



The Indian contingent completely eclipsed the presence of any of their New Zealand counterparts at Old Trafford yesterday, with saffron, green and white the dominant colours across the stands during the first semifinal yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

BEST QUOTE



'Everything is interesting'

Bishop breaks down Bumrah's action

ICC

West Indies legend Ian Bishop explains just what it is that makes Jasprit Bumrah so special.

In modern-day social media parlance, it's known as game recognising game. For Jasprit Bumrah, it was most unusual. "You want me to tell you?" he enquired, slightly puzzled, of Ian Bishop after the West Indies great asked India's pace ace to explain how he bowls certain deliveries ahead of the team's ICC Men's Cricket World Cup group finale against Sri Lanka at Headingley.

It is telling of the mystique that surrounds Bumrah, who has utilised his unique action – calm, easy run-up with both arms out in front of him during his delivery stride, as if pushing a car, ready to hyper-extend in a whipping motion – to become, in the words of Brendon McCullum, "the best all-format bowler" in world cricket. Yet his lofty status extends beyond the relentless excellence; he is a source of great intrigue, even for one of West Indies' finest fast bowlers.

"Everything is interesting," Bishop tells the ICC. "Most fast-bowling scientists – not that I'm one of them – say that your ball speed is 60% run-up and the pace of it – but his is an ambling one and the ball comes at 140kph and higher. It's very unusual; it's hard to decipher where the speed comes from. He releases the ball slightly inside the perpendicular, at his highest point, and his bowling arm comes down between his legs rather than past his left hip."

If you look at the bare facts, it might be easy to overlook Bumrah's tournament performance. Seventeen wickets at 19 is certainly impressive after the group stage, but still nine shy of the competition's most prolific bowler Mitchell Starc. And yet, according to Bishop, his performances have been every bit as good. "He's been maybe the best bowler," he says. "The wickets don't show how valuable he has been. The likes of Starc have more, but Bumrah's been brilliant."

It's a great cricketing paradox that the truly great bowlers, particularly in one-day internationals, don't always get the most wickets. With Bumrah, it's reached the stage where opposition batsmen have almost accepted they cannot consistently hit him to the

fence and, therefore, must attack India's other options with even greater regularity. Statistics illustrate it's smart thinking; Bumrah has sent down 35 death overs in 2019 and only two have gone for more than 10 runs.

"At the death, he mixes up his length and pace," adds Bishop. "It's not just the yorkers, but they're incredible. Yorkers are very hard. Even Lasith Malinga, who can deliver them more often than anyone, sometimes misses them. But those two are most consistent at them, and it's fascinating the differences; Lasith does it with a low arm, where Bumrah's is very high."

Bumrah's most impressive trait is maintaining his frugality throughout an innings. Such is his value to Virat Kohli's India side – his economy of 4.48 is best among all seamers to have delivered at least 50 overs in this showpiece – that he is used in short spells throughout the innings.

"His ability to bowl the new ball effectively,

do the same in the middle and be so good at the death is incredible," adds Bishop. "People are just trying to see him out. But the great thing about him is, even with that, he's capable of getting you out as well. His pace and skill are so great. That's why people have such a high regard for him."

It's easy in this India side to get lost amid the hoopla that naturally surrounds Rohit Sharma's relentless century compilation and Kohli's peerless ODI mastery, especially in a nation where batsmen – from Gavaskar to Tendulkar through to Kohli – occupy the consciousness in such an all-encompassing fashion. Yet Bumrah, given how central he has become to India's World Cup aspirations, might be the rare exception, as a fast bowler capable of elevating himself to that unfathomable stratosphere of fandom. If not, India's exceptional pace man will never be short of legendary supporters around the game.



Jasprit Bumrah bowled his ninth maiden of the ongoing World Cup yesterday -- the most by any player -- and also picked up the crucial wicket of Martin Guptill.

PHOTO: AFP

Indian fans fear Kiwi pace and weather for World Cup semi

AFP, Manchester

Virat Kohli's India are two wins away from World Cup glory but fans are wary about New Zealand's pace attack and the threat of rain that looms over Manchester in the first of the semi-finals on Tuesday.

Two-time champions India topped the group table with seven wins from nine league games to book a clash with fourth-placed New Zealand at Old Trafford.

"I know India start as top favourites to win here but you never know. Kiwi pacers are lethal and can exploit the overcast conditions," Neeraj Kumar, an Indian student who travelled from Bradford, told AFP.

"But our pacers are also good. (Jasprit) Bumrah can run through their batting. Fingers crossed," the 22-year-old with an Indian tri-colour in hand and a painted face said.

Fit-again fast bowler Lockie Ferguson, with 17 wickets in seven games, is expected to return to the New Zealand side after missing the previous game with a hamstring injury.

His pace partner Trent Boult has taken 15 wickets in eight matches.

Kane Williamson's New Zealand desperately need to find form after losing their past three matches.

India have lived up to their tag as one of the pre-tournament favourites, with opener Rohit Sharma leading the team's charge, becoming the first player to score five centuries at a single World Cup.

Paceman Bumrah has also been key to the team's success, with 17 wickets, and is an impressive "death-ball" bowler with his ability to bowl yorkers.

"If they have Lockie then we have Bumrah. It is a clear case of pace versus pace today," said Reeta Jain, an Indian fan who has come all the way from America with her husband.

"We will win for sure," she said with a smile and thumbs-up.

The sky above Old Trafford has been declared a "no-fly zone" for Tuesday, after a light aircraft flew banners containing political messages over Headingley on Saturday.



India's 87-year-old fan Charulata Patel showed up at the semifinals yesterday, trumpets and all, to cheer on her beloved team.

PHOTO: AFP

HAPPY MOMENT



Although most of yesterday's semifinal between New Zealand and India was dominated by India after Kiwi skipper Kane Williamson had won the toss, it was literally India all the way till the 17th ball of New Zealand's innings. Surprising? Well, New Zealand openers -- Martin Guptill and Henry Nicholls -- were tormented by the two India quicks in Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Jasprit Bumrah. And it was as late as the 17th delivery of the game when Guptill finally tucked an angled in delivery from Bumrah towards mid wicket to take a single -- New Zealand's first run. Certainly it was a moment to cheer for Kiwi fans after such a bleak start.

Aussies go barefoot in bonding session

AFP, Birmingham

Australia's stars walked barefoot on the Edgbaston pitch on Monday in an unusual team bonding session in the build-up to their World Cup semi-final against England.

Aaron Finch's side began their training session at Birmingham venue for Thursday's England showdown by discarding their socks and trainers.

The World Cup holders then took a walk across the playing surface and sat for more than half-an-hour in the same state as they took it in turns to talk to each other about their emotions ahead of the final week of the tournament.

The move was inspired by Australia head coach Justin Langer, who last year described himself



as "a bit of a hippy", spending a month a year growing out his beard and walking barefoot.

Australia batsman Peter Handscomb has yet to play in the

tournament, having joined up as a replacement for Shaun Marsh, but is in line to face England in place of the injured Usman Khawaja.

It was really nice to see what playing in the finals means to this group."

We're a 'different animal' now, says Plunkett

AFP, Birmingham

Liam Plunkett has warned Australia that England are a "different sort of animal" from their predecessors as they prepare for their blockbuster World Cup semifinal.

"They've been there and done it before but not against this bunch of players," he said.

"We're a different sort of animal compared to our last teams. We've played well for the past four years, we're ranked number one and we feel in a good place. We feel on our day we can beat anyone in the world."

Plunkett is the elder

statesman of the current England squad, making his international bow in 2005 and earning his previous taste of World Cup cricket 12 years ago in the West Indies.

"We had amazing players (previously) but I never thought we'd win a World Cup," he said.

"We've made it exciting again. I've played in teams where we didn't expect to win. With this squad the public expect us to win games and win series."

"It would be nice to finish this four-year cycle. This journey we've been on, with this group of boys, it comes down to this."



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