

Ranji Trophy: Harmeet Singh spins it in Mumbai's favour

Hosts take crucial first-innings lead after left-arm spinner takes 6/139 to bowl Karnataka out for 415

Young left-arm spinner Harmeet Singh bowled his heart out for Mumbai on a pitch that was still a batting beauty.

The 22-year-old former Under-19 World Cup star tried a lot on a helpless pitch, changing his angle, using the return crease to the maximum and bowling on the rough. He even changed ends before eventually settling down to bowl from the North Stand end to finish with career-best figures of 6/139, helping Mumbai take a 21-run first-innings lead.

Playing only his second match of the season and seventh of his career since his debut in November 2009, Harmeet was largely responsible for bowling Karnataka out for 415. Resuming Day 3 at 175/2 in reply to Mumbai's first innings total of 436, Karnataka were bowled out with 37 minutes left for stumps. Mumbai, in their second innings, were 19 without loss, enjoying an overall lead of 40.

With the first-innings lead and three points that go with it in Mumbai's kitty, the 40-time champions have to hope that neither Baroda, [Madhya Pradesh](#) nor Railways post outright wins in their respective Group A matches. With even one of them winning outright, it is curtains for Mumbai this season as this match does not look like yielding an outright win.

While it looked like an unrewarding day for the bowlers in the first session with Karnataka losing only one wicket and overnight not out batsman Ravikumar Samarth and debutant Shishir Bhavane showing no signs of discomfort, Mumbai came back in the second and third sessions of the day.

Shardul Thakur started the day's proceedings, striking in his first over by sending back Manish Pandey caught and bowled. Karnataka had set out to not only bat out Mumbai but also to counter-attack, or at least show the intent to do so.

After Pandey's fall, Samarth and Bhavane frustrated the Mumbai bowlers, who had to pay for the kind of surface that has been prepared for this encounter with no assistance on it.

Samarth completed his maiden Ranji century in his seventh appearance by cutting part-time off-spinner Sidhesh Lad to the vacant third man for four. Samarth's long vigil -- he batted for 13 minutes short of nine hours for 180 -- ended when he was done in by Harmeet, the ball rising sharply and taking the edge to the waiting slip cordon.

It was a victory of sorts for Harmeet, who worked on Samarth's patience as the right-handed opener had stubbornly holding his end up.

The aggressive batsman of the two in the morning, Bhavane, 23, received his maiden cap here on the back of his player-of-the-tournament performance in the Karnataka Premier League Twenty20 competition in September 2014. He showed that he was also cut out for the long format. Reaching his maiden half-century in a hurry -- he got there in just 63 balls with 10 fours -- he changed gears despite batting only getting easier. He consumed 70 deliveries to score the next 12 runs before edging Balwinder Sandhu behind to Aditya Tare's gloves when the second new ball was 22 overs old, bringing an end to the 136-run stand for the fourth wicket.

However, Samarth batted on until he was seventh out with Karnataka still 55 behind the Mumbai total. The first innings lead was Karnataka's for the taking but their lower order, who are capable of wielding the bat, collapsed to Harmeet's guiles.

Harmeet looked like the only one who could help Mumbai polish off Karnataka and proved it on the day. His last spell lasted 16 overs, in which he took four wickets for 36 runs. This was Harmeet's second five-wicket haul in Ranji Trophy.

Before start of play, there was a little presentation in the Mumbai camp when their coach, Praveen Amre, handed over Rs 1,000 each from his pocket to first-time centurions Lad and Nikhil Patil, something the former India batsman has been practicing whenever he is the coach.

"I like to reward my players with Rs 1,000 each for their maiden century or first five-wicket haul," Amre told dna.

SCOREBOARD:

Mumbai (1st innings): 436

Karnataka (1st innings, o/n 175/2): R Samarth c Yadav b Singh 180, M Pandey c&b Singh 5, S Bhavane c Tare b Sandhu 62, S Gopal c Nayar b Girap 16, CM Gautam c Yadav b Singh 9, [R Vinay Kumar](#) st Tare b Singh 18, A Mithun not out 22, U Patel lbw Singh 8, S Aravind c Tare b Thakur 2

Extras (B4 LB1 W1 NB3) 9

Total (all out, 139.4 overs) 415

Fall of wickets: 2-166 (Kapoor), 3-181 (Pandey), 4-317 (Bhavane), 5-337 (Gopal), 6-358 (Gautam), 7-381 (Samarth), 8-390 (Kumar), 9-412 (Patel)

Bowling: **S Thakur 28.4-4-98-1**, BS Sandhu 18-6-22-1, **H Singh 50-8-139-6**, A Girap 38-1-128-2, S Lad 5-0-23-0

Mumbai (2nd innings): S Mangela batting 9, A Tare batting 9

Extras (NB1) 1

Total (for no loss, 8 overs) 19

Bowling: R Vinay Kumar 3-2-5-0, A Mithun 3-0-9-0, S Gopal 1-1-0-0, S Aravind 1-0-5-0