

Pink or red, Shami can deliver: Saha

'Chances are less for the ball to reverse swing, but our bowlers have the talent to get it'



Race against time: Wriddhiman Saha feels that the Eden Test wouldn't affect the players' body clock. •K.R. DEEPAK

DAY-NIGHT TEST

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA
India's pace ace Mohammed Shami not only thrills the cricket lovers, but also instils confidence in his teammates. Ahead of the first pink-ball Test in the country, to be held here between India and Bangladesh from Friday, wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha, Shami's Bengal and India mate, said

the paceman – who had picked up seven wickets in the first-ever pink-ball match (between two local clubs) at the Eden Gardens in 2016 – could be devastating with any ball.

Bowler for all conditions
"Pink or red, I would have said the same (that he would do well). Shami has done well in recent matches. He does well in all conditions – in Ranchi (against South Afri-

ca) and the last Test (in Indore). He gets the ball to reverse swing and bowls with good pace. The ball won't matter, he will deliver and trouble the batsman," said Saha, prior to the home team's first practice session at the Eden Gardens on Wednesday evening.

Amidst speculation that the pacers might not extract reverse swing with the pink ball due to its extra shine, Saha backed the Indian seam-

ers who had tormented Bangladesh in the opening Test. "Chances are less for the ball to reverse swing with the pink ball, but our bowlers have the talent to get it."

Like many players and experts, Saha underlined that sighting the ball in the twilight might be challenging.

"Condition-wise, twilight time will be challenging, especially picking the ball. We have to adjust. (When) The ball is new, it might help pac-

Why pink?

• The pink ball was chosen as it lasted longer and was easier to sight in the night

• It was after experimenting with pink for a few years in First Class cricket that it made its Test debut in 2015

• All the 11 men's day-night Tests have produced a result

• Fast bowlers relish the prospect of bowling with the pink ball as its shine lasts longer and it is expected to swing more too

• The spinners wouldn't be as enthusiastic as the dew in the night, especially during the Indian winter, could make it

difficult for them to grip the ball

• It would be a challenge for the batsmen too as they have to deal with something they are not used to, including the colour of the ball



COMPILLED BY P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Twilight time will be the most crucial: Vettori

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

For Bangladesh, which traditionally fields a spin-dominated attack, the enthusiasm of its faster bowlers at the prospect of extracting massive movement with the pink ball has come as a pleasant surprise ahead of the second Test against India, starting at the Eden Gardens here on Friday.

The only pink-ball match in Bangladesh was held in 2013.

Nevertheless, the visiting pacers – Abu Jayed, Ebadot Hossain, Al Amin Hossain and Mustafizur Rehman – relished the sight of the pink ball and a pitch with a tinge of green at the first nets session of the team at the Eden Gardens on Wednesday morning.

"The four fast bowlers are excited. Bangladesh fast bowlers don't get to be excited too often. They are coming to grips with the ball. The SG pink ball is slightly different. Most guys' limited experience has been around the Kookaburra one. For us, as a team, the real joy is to be here," said Bangladesh's spin bowling consultant Daniel Vettori.

"The seamers did a great job in the last Test, so they will come to the fore. The re-laid wicket here has more bounce. It was watered today and is now covered. The seamers, because of the



Mushfiqur Rahim.
•K.R. DEEPAK

pink ball and under lights, will play a big part in this Test match."

Vettori said, even though the Indians were good against the spinners, the slow bowlers would have a role to play due to the 1 p.m. start. He added that the twilight time would be the most crucial phase.

"The challenge will be how much of the Test is under lights. The sun sets quite early here. That will be the time we will see the pink ball coming into play. My experiences are only from watching on TV. The twilight hours, dusk, seems to do a little bit more. That's going to be the exciting period."

Pakistan edges out India in the semifinals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DHAKA

India crashed out of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Emerging Teams Cup after losing by three runs to Pakistan in the first semifinal here on Wednesday.

After opting to bat, Pakistan scored 267 for seven in 50 overs with Omair Yousuf making 66 and then restricted India to 264 for eight. Sanvir Singh (76) was the top-scorer.

The scores:

Pakistan 267/7 in 50 overs (Omair Yousuf 66, Haider Ali 43, Said Badar 47 n.o., Rohail Nazir 35) bt India 264/8 in 50 overs (B.R. Sharath 47, Sanvir Singh 76, Armaan Jaffer 46).

The finishing touch



Leaving no stone unturned: Work is on in full swing to get the Eden Gardens ready for the day-night Test between India and Bangladesh which gets underway on Friday. •K.R. DEEPAK

ers. It can be challenging for the batters.

"If it is challenging for slips, it is so for me as well. The ball bobbles when our pacers bowl, but I have to accept the challenges," he added.

"Every international match is a challenge. We have more experience with the pink ball, but with twilight period coming into play and considering the dew factor, we have to apply

ourselves."

Saha said since the players were used to playing one-day and T20 matches in the evening, the new schedule for the Test would not affect their body clock. The India stumper was excited at the prospect of playing before a full house. "We are hearing tickets have been sold out for three-four days. If a Test match is played in front of a full house, the thrill is different," said Saha.

India squads for WI series to be picked today

TEAM SELECTION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

Vice-captain Rohit Sharma's workload management and opener Shikhar Dhawan's poor form are expected to dominate the deliberations when the national selection committee meets here on Thursday to decide on India's limited-over squads for the home series against the West Indies.

The Indian team is scheduled to play three T20Is and as many ODIs against the West Indies.

Last meeting

This is likely to be the last meeting chaired by M.S.K. Prasad as he and Central Zone selector Gagan Khoda are on their way out, having

WI in India schedule

T20Is

Dec. 6: Mumbai

Dec. 8: Thiruvananthapuram

Dec. 11: Hyderabad

ODIs

Dec. 15: Chennai

Dec. 18: Visakhapatnam

Dec. 22: Cuttack

completed four years.

If all goes well, Rohit may get some well-deserved rest during the three-match ODI series against the Caribbean team so that he is fresh and rejuvenated for the tough tour of New Zealand next year.

India will play five T20Is, three ODIs and two Tests in New Zealand.

Question mark over Mumbai T20I on Dec. 6

AMOL KARHADKAR & SHAYAN ACHARYA
MUMBAI

Less than three weeks before Mumbai's first international cricket match in two years, a question mark has arisen over scheduling of the match due to security reasons.

As a result, the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) has convened an emergent apex council meeting on Thursday after the Mumbai Police asked it to reschedule the match from December 6.

The Hindu understands that, on Wednesday, the Mumbai Police formally in-

formed the MCA that the police force would be unable to provide security cover for the game on December 6.

Since it is the death anniversary of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, lakhs of his followers will head to Dadar to pay their homage to him.

According to an MCA official, the association may, on Thursday, request the BCCI that the match may be swapped with one of the other venues for the series.

The Wankhede Stadium last hosted an international match in December 2017, when India played Sri Lanka in a T20I.

Smooth start for Serbia

Nadal sparks a Spanish comeback; Canada makes last eight

DAVIS CUP

REUTERS
MADRID

Novak Djokovic played his part as Serbia blanked Japan 3-0 in Group A of the Davis Cup Finals here on Wednesday.

The 16-time Grand Slam champion cruised to a 6-1, 6-2 win over 73rd-ranked Yoshihito Nishioka for his 13th straight Davis Cup singles victory. Earlier Filip Krajinovic had beaten Yuichi Sugita 6-2, 6-4 in the first match.

The former champion wrapped up the match with Janko Tipsarevic and Viktor Troicki posting a 7-6(5), 7-6(4) win over Ben McLachlan and Yasutaka Uchiyama.

Meanwhile on Tuesday, a sell-out crowd in the cavernous 12,500-seat La Caja Magica roared the World No.1 and local hero Rafael Nadal to a 6-3, 7-6(7) win over Russia's Karen Khachanov.

While the reaction to Nadal's victory sounded like Spain had won the old trophy for a sixth time, it actually just levelled the Group B tie at 1-1. The victory would come shortly when the veteran duo Feliciano Lopez and Marcel Granollers beat Khachanov and Andrey Rublev 6-4, 7-6(5) to clinch a 2-1 win.

With Russia having beaten holder Croatia 3-0 on Monday there was some anxiety on the Spain bench when Rublev surged back to beat Wimbledon semifinalist



Pumped up: Rafael Nadal, backed by a boisterous home crowd, helped Spain draw level with Russia on Tuesday. •AFP

Roberto Bautista Agut 3-6, 6-3, 7-6(0) and put it ahead.

Canada became the first nation through to the last eight after beating the USA for the first time in 16 attempts. Vasek Pospisil edged youngster Reilly Opelka 7-6(5), 7-6(7) before Denis Shapovalov beat Taylor Fritz. Canada's second 2-1 win sealed top spot in Group F.

Easy for Australia

Canada could face Australia in the last eight after Nick Kyrgios returned from a two-month lay-off to put his team on the way to a 3-0 win over Colombia in Group D.

The results: Group A: Serbia bt Japan 3-0 [Filip Krajinovic bt Yuichi Sugita 6-2, 6-4; Novak Djokovic bt Yoshihito Nishio 6-1, 6-2; Janko Tipsarevic &

Viktor Troicki bt Ben McLachlan & Yasutaka Uchiyama 7-6(5), 7-6(4)].

On Tuesday: Group B: Spain bt Russia 2-1 [Roberto Bautista Agut lost to Andrey Rublev 3-6, 6-3, 7-6(0); Rafael Nadal bt Karen Khachanov 6-3, 7-6(7); Marcel Granollers & Feliciano Lopez bt Khachanov & Rublev 6-4, 7-6(5)].

Group D: Australia bt Colombia 3-0 [Nick Kyrgios bt Alejandro Gonzalez 6-4, 6-4; Alex de Minaur bt Daniel Elahi Galan 6-4, 6-3; John Peers & Jordan Thompson bt Juan-Sebastian Cabal & Robert Farah 6-3, 3-6, 7-6(6)].

Group F: Canada bt USA 2-1 [Vasek Pospisil bt Reilly Opelka 7-6(5), 7-6(7); Denis Shapovalov bt Taylor Fritz 7-6(6), 6-3; Pospisil & Shapovalov lost to Sam Querrey & Jack Sock, walkover (counted as a 6-0, 6-0 win)].

Pakistan names two 17-year-olds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Pakistan has been forced to pick two rookie 17-year-olds for its Davis Cup encounter against a full-strength Indian squad, after senior players Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi and Aqeel Khan pulled out, protesting against the tie being shifted to a neutral venue.

The Pakistan Tennis Federation named Huzaifa Abdul Rehman and Shoab Khan, ranked 446 and 1004 respectively, in the junior ITF ranking list.

RAKESH RAO
KOLKATA

The amused-look on the faces of Ding Liren and Hikaru Nakamura said it all.

In chess terms, one is the strongest Chinese and the other, the strongest of Japanese origin. The duo stared at the worn-out chessboard on which they were expected to play a rapid game for the benefit of a crowd of at least 100 under the Gariahat flyover.

Indeed, it was a one-of-a-kind experience for these illustrious practitioners of the cerebral sport. The blaring traffic passed from left, right and above.

In the presence of Grandmaster Dibyendu Barua and Woman Grandmaster Tania Sachdev, members of the Ga-

Humour-filled session with Hari and Giri

RAKESH RAO
KOLKATA

More often than not, the staid ways of chess players lead to the impression that they are introverts and can be boring. Contrary to this image, many chess players are very social and armed with a fine sense of humour.

Viswanathan Anand has always been known for his way with words. From the current generation, Anish Giri clearly has the reputation of being deadpan, unleashing witty lines.

The World No. 5 gave ample evidence of his humour, along with P. Hari Krishna, when they met chess-playing children from the Alekhine



Kings of wit! Giri and Hari's answers had the Alekhine Chess Club players in splits. •RAJEEV BHATT

Chess Club on Wednesday. Giri, of Nepalese-origin and representing the Netherlands, set the ball rolling with his very first response. Asked how hard he worked

on his chess, the bespectacled player responded: "Very hard!" This triggered off a round of laughter that soon became the norm for the rest of the evening.

The players, prodigies in their time, took jibes at each other, all in good fun, as they shared their knowledge with the children. All through the session, the duo kept their answers, laced with humour, short and simple.

Hari underlined the importance of enjoying the process of training. "If you are enjoying spending time over the board, you are sure to get better," he said.

On dealing with defeats, Hari said, "as you become stronger, it becomes increasingly difficult to deal with defeats. It is far more difficult than what it is at your level. One has to analyse the mistakes and learn from them."

Amid the city's chaos, two stars play chess under a flyover!



Quite an audience! Hikaru Nakamura and Ding Liren play a rapid game for the benefit of a crowd of at least 100 under the Gariahat flyover. •RAJEEV BHATT

riahat Chess Club, chess-playing children, their parents and coaches, were al-

most falling over Ding Liren and Nakamura to get up close to the action. Within

minutes, they drew and then went on to play quick games with some select youngsters.

For Liren, presently ranked third in the world, the experience was "very different." For someone who has maintained his rating in above 2800 since September last year, keeping his smile intact with a growing number of requests for selfies and autographs was not difficult.

"It is great to see people play chess without letting anything bother them. I haven't seen anything like this. Unlike the noiseless ambience where chess is played, this was fun."

Tough year

Unlike Liren, Nakamura has very little to be excited about

in 2019.

But this experience of playing chess, with blaring horns and moving traffic providing the background music, brought repeated smiles on Nakamura's face.

"It's incredible to find so many people eager to see us play. Last year, I remember, the crowd for the tournament was huge," said the champion of the 2018 edition of the Tata Steel rapid and blitz tournament.

Looking at his modest form this year, Nakamura said, "No doubt, I've struggled.

"The quality of my games has been good but it does not show in results. So, moving ahead, I need to prepare better so that I get the desired results."