

Bumrah and Shami need to fire

Both got their lengths wrong at Basin Reserve and let the Kiwi tail wag

INDIA IN NZ

S. DINAKAR
WELLINGTON

India has a bunch of world-class pacemen who have been slicing through lines-up both away and home in the last two years.

And there is intense competition for places. Not many teams would have someone of the quality of Umesh Yadav cooling the bench.

But the pace attack on view at the Basin Reserve, with the exception of Ishant Sharma, largely disappointed.

Let's take the case of Jasprit Bumrah. He was among the key factors in India's maiden Test series triumph in Australia last season. With his whippy and deceptive action, he was quick off the pitch, had a nasty short ball and a telling yorker.

Bumrah moved the new ball just enough to find the edge and, when the sphere became older, struck with reverse swing. His pace seldom dropped below 140 kmph even at the fag end of the day, something that impressed pace legend Glenn McGrath.

Just a shadow

Yet, the Bumrah seemed a shadow of his former self at the Basin Reserve. The nip off the track was missing.

Bumrah had spent a long period in the sidelines tending to a rather serious injury, stress fracture of the lower back.

He did not undergo surgery and when he came back, he was drafted into the shorter formats. Except for the game at Mount Maunganui, where he scalped three, Bumrah had a lacklustre T20I series in New Zealand.

And in the ODI series, he conceded 50 or more runs in each of the three games without picking a wicket. The alarm bells were ringing.

In the first Test at the Basin Reserve, one got the im-



Job on hand: Bowling coach B. Arun has to find a quick fix to the chinks in the armour of Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah. ■ AP

pression that Bumrah was not letting it rip; perhaps the back injury was playing on his mind.

There were times when Bumrah appeared pedestrian. The explosive release with the arm-speed was absent and the Kiwis were able to play him comfortably.

Down on speed

Bumrah appeared down on speed and was not bowling the right length for the Basin Reserve surface. The seamer pitched short of a good length when he should have, ideally, pitched the ball up.

By not pitching up and drawing the batsman into a drive, Bumrah was not giving the ball a chance to swing. And he was bowling on middle and off-stump when his line should have been off-stump or just outside it.

In fact, it was this line that fetched Bumrah his only

wicket of the Test when he had B.J. Watling caught behind.

This was a Test where even the Kiwi lower order batsmen were able to pick his yorker – a major delivery in Bumrah's arsenal – and dig it out. Bumrah was missing the extra speed that gave his bowling the cutting edge.

No reverse swing

And there was no reverse swing for him either. If someone such as Bumrah finishes with 1/88, the Indian bowling has a problem.

Mohammed Shami too had an ordinary Test, given the high benchmark he has set for himself. Like Bumrah, he, carried away by the grass, bowled the wrong length, only rarely pitching the ball up. Shami is a pacesman who relies on the fluency of his run-up to generate

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■ In the first Test, the last three New Zealand wickets added 123 precious runs

speed. Then he uses his wrists and seam position for movement.

However, the stiff breeze at the Basin Reserve appeared to have adversely impacted the rhythm in Shami's run-up and the rest of his bowling suffered.

India normally blows away the tail. In the first Test, the last three New Zealand wickets added 123 precious runs.

It was a massive phase of the match. The pacemen have to get their act together at Christchurch.

Tennis - I'm saying goodbye

Sharapova announced her decision in an article for *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Five-time Grand Slam winner Maria Sharapova, one of the world's most recognisable sportswomen, on Wednesday announced her retirement at the age of 32.

"Tennis - I'm saying goodbye," Sharapova said in an article for *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* magazines.

"After 28 years and five Grand Slam titles, though, I'm ready to scale another mountain - to compete on a different type of terrain."

Sharapova burst onto the scene as a supremely gifted teenager and won her Grand Slams before serving a 15-month ban for failing a drugs test at the 2016 Australian Open. The Russian's ranking is currently 373.

Sharapova has hardly played in the past year because of long-standing shoulder problems.

Sharapova shot to fame as a giggly 17-year-old Wimbledon winner in 2004, the third-youngest player to conquer the All England Club's hallowed grass courts.

Give me life

She became World No. 1 in 2005 and won the US Open the next year. "One of the keys to my success was that I never looked back and I never looked forward," Sharapova said on Wednesday.

"I'll miss it everyday. I'll miss the training and my daily routine: Waking up at dawn, lacing my left shoe before my right, and closing the court's gate before I hit my first ball of the day.

"I'll miss my team, my coaches. I'll miss the moments sitting with my father on the practice court bench. The handshakes - win or lose - and the athletes, whether they knew it or not, who pushed me to be my best.

"Looking back now, I realise that tennis has been my mountain. My path has been filled with valleys and detours, but the views from its peak were incredible."

The Maria file

Age: 32 Current ranking: 373

Career high: No. 1 (Aug. 22, 2005) Singles Titles: 36

Career Prize Money: \$38,777,962

Career record (Win/Loss): Singles: 645/171

CAREER FACTOID

2001: Played first event at ITF/Sarasota-USA

2002: Figured in her first two WTA main draws, reaching the second round at Indian Wells and losing in the first round at Tokyo (Japan Open)

■ Bagged three singles titles on the ITF Circuit

2003: Burst into the top-50 for the first time; Clinched two WTA crowns (Japan Open and Quebec City)

■ Made her debut at all four Majors (Best result: Fourth round at Wimbledon)

2004: Finished in the top-5 (ended year at No. 4)

■ The 17-year-old created a ripple by stunning Serena Williams in the Wimbledon final and becoming the fourth youngest Grand Slam champion in the Open Era after Martina Hingis, Monica Seles and Tracy Austin

2005: Reached the summit of the rankings for the first time on August 22

2015: Her last Grand Slam final appearance (Australian Open, lost to Serena)

2016: Handed a ban for failing a drug test at the Australian Open

GRAND SLAM COLLECTION

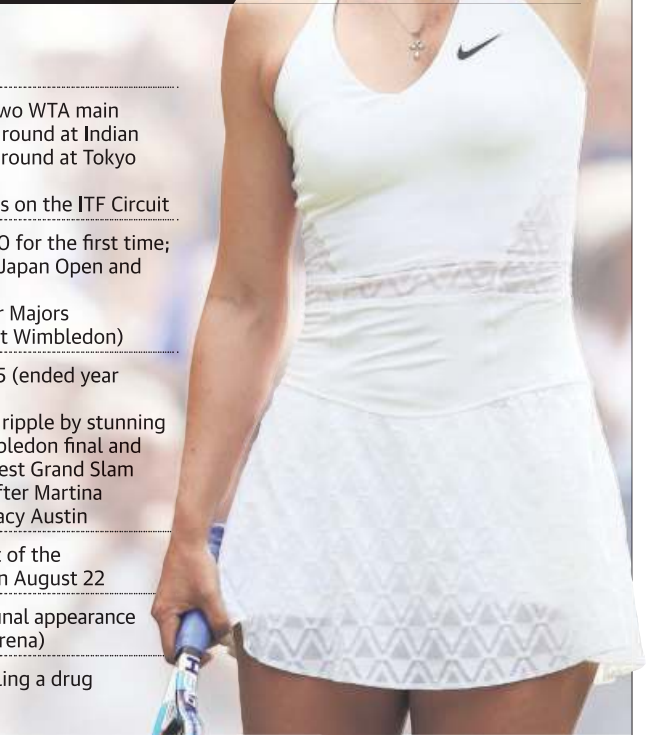
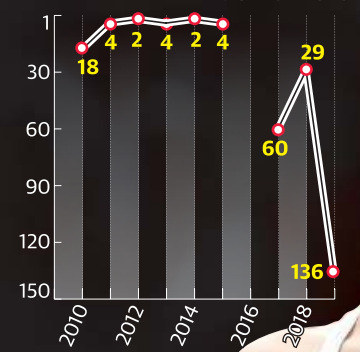
Wimbledon: 2004 | US Open: 2006

Australian Open: 2008 | French Open: 2012, 2014

OTHER MAJOR TROPHIES

2004: WTA Tour Championships | 2008: Fed Cup
2012: Silver (London Olympic Games)

YEAR-END RANKING SINCE 2010:



Tennis showed me the world – and it showed me what I was made of. It's how I tested myself and how I measured my growth. And so in whatever I might choose for my next chapter, my next mountain, I'll still be pushing. I'll still be climbing. I'll still be growing. Tennis – I'm saying goodbye

MARIA SHARAPOVA

SOURCE: WTA

THE CAREER GRAND SLAM CLUB (WOMEN):

Maureen Connolly
Doris Hart | Shirley Fry
Margaret Court
Billie Jean King | Chris Evert
Martina Navratilova
Steffi Graf | Serena Williams
Maria Sharapova

COMPILED BY ANIRUDH VELAMURI

Australia too hot for SA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CAPE TOWN

Australia trounced South Africa by 97 runs in the third and final T20I at Newlands here on Wednesday to win the series 2-1.

Sent in to bat, Australia made an imposing 193 for five in its 20 overs. David Warner (57, 37b, 5x4, 2x6) and Aaron Finch (55, 37b, 6x4, 1x6) added 120 for the opening wicket in just 11.3 overs before the former departed.

A late flourish by Steve Smith (30 not out, 15b, 2x6) took the visitors close to 200.

South Africa simply collapsed in the face of a daunting chase and was bowled out for 96, with Mitchell Starc and Ashton Agar picking up three wickets apiece.

The scores: Australia 193/5 in 20 overs (David Warner 57, Aaron Finch 55, Steve Smith 30 n.o.) bt South Africa 96 in 15.3 overs (Mitchell Starc 3/23, Ashton Agar 3/16, Adam Zampa 2/10).

Sri Lanka hammers WI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HAMBANTOTA

Sri Lanka crushed West Indies by 161 runs in the second one-day international to clinch the series here on Wednesday.

Chasing 346 for victory, West Indies was bowled out for 184 in 39.1 overs. Earlier, Avishka Fernando (127) and Kusal Mendis (119) put on 239 as the hosts amassed 345 for eight after being put in to bat.

The scores: Sri Lanka 345/8 in 50 overs (Avishka Fernando 127, Kusal Mendis 119, Thisara Perera 36, Sheldon Cottrell 4/67, Alzarri Joseph 3/57) bt West Indies 184 in 39.1 overs (Shai Hope 51, Nicholas Poonran 31, Wanindu Hasaranga 3/30, Lakshan Sandakan 3/57).

Edgar goes down memory lane

EXCLUSIVE

S. DINAKAR
WELLINGTON

Bruce Edgar was a tenacious left-handed opener who took on the fastest of bowlers in the golden era for pacemen – the 70s and the 80s – without flinching.

People who saw him bat talk about his courage and heart. And Edgar, the New Zealand chief selector not too long ago, has interesting tales to tell.

The southpaw was part of a competitive New Zealand side, making 1958 Test runs and 1814 ODI runs at 30.59 and 30.74 respectively.

Edgar, who looks much younger than his 63 years, recalls the first Test of the series against the all-conquering Clive Lloyd's West Indians at Dunedin in 1980.

Flying kick

Michael Holding sent down a vicious delivery that hit John Parkar on the gloves and then travelled to 'keeper Deryck Murray. The umpire shockingly gave 'not out' and Holding produced a flying kick to knock the stump out of the ground.

Edgar saw the humorous side of it. "It was funny. Parkar was in pain. He even removed his gloves! The ball had struck him there. But then, the umpire had given him not out!"

"The umpires were crouching on their knees looking for no-balls. By the time they looked up, the ball had already passed the batsman and was being relayed by 'keeper Murray to Alvin Kallicharran at gully! Those guys were so quick."

Edgar made a typically gutsy 65 in the first innings. But he too could not escape a sharp comment. "Kallicharran, always talkative, shouted from gully after an appeal was negated. 'Is he



Bruce Edgar. ■ S. DINAKAR

[the umpire] your father?"

Blood and guts

New Zealand won the series 1-0 and Edgar made blood and guts 127 in the third Test at Auckland, taking on Andy Roberts, Michael Holding, Joel Garner and Colin Croft.

The southpaw, a chartered accountant by profession, said, "Holding was the quickest, Roberts spoke very little and hated batsmen, Garner had bounce and Croft was awkward with his run-up and angle."

Edgar was part of the infamous ODI where Greg Chappell asked his brother Trevor to bowl underarm. "Greg bullied Trevor to bowl underarm. I became good friends with Greg later. And I told him he had done the single biggest thing to promote cricket in New Zealand!"

Edgar played his cricket in a different era where his mom used to stitch his chest guard. And the New Zealanders, minutes before entering the arena for the WSC games in front of 50,000 spectators, would be washing and ironing their clothes in their hotel rooms.

And exchanging jerseys with Gundappa Viswanath, "a fine player and a lovely chap," remains among his favourite memories. Edgar is never short of a tale.

India eyes third victory

It has been impressive in batting and bowling, takes on NZ

T20 WORLD CUP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

On a high after two victories on the trot, including one against defending champion Australia, the Indian women's cricket will aim to inch closer to a semifinal berth when it takes on New Zealand in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup here on Thursday.

India hardly broke a sweat during its 17-run and 18-run wins over host Australia and Bangladesh in its previous two matches and is perched atop the five-team Group A standings with four points from two matches.

A victory against New Zealand on Thursday will take the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side on the threshold of a knock-out stage spot, to be competed among the top two teams from Groups A and B.

India has been impressive both in batting and bowling in its two matches.

The 16-year-old sensation Shafali Verma has been a standout with the bat. She scored a whirlwind 17-ball 39 against Bangladesh, following 29 against Australia.



Sensational: The 16-year-old Shafali has been a standout with the bat for India. ■ COURTESY: ICC

No. 3 Jemimah Rodrigues has also been among the runs with knocks of 26 and 34.

Among the top order, only captain Harmanpreet has not scored many runs and is due for a big innings.

Smriti set to return

India is also likely to be bolstered by the return of star opener Smriti Mandhana, who missed the match against Bangladesh due to fever.

The middle order has also done its bit with Deepti Sharma playing a major role against Australia with an unbeaten 49 while Veda Krishnamurthy hit a match-defining 11-ball 20 not out for a late flourish against Bangladesh.

The bowling has been led admirably by seasoned leg-spinner Poonam Yadav – seven wickets in two matches – with pacer Shikha Pandey ably supporting her with five scalps.

New Zealand, though, has a better head-to-head record against India in recent years, having won the last three matches between the two sides. Exactly a year ago, it defeated India 3-0 in a three-

match T20I series at home.

Top-class players

New Zealand has some top-class players in its ranks in the form of captain and all-rounder Sophie Devine and top-order batswoman Suzie Bates. Pacer Lea Tahuhu and leg-spinner Amelia Kerr will lead the bowling.

The team will go into this match on a high after an easy seven-wicket win over Sri Lanka on Saturday. Devine had led from the front with an unbeaten 75 off 55 balls at the top of the order.

The teams (from):

India: Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Deepti Sharma, Shafali Verma, Poonam Yadav, Radha Yadav, Taniya Bhatia (wk), Harleen Deol, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Richa Ghosh, Veda Krishnamurthy, Shikha Pandey, Arundhati Reddy and Pooja Vastrakar.

New Zealand: Sophie Devine (Capt.), Rosemary Mair, Amelia Kerr, Suzie Bates, Lauren Down, Maddy Green, Holly Huddlestone, Hayley Jensen, Leigh Kasperek, Jess Kerr, Katelyn Martin (wk), Katie Perkins, Anna Peterson, Rachel Priest and Lea Tahuhu.

Match Starts at 9:30 a.m. IST.

Pakistan stuns West Indies

Knight stars for England



On the go: Heather Knight smashed the first century of the tournament against a hapless Thailand attack. ■ GETTY IMAGES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CANNBERA

Skipper Bismah Maroof anchored the chase admirably as Pakistan shocked former champion West Indies by eight wickets in its opening match of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup here on Wednesday.

Diana Baig's fierce spell of fast bowling exposed the Windies top-order as it posted 124 for seven, courtesy Stafanie Taylor (43) and Shemaine Campbelle (43).

In reply, Pakistan openers Javeria Khan and Muneeba Ali put on 58 before Maroof's unbeaten 38 steered her side to a comfortable win with 10 balls to spare.

Earlier, England captain Heather Knight smashed the first century of the Twenty20 World Cup as her team got its campaign back on track with a crushing 98-run win over minnows Thailand.

The 2009 champion had looked vulnerable as it crashed to a six-wicket defeat against South Africa in the opening Group B game on Sunday, following a shock 10-wicket hammering by Sri Lanka in the final warm-up last week.

Knight hit an unbeaten 108 in a tournament-best 169-run partnership with Natalie Sciver (59 not out) to secure a vital win. England's 176 for two was also the highest score by any team so far.

England plays Pakistan on Friday, while South Africa faces Thailand.

"We were gutted after the performance the other day so it was very important that we bounced back with a decent performance here," said Knight.

"It was a challenging game for us, but we tried our best," said Thailand captain Somnarin Tippoch.

The scores: England 176/2 in 20 overs (Natalie Sciver 59 n.o., Heather Knight 108 n.o.) bt Thailand 78/7 in 20 overs (Nattakan Chantam 32, Anya Shrubsole 3/21).

West Indies 124/7 in 20 overs (Shemaine Campbelle 43, Stafanie Taylor 43) lost to Pakistan 127/2 in 18.2 overs (Javeria Khan 35, Bismah Maroof 38 n.o.).

■ Heather Knight becomes the first woman to score a century in all three formats