

TASKIN

preaches game
of patience

SPORTS REPORTER *from Chattogram*

The Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium at Chattogram has produced flat batting wickets over recent years and while there is some help for the spinners, pacers usually find it hard to bowl at.

Despite that, Pakistan pace attack had managed to get something from the wicket during an eight-wicket win in November last year while Sri Lanka's Kasun Rajitha showed during the last Test played here that sticking to a plan can work in pacers' favour.

Thus, when Taskin Ahmed was asked whether more pace-friendly wicket can be provided given Bangladesh's pace attack, he talked about improving on skills for all surfaces and playing the patient game.

"Every pacer wishes to bowl on green wickets. But the condition is not in our hands. Many times we go to South Africa or New Zealand and get slow or flat tracks. The task is to adapt and to grow skills so that you can do well in all kinds of surfaces. We need to improve more so that the opponent thinks twice before providing either green or flat tracks. The good bowlers get five wickets even on flat tracks in Tests. So without thinking of those things, it will be better to work on our self-improvement," Taskin, the spearhead of Tigers' pace attack said ahead of the first Test on Wednesday against India.

The pacer has come a long way following setbacks and admitted that conditions have not been easy for the pace unit at Chattogram. "In Bangladesh, Chattogram's venue is the only one which could be called a batting paradise. The pace bowlers haven't found it easy here," he remarked.

With very little movement on offer at Chattogram, a lot will depend on discipline and skills with the old ball, according to the pacer. India have some of the biggest names in their batting lineup while a few of the batters in the Bangladesh lineup have struggled in the longest format recently.

Asked regarding a ploy in these wickets for the pacers, he said: "Top of off-stump line and if we can do that with patience. In good wickets, if we try too hard for wickets, we can go for runs. They [India batters] are great players. Some early swing and reverse swing with the old ball can be tried. The plan would be to make them impatient. We have to be patient," he said.

Taskin had his own bouts with back injuries recently and still looking to get back into his rhythm having sat out the first two ODIs against India before playing the third ODI. There are concerns over Taskin's workload management as well. "If I can't fulfill my workload then maybe the management may not play me in this Test," he said and patience will be an important facet for Taskin's injury management just as for the team in the first Test.



After a riveting few months of white-ball cricket, Bangladesh speedster Taskin Ahmed now has to shift his focus to making the red ball talk. The 27-year-old, after a standout performance against the Netherlands in the T20 World Cup, said that sticking to Test match line and lengths have helped him and he will bank on those abilities to give Bangladesh the upper hand in the Chattogram Test. His performance curve has been on the up in recent times and he seems to be in good hands under Bangladesh bowling coach Alan Donald.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Neymar's comments broke my heart'

AGENCIES

Brazil legend Ronaldo defended Neymar and opined that the future of the Brazil national team was very bright after Croatia eliminated the five-time champions in the 2022 World Cup.

Starting with Neymar, El Phenomenon believed that his desire would not be hampered, but he also advised the player to ignore the taboo around mental health in sport and seek professional help.

Ronaldo revealed recently that he had been going to therapy for nearly three years, saying: "Today, I am in therapy. I have been in therapy for two and a half years and I understand myself much better than before."

He advised Neymar to do the same. "Neymar will come back with the same desire. But I want to reinforce the need to monitor the mental health of our athletes. It is very important for us to address this issue, especially when it comes to the World Cup, where the whole world is looking at the national team. The world was looking at Neymar," the 46-year-old said.

"I would advise having a psychological follow-up after this pressure, which is extremely disproportionate for human beings.

“

I am psychologically destroyed. It is definitely the defeat which has hurt me the most, which left me paralysed for ten minutes after the match, after which I burst into tears without being able to stop. It is going to hurt for a very long time, unfortunately.

NEYMAR

I was psychologically destroyed, it broke my heart and I also felt psychologically destroyed. I wanted to find a way to help Neymar. That help exists today. In my day it was little talked about."

Ronaldo also praised the overall team, saying that there was a lot to build upon before the 2026 World Cup in the USA, Canada and Mexico, but admitted that there was a lack of gamesmanship in extra



time against Croatia.

"The team had a lot of positives that we can reuse. Talented young people and the most experienced performed super well. We had a lot of good things in this World Cup, but for a small detail – that trickery and catimba (gamesmanship) – which was missing after scoring the goal in overtime."

“There, the game should already start to slow down, keep possession of the ball.

Croatia was already tired. We learn this very early on, how to ice the game, keep possession of the ball. With the quality of our team it should have been easier. That is where we sinned."

When asked if Neymar's image would be affected by not winning a World Cup in his career, Ronaldo was emphatic in replying that the player is already established.

"There's no risk of throwing away absolutely everything Neymar has done in his career. Everything you've done is done. Neymar is consecrated. Logically everyone wants to win the World Cup and everyone starts to realize that it's not easy. We have five stars, we are the biggest winners. The vast majority of people think we're going to win them all. And that's not how it works. The World Cup is a very complex competition."

Ronaldo also criticised those who argue that Neymar should have shot earlier in the shootout as he ultimately did not get to step up for the decisive fifth spot-kick.

"I think that changing the penalty sequence is extremely delicate. Approaching a player and showing that you have no confidence in him, asking another to take his place. That doesn't exist in football. If you ask to change it, it's absurd. Those who support this theory do not understand the dynamics of a group."



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