

It will be a different ball game: Rahane

Batsmen's mindset and ability to tweak technique will be key, says vice-captain on tackling the pink ball

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
INDORE

It's going to be a very "different ball game", India vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane asserted on Tuesday, saying the pink ball's extra lateral movement compared to the red cherry would force batsmen to play late and closer to the body.

Rahane, along with Test specialists Cheteshwar Pujara, Mayank Agarwal, Mohammed Shami and Ravindra Jadeja, had a couple of practice sessions with the pink ball under the watchful eyes of National Cricket Academy director Rahul Dravid in Bengaluru, building up to the historic day-night Test beginning on November 22.

Exciting

"We had two good practice sessions. Actually four, but two with pink balls — one during the day and one under lights. It was actually exciting," Rahane said ahead of the first Test against Bangladesh starting here on Thursday.

"It was my first time with the pink ball and definitely it's a different ball game as compared to the red ball. Our focus was to look into the swing and seam movement and also play close to the body," said Rahane.

The batsmen would have to tweak their technique, he opined.

"What we found out after the practice session was that the (new) pink ball does a lot more than the red ball. You have to play slightly late and close to your body. We had a word with Rahul bhai as he was also there."

During the couple of Duleep Trophy seasons with the



Kabaddi, kabaddi...! India skipper Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane prepare to come to grips with Bangladesh. • R.V. MOORTHY

pink ball, there were complaints about spinners going out of the equation.

"I think they played with the Kookaburra ball in the Duleep Trophy, that's a different thing. With the SG ball, I am not so sure. We played against spinners in Bengaluru and they were getting good revs (revolutions) on the ball. Yes, the shine is completely different to the red ball, but it's very hard to compare the SG and Kookaburra," he explained.

"I've never played with the pink ball. And what I've heard from others is that the Kookaburra is actually easy for the batsmen. What we saw in Bengaluru was that

the SG ball was doing a bit for the fast bowlers. For spinners, it is difficult."

He feels the primary objective would be to adjust to the pink ball "mentally" and hope for things to fall in place after that.

"I'm sure we'll get two good practice sessions in Kolkata. I'm sure everyone will adjust very quickly."

The schedule

- The first Test will be held in Indore from Nov. 14 to 18
- Kolkata will host the second Test (day-night) from Nov. 22 to 26

Return to the gully

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
INDORE

Indian captain Virat Kohli played gully cricket with children during a shoot in the Bicholi Mardana area here.

Downtime
Kohli, who was rested for the three-match T20 series against Bangladesh which India won 2-1, will lead the side for the two-match Test series beginning here on Thursday against the

visitors.

The video and photo of the shoot, which went viral, showed Kohli wearing a checked shirt and jeans and having fun with the children.

Both Indian and Bangladeshi squads practised at the Holkar stadium here ahead of the Test match.

Fans had gathered at the venue in large numbers to catch a glimpse of their favourite cricketers.

Kohli & Co. face the pink ball

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
INDORE

Skipper Virat Kohli had his first experience of negotiating a pink ball as the Indian players took turns to get used to the new colour during the net session ahead of the first Test against Bangladesh starting on Thursday.

The Indian team did not train under lights and the throwdowns with the SG pink ball was part of the traditional red-ball practice session.

It was skipper Kohli who first faced the pink ball. Though throwdown specialists Raghavendra and Sri Lankan Nuwan Senaviratne hurled the pink ball at express pace, the skipper looked comfortable. He fo-



At full tilt: The Indian players are leaving nothing to chance for the Test series against Bangladesh. • R.V. MOORTHY

cused more on playing defensive shots.

Meanwhile, seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar, recovering from a hamstring injury and side strain, participated in a skill session. "Bhuvu is here for a skill session with the

team. The team management just wants him to get into the groove," said a team source.

He had a catching session with fielding coach R. Sridhar and participated briefly in the net session.

Bangladesh wary of spin twins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
INDORE

It's India's fast bowling unit which is now feared in Tests but the Bangladesh batsmen

are more concerned about handling spin twins, R. Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, during the two-match series, said Mohammed Mithun on

Tuesday. Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma are expected to be more than a handful for Bangladesh during the series, but Mithun seemed more wary about the Ashwin-Jadeja threat.

"We all know the strength of their bowling. We are working on how to tackle their spinners as it is batting-friendly for the first two days but afterwards their spinners come into play and will try to attack the opposition," he said.

Technical aspect

"We are working on some technical aspects, keeping our focus on how to handle them," Mithun said. The Bangladesh players look to batting coach Neil McKenzie to help them decode the Indian spinners. "Let the technical things remain inside the dressing room," he said.



Hot seat: Skipper Mominul will hope to deliver. • R.V. MOORTHY

I kept believing in myself, says Chahar

'Worked hard for 15 years to come so far and won't let it go easily'



On the prowl: Deepak Chahar has made his presence felt with incisive spells. • AFP

SHAYAN ACHARYA
MUMBAI

The last few days have been like a fairytale for Deepak Chahar. On Sunday, he claimed a hat-trick and a record-breaking six-wicket haul in the third T20I against Bangladesh to help India to a series win in Nagpur. On Tuesday, he finished with a four-wicket haul for Rajasthan against Vidarbha in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

It was nine years ago that Chahar exploded on the scene, his eight-wicket burst helping Rajasthan skittle out Hyderabad for 21 in the Ranji Trophy. It has taken him a while to break into the Indian team, with injuries playing their part, but the 27-year-old has shown he belongs on the big stage. The pacer spoke to *Sportstar* on Tuesday.

Excerpts:
About the last few days: I am really happy. I have worked hard day in and day out and with god's blessings, I have been able to come so far. There have been times when I was not getting results despite the hard work, but I kept believing in myself.

The Nagpur game: Yes, I took six wickets in that match, but for me the best thing happened before the

match. I went to meet captain Rohit Sharma to discuss a few things. He told me, "You are not going to bowl with the new ball today. I will use you as (Jasprit) Bumrah." For me, those words were really motivating. For a young bowler like me, who has played only six international games, it is a matter of pride that your captain has so much trust in you. I am happy that I could justify his faith.

On the competition for spots: India now has the best fast-bowling attack and getting a place in the team is difficult. You have to perform in every game and you cannot afford to take any match lightly. Since I treat every game as my last one, that helps me stay focused and motivated. I have worked hard for 15 years to come so far, and I won't let it go easily.

The IPL experience: That was the best thing to have happened to me. We had to play seven matches in Chennai, and it was obvious that I had to bowl a lot of slower balls. So, I adjusted accordingly.

Before that, I had learnt the art of delivering knuckle balls. I also practised my yorkers a lot in the CSK nets. It has helped me immensely.

End of reform in sport: a 'no-change' ruling could salvage hope

N. Srinivasan well qualified to attend the ICC meeting



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

Did former President of the Board of Control for Cricket in India N. Srinivasan say "We are back" after the BCCI elections? Even if the words sound too cute, the concept is probably right. It means the hope of reform has ended, with the general body meeting on December 1 ready to roll back significant rulings by the Supreme Court.

Old-timers whose actions caused the Supreme Court to focus its attention on cricket administration are getting set to celebrate and to return the cricket board to the days when it was a feudal set-up ruled by a small coterie. This was what the court was trying to change, and what it still can if it puts its foot down.

From the start, the Supreme Court diluted many of its intentions, forgave BCCI its transgressions, and

allowed it to interpret the Lodha Committee reforms as it wished, or ignore them altogether.

The BCCI might effectively end reform in sports in general in India — the Indian Olympic Association and national sports federations will be emboldened to take a stronger stand against the sports code. This code was intended to set sports bodies on the path to better governance using terms foreign to them like "transparency" and "accountability."

The hope

The hope was that if the BCCI, the richest, most powerful and best-run sports body could be made to follow the new code, then it would be easier to get the others, most of whom depend on government handouts, have little say internationally and are often both corrupt and inefficient, to follow suit.

The objections have been basically personal, limited to looking after the office-bearers rather than the sportspeople or the sport itself, and arise out of a fear of long-serving officials being rendered irrelevant. Power, as Henry Kissinger said, is an

aphrodisiac, whether political or sporting, and in the case of the BCCI it usually means both.

Still, it is different with cricket because it generates its own funds, has a successful graduation system — from the junior levels to the international — and is more powerful than even the International Cricket Council.

The December 1 meeting will vote on making changes in the cooling off period of the office-bearers, an offshoot of which will see full terms for president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Sharma who otherwise have to quit office in ten months' time. It also envisages giving the secretary greater, possibly unprecedented powers, and ignoring the court if the constitution is changed.

Back to BCCI normal

In other words, things go back to BCCI normal (which is not the same as normal normal). Thus enormous amounts of money, time and effort would have been wasted in the last half decade on bringing some order to and modernising a sports body that desperately needed to be

brought into the 21st century.

The BCCI, now strengthened by the addition of the Home Minister's son and the brother of the Minister of state for Finance, has traditionally united all political parties. For decades, the ruling party and the opposition have stood shoulder-to-shoulder to oppose any reform, to fight any bill in Parliament that envisaged a reduction in their powers.

The BCCI argues that the Supreme Court has done its job and should now keep out, but that would be assuming that its rulings are followed in letter and spirit. Changes to the constitution that go against the rulings are obviously violations, and need to be seen as defying the edicts laid down by the highest court in the land.

This does not mean, however, that the Supreme Court needs to get into administration at the granular level — a mistake its Committee of Administrators made consistently. But if the BCCI is intent on ensuring, for example, that the money it loses out owing to the ICC's new and ridiculous plan of having more annual multi-nation tournaments,

then it needs to send a person to such meetings who has both the background and the authority to deal with it.

Here is where Srinivasan would make a difference. He is above 70, it is true, but that does not concern the ICC, and there is something to be said for continuity at the international level. The Supreme Court should temper justice with common sense.

If the BCCI has its way on December 1 — and it could be a unanimous endorsement of its proposals, not just the three-fourths needed — then it would be tantamount to ridiculing the Supreme Court, in the words of the secretary of the Lodha Committee which drafted the reforms later endorsed by the court.

What cannot be denied is that systems have to be put in place. Perhaps the Supreme Court could rule that no changes be made to the constitution for, say, two years. Then a review may be taken on how things have worked out before taking a call on the changes.

This will maintain the sanctity of the Supreme Court's rulings and be a practical guide on how to proceed.

Hearing ends in Dravid's Col case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The hearing in the alleged conflict of interest case involving Indian cricketering great Rahul Dravid concluded here on Tuesday with BCCI ethics officer D.K. Jain saying his "order can be expected soon".

MPCA life member Sanjiv Gupta had filed a complaint against Dravid, alleging conflict of interest in his current role as National Cricket Academy (NCA) Head and being an India Cements employee.

"The hearing has been concluded. You can expect my order soon," Jain said.

The 46-year-old former India captain had earlier explained his case in a personal hearing held in Mumbai on September 26.

However, the ethics officers asked Dravid to depose before him for a second time but on Monday.

Gritty Federer lives to fight another day



Pulling through: Roger Federer packed enough power to subdue Matteo Berrettini in his crucial group match on Tuesday. • AP

Zverev finally solves the Nadal puzzle

ATP FINALS

REUTERS
LONDON

Roger Federer got back on track at the ATP Finals with a 7-6(2), 6-3 defeat of Italian Matteo Berrettini on Tuesday.

Defeat by Dominic Thiem in his opening round-robin match on Sunday had left the six-time champion facing an early exit.

Berrettini was also coming off a heavy defeat by Novak Djokovic in his first appearance at the event, and the 23-year-old showed why he has made such an impact this year as he pushed Federer hard in the opening set.

He saved a set point at 5-6 but Federer squeezed the accelerator to win 10 of 11 points as he cruised through the tiebreak and broke to love at the start of the second.

Berrettini, the first Italian to qualify for the tournament

since 1978, had three break points in the eighth game but Federer served his way out of trouble.

Meanwhile on Monday, Rafael Nadal made a disappointing start as he suffered a first career loss to reigning champion Alexander Zverev, going down 6-2, 6-4.

Zverev broke serve in the fifth game and again two games later when Nadal blazed a wild forehand wide. Nadal dropped his serve again at the start of the second set and Zverev's rock solid delivery never allowed the Spaniard a glimpse of an opportunity.

The statistics told the story of the match with Zverev striking 26 winners to Nadal's 13 and winning 30 of 34 points behind his first serve.

The results: Group Bjorn Borg: Roger Federer bt Matteo Berrettini 7-6(2), 6-3. Group Andre Agassi: Alexander Zverev bt Rafael Nadal 6-2, 6-4.