

-9th February, 2015

Ranji Trophy, Rd 9, Group A, Day 3: Harmeet claims six to help Mumbai take lead against Karnataka

Mumbai: Leftarm spinner Harmeet Singh claimed six wickets, including that of maiden centurion R Samarth, to help hosts Mumbai take a first-innings lead of 21 runs on Day 3 against Karnataka on Sunday.

The defending champions, who have already booked their berth in the knockout quarter-finals, looked on course to take the lead at 317 for three before losing their last seven wickets for 98 runs to be all out for 415, 37 minutes before the scheduled close on the penultimate day of the game.

And in eight overs before stumps, Mumbai, with their hopes of qualifying for the knockout depending on an outright victory, ended with 19 without loss. Openers Shrideep Mangela and skipper Aditya Tare were the unbeaten with identical nine runs each.

At stumps, Mumbai were ahead by 40 runs and are expected to press for victory on the final day on Monday.

Samarth, not out on 85 in a team score of 175 for two chasing Mumbai's first-innings total of 436, batted for the first two sessions before becoming the third victim of Harmeet during a purple patch, which saw him bag four wickets in 31 balls on either side of tea, to trigger a collapse.

Samarth showed good judgment outside the off stump against the pace bowlers and was composed against the spinners to make a patient 180 in 523 minutes during which he faced 400 balls and struck 16 fours and a six.

The 22-year-old Mysore-born Samarth, playing his seventh first class game since making his debut in 2013 as regular opener K L Rahul was rested, and another youngster Shishir Bhavane (62 with 11 fours in 133 balls), put on 136 runs for the fourth wicket in 287 balls and 194 minutes that took Karnataka past the 300 mark.

However, the dismissal of Bhavane in the second session enabled Harmeet who took 6 for 139 - his second five-wicket haul - to slice through the visiting team's line-up.

Harmeet, also playing only his seventh Ranji game, bagged the wickets of C Gautham, whom he sent back in the last over before tea by turning the ball across the face of the bat, then had rival skipper Vinay Kumar stumped, foxed the well-set Samarth with another turning ball and then trapped Udit Patel leg before during his spell while giving away 14 runs.

Offspinner Akshay Girap took two wickets while Sandhu and fellow medium-pacer Shardul Thakur got a wicket apiece.

In the morning, Harmeet, who had missed the entire 2013-14 season because he was not selected, had accounted for Manish Pandey early after having trapped opener Robin Uthappa last evening to break the opening wicket partnership.

Brief scores: Mumbai 436 all out and 19 for no loss in 8 overs. Karnataka 415 all out in 139.4 overs (R Uthappa 49, R Samarth 180, K Kapoor 35, S Bhavane 62; Harmeet Singh 6 for 139, A Girap 2 for 128).