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'

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

"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

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.

'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 time against Croatia. issue, especially when it comes to the World Cup, where the whole world is looking at can reuse. Talented young people and the the national team. The world was looking most experienced performed super well. at Neymar," the 46-year-old said.

follow-up after this pressure, which is and catimba (gamesmanship) -- which was extremely disproportionate for human missing after scoring the goal in overtime."

"When I saw the interview saying that to slow down, keep possession of the ball.

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



We had a lot of good things in this World "I would advise having a psychological Cup, but for a small detail -- that trickery

"There, the game should already start

Online

I was psychologically destroyed, it broke 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 shoout as he ultimately did not get to step up for the decisive fifth spot-kick.

"I think that changing the penalty sequence is extremely 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."

France know **Morocco** not just an expert defence mechanism

REUTERS, Doha

France are fully aware that Morocco are much more than a strictly defensive team as they prepare for their unexpected World Cup semi-final clash on Wednesday.

Morocco reached the last four by beating Spain and Portugal in the knockout stages and have conceded only one goal in the tournament.

Their quick transitions and comfort in possession of the ball have been highly impressive in Qatar and there is no chance the defending champions will take anything for granted at the A Bayt stadium.

"We have enough experience to avoid falling into this trap (of being over confident). They've reached that stage for a reason," centre back Raphael Varane, France's vice-captain, told a news conference on Monday.

"They defend very well, it will be extremely difficult. We, the leaders of the team, have to prepare all the players for another battle. It's a World Cup semi-final, you need to give everything until the end if you want to deserve your place in the final."

Varane knows that Walid Regragui's team will be full of confidence.

"They're writing Moroccan football history, they have a collective force with performances that give them a lot of confidence," he said.

'They're physically very fit, they're dangerous on counter attacks and set pieces, too."

Right back Jules Kounde, who will be tasked with containing Sofiane Boufal on the flank, does not need to be reminded of Morocco's qualities.

"I'm not worried but we know they beat big teams to get there and we're going to take it seriously. It's not a surprise to see them here anymore. They deserve to be here," he said.

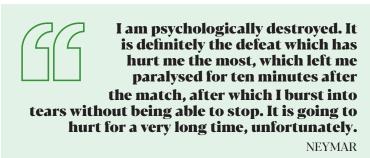
'They're very compact. They give very little time to the player who has the ball to get organised. You have to play fast and try to break their balance," said Kounde.

"We're well aware of their qualities. They're very efficient with the ball, they combine very quickly to find their two wingers.

"What they have done is remarkable, only conceding an own goal, especially when you see the tams they played. We're going to have to be very precise to score."

"We played Simeone-style and won," Sevilla and Morocco goalkeeper Yassine Bounou said after the 3-0 penalty shootout win over Spain in the last 16. "I have to thank all my teammates who have helped me enormously. It was a colossal effort. I applaud them for their work. We have to stay focused and keep in mind what lies ahead.

Moroccan coach Regragui explained after Saturday's 1-0 over Portugal. "Some people say something that it's not good, but he's performed it very well. We are doing really well tactically. We had a big heart, we didn't leave spaces and we had technical players who make the difference. Our style of play was similar to the one we used against Spain, and it's similar to Cholo Simeone's too,"



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