the two-day break."



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TODAY'S MATCH
ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP
ENGLAND V WEST INDIES
LIVE FROM 3:30PM
(BANGLADESH STANDARD TIME)

Pakistan must bring their A game against India

THE EXPERT OPINION
|| FROM WAQAR YOUNIS ||

When Pakistan play India it's always a huge game, but their meeting on Sunday is shaping up to be more crucial than ever.

It's simple -- if Pakistan want to stay in the tournament, they have to bring an 'A plus' performance and win that game.

The match has always meant so much to both countries. There will be billions watching the game.

Pakistan's track record is very mixed, but that's all gone. That's all history. It's a new game, a new day.

Pakistan have got to take positives out of what they did to India in the final of the ICC Champions Trophy a couple of years ago. They must think positively going into this game.

I hope they have got their best game in the locker for India, who showed against Australia that they are a very fine side.

What I have seen in this World Cup so far is that if you don't pick up early wickets, you're in trouble. The new ball is so crucial and openers are being more careful in the first ten overs this year.

They're not really going full throttle, they are being a bit more watchful. Once you don't lose any wickets early on, it becomes easier because the ball doesn't swing and batting becomes easier.

It was with the new ball, in both batting and bowling, that I felt Pakistan missed a trick in their entertaining defeat to Australia at Taunton.

Early on, we were not really sharp enough and Sarfaraz Ahmed was not on his toes. Mohammad Amir didn't get any support from the other end.

No-one really saw the comeback coming and for that, you have to take your hat off to Amir. Full marks to him for the way he bowled.

Even with the new ball, I thought he bowled quite nicely. He could have picked up more than five wickets in the end. He was unfortunate with a couple of nicks early on.

Pakistan pulled it back very nicely. They were sharp after 25 overs and started picking up wickets. They found the right lengths.

Amir bowled superbly. He showed us all his cutters, variations and short pitched deliveries.

I think we all know Amir is mentally very, very strong. He showed once again that class is permanent -- he is no doubt a match-winner.

Dealing with short bowling again proved an issue for the batsmen. It's been a real problem for them on this tour.

I felt they managed it well against England but not against West Indies, only to get exposed again by Australia. They haven't quite figured it out yet.

The batsmen are such good players, they just need to avoid playing into the hands of the opposition with some of the shots they play.

It may be that Mickey Arthur looks at changing the team for Sunday. I spoke to Mickey in Taunton and he is thinking in terms of horses for courses, and I agree with him to an extent.

The pitch there was good for pacers and he rightly went with four of them. The issue was not the nature of the plan, but the execution.

Shadab is the key man in this side and I think they will look to bring him back in against India. They might go for five bowlers, use four pacers and Shadab and drop someone like Shoaib Malik.

It depends a lot on what conditions are like in Manchester, up to a few hours before the game.

Going from a defeat to playing the old rivalry against India isn't going to be easy. India probably watched the Australia game very closely and know what needs to be done.

Pakistan need to lift themselves up and I hope they bring their best on Sunday.

Source: ICC



RAHIM STEEL

Not only was the toss for yesterday's match between India and New Zealand at Trent Bridge in Nottingham delayed but also the scheduled pitch inspections were interrupted at times by the rain before the fixture was ultimately called off. While this has been a common scenario in this edition of the World Cup, the types of news that flooded in unsurprisingly had titles such as toss delayed, covers not coming off and pitch inspection at 3:00pm.

