

Reliance on gamechanger Bumrah key in India’s triumph

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Jasprit Bumrah was one of the main architects of India’s T20 World Cup triumph and he capped off his tournament as the player of the tournament after the Men in Blue won the final by seven runs against South Africa on Saturday.

Bumrah’s campaign will go down in history as one of the greatest individual displays ever seen in the event’s history.

Collecting 15 wickets at an average of 8.26, Bumrah finished with an astonishing economy of just 4.17, by far and away the best rate of those to bowl a minimum of 20 overs at the tournament. He joins teammate Virat Kohli (a two-time winner) as India players to claim the Player of the Tournament award.

“I honestly think he’s the best seam bowler who has played white ball cricket,” former England captain Michael Vaughan told Cricbuzz yesterday.

“If you can tell me a better seam bowler. I know Wasim Akram was special and there have been many others to mention but I just think he’s got this amazing action ability and he’s got the pace, he’s got all



the different skill sets and he does it under pressure day in and day out. It’s not just two or three times at the World Cup. It’s pretty much every single game.”

Vaughan put it neatly as Bumrah delivered outstanding displays of his acumen throughout the tournament and propelled his reputation to newer heights. Hewasimmaculateinallthree phases of play. He bowled unplayable deliveries with the new ball, disrupted the opposition’s momentum in the middle overs, nailed yorkers as well as slowers to knock the wind out of the opposition’s sails in the latter stages, and was skipper Rohit Sharma’s go-to option whenever India were in a bothersome position.

One could hardly point out an occasion when a batter tried to take Bumrah on as most, if not all, tried to see off his overs and look for scoring opportunities elsewhere.

His economy rates of 4.07 in the Powerplay, 4.75 in the middle overs, and 3.78 at the death were also instrumental in Bumrah winning phases of play. And that assurance he brought gave Rohit and India the belief of winning games from any situation.



Legendary trio’s FAREWELL TO REMEMBER

SPORTS REPORTER

“The nice guy who finished first” is the title of a biography on Rahul Dravid, an obvious attempt at wordplay in reference to Dravid’s reputation as cricket’s ultimate nice guy who went on to become one of the greatest batters India has ever produced.

However, before June 29, 2024, this title was essentially propagating a lie. While Dravid had risen to incredible heights in his playing career, ‘The Wall’ never truly came ‘first’ as he was never a world champion.

As a coach, he shepherded India’s Under-19 team to a World Cup trophy in 2019, and after taking over the reins of the senior team in 2021, India played two finals in 2023 – the World Test Championship and the ICC ODI World Cup – but once again, his side slipped up.

Up against South Africa, the final of the just-concluded Men’s T20 World Cup was Dravid’s final chance to be involved in a World Cup triumph for India in any capacity for the foreseeable future, as the 51-year-old had already announced that he would be leaving the post after the tournament.

Meanwhile, for Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, two modern-day greats of India and world cricket, the final was their chance to bid adieu to the shortest format as world champions. Both knew what it felt like to lift a World Cup, with Rohit being part of India’s triumph in the maiden edition of the T20 World Cup in 2007 and Kohli lifting Sachin Tendulkar on his shoulders after they won the final of the ODI World Cup in 2011 in front of an enraptured home crowd in Mumbai.

But after tasting the ultimate success so early in their respective careers, the

duo had to endure the agony of getting close but eventually falling short in ICC tournaments for over a decade. Rohit and Kohli, aged 37 and 35 respectively, are nearing the swansong of their respective careers and, while they had already done more than enough to cement their positions as icons of Indian cricket, failure to drive their team to a world



championship as leading figures remained a blemish in both of their careers.

The desperation to win a World Cup trophy was evident, as Rohit wanted his batters to move past the circumspet approach that brought their downfall in previous T20 World Cups and lead by example at the top. Especially, his assault against Australia in the Super Eight, a swashbuckling 92 off 41 balls, set the stage for Australia’s eventual elimination, removing the biggest thorn to India’s

charge for the title.

Kohli, on the other hand, had a terrible tournament leading up to the final. But even though he couldn’t get among the runs, he continued opening the innings for India, not dropping down to his favourite one-down position where he averages almost 54 in T20Is. Kohli conceding his superstar status for the betterment of the team is

one example of how motivated The Men in Blue were

to make sure this time they return home with the trophy.

In the end, Rohit’s bold stance and Kohli’s sacrifice bore fruit as they both have now hung up their boots in T20Is as World Cup winners. Meanwhile, the place where Dravid had experienced his biggest failure, when India got eliminated from the group stage of the 2007 ODI World Cup in the Caribbean under his leadership, has become the place where he finally became a world champion.



WIMBLEDON prepares for new era

REUTERS

Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz and world number one Jannik Sinner will take their simmering rivalry at the top of the men’s game to Wimbledon, where the two young guns will look to prolong seven-times winner Novak Djokovic’s trophy drought in 2024.

Even before the tournament begins, however, Djokovic’s quest for a record 25th Grand Slam title is under a cloud with the Serb building match fitness after undergoing knee surgery three weeks ago for an injury that prematurely ended his French Open.



Fellow 37-year-old and former champion Andy Murray is also in a race to be ready for what is likely his Wimbledon swansong after the injury-plagued Briton went under the knife last week for a back issue.

With Roger Federer retired and Rafa Nadal skipping Wimbledon to focus on next month’s Paris Olympics, the potential pullout of Djokovic would ensure the first Wimbledon without any of the Big Three since 1998.

All eyes would then be on Alcaraz and Sinner as they usher in a new era at Wimbledon.

“I don’t feel more pressure about playing a tournament that not one of the Big Three is playing in,” Alcaraz said last week before Djokovic arrived in London on Sunday to give fans hope.

Swiatek looks for a breakthrough

For all her achievements over the last few seasons, Iga Swiatek remains largely unproven on grasscourts, but the Pole will have a golden opportunity to claim a maiden Wimbledon title with her rivals hampered by injuries and illness before the Grand Slam.

The five-times major champion has been an unstoppable force since inheriting the world number one spot, although none of the 22 titles have come on the sport’s slickest surface.

But fresh from her fourth French Open title amid a 19-match winning streak stretching back to May, the 23-year-old will head to the All England Club primed to go past the quarter-finals for the first time and prove herself as an all-court player.



Even though the Cristiano Ronaldo-led Portugal looked confident in training, they have been a lot patchy on the field as Roberto Martinez’s side fell to a shock 2-0 defeat to debutants Georgia in their final Euro 2024 group game. They progressed as group champions regardless. However, as they face Slovenia in a Round of 16 game in Frankfurt on Monday, they will hope for a lot more potency up front, especially from star man Ronaldo who is yet to score in this edition of the tournament.

PHOTO: X

Misfiring France & Belgium on collision course

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By this stage of the European Championship, favourites France and contenders Belgium would have wanted to be well into their stride and hitting their straps as they enter the knockout stages.

Instead, the neighbours go spluttering into the last 16 and into a head-on collision in Duesseldorf on Monday after both failed to finish top of their first-round group.

France’s much-vaunted attack is suffering from a crisis of confidence and coach Didier Deschamps, usually a steady hand guiding the squad, looks unsure of what his next move will be.

Belgium will have had some motivation sucked out of their cause following an astonishingly hostile reaction from their own supporters after they limped into the next stage of the tournament in Germany.

Despite Wednesday’s draw with Ukraine assuring them progress, they were subjected to loud barracking from their fans and have since closed ranks.

Captain Kevin De Bruyne did

not take kindly to the abuse. His attitude and demeanour will set the tone for the rest of the Belgian side as they look to leave behind them the limp performances from the group stage.

De Bruyne did, however, later mention that they would “need the fans against France”. It is



understandable as Belgium will be looking for revenge against the French, who beat the Belgians in the 2018 World Cup semifinal to hand their so-called “golden generation” a bitter experience.

For that to happen, Romelu Lukaku would need to find his scoring touch after a number of missed opportunities in the

tournament. His record 85 goals for Belgium does not include any from Euro 2024, and overall he has a poor scoring record at major tournaments.

Few would have envisaged a French forward line failing to score in open play in their opening three matches at the tournament.

One of their two goals was a penalty by Kylian Mbappe and the other an own goal from Austria in their opening game.

Deschamps must now decide whether to restore Antoine Griezmann to the line-up and pair him up front with Mbappe.

Griezmann has been a long-time mainstay for Deschamps but was dropped for their last game, a 1-1 draw with Poland, which allowed Austria to emerge as unexpected winners of Group D, which also included the Netherlands.

As things stand, the oldest and most frequent opponents will hope for getting everything right, both tactically and selection wise, in order to get their rhythm back through this crucial encounter.