

Shardul Thakur: The next big product of Mumbai cricket

Shardul Thakur has already taken 23 wickets in the ongoing Ranji Trophy



At 5'9", [Shardul Thakur](#) may not be your typical fast bowler. But give him a ball in hand and he can be more threatening than any other pacer. In the absence of an injured Zaheer Khan and Dhawal Kulkarni (on national duty), the 23-year-old Thakur has played the role of [Mumbai](#)'s leading bowler with aplomb. Such has been his impact that he is currently the leading wicket-taker this season, with 23 wickets in four [Ranji Trophy](#) games. He has three five-wicket hauls to his credit, including a match-winning six for 53 against Uttar Pradesh. He finished with a career-best nine for 123 in that match.

For a bowler who was criticised for being overweight — 83kg — and erratic in his debut season two years back, Thakur has come a long way to being the best bowler of the side.

“Yes, sometimes I wish I was taller, with a typical fast bowlers’ physique, but it doesn’t matter. I am doing justice to the role considering that we don’t have Dhawal and Zaheer. It is a challenge and I am relishing it,” Thakur says.

It was a lot of hardwork with Mumbai bowling coach Omkar Salvi in the off season that has finally bore fruit for Thakur. “We are going very good as a team at the moment because of the way we worked hard in the off season. We also worked individually on our fitness. I worked with Salvi who understands my bowling a lot. He gave me a lot of inputs. I worked on my action and corrected my run-up to get the rhythm right. I have started using my left hand very well now, as being a side-on bowler helps a lot. I also worked on my pace,” he says, and is quick to point out that he recently clocked 142kmph against Railways in Delhi.

For Thakur, the trick as a bowler is to keep the batsmen guessing all the time. “I am just trying to do my basics right, bowling outswingers in the corridor and putting batsmen under pressure by not giving them runs and then hitting them with bouncers. I keep them guessing and that is working for me. I hope to continue that way,” Thakur says.

Thakur not only scares batsmen with some bouncers but also tries to intimidate them with a stare after every ball. “I don’t sledge. I just stare to scare them. These things keep me on my toes and add to my aggression. As a fast bowler, you have to be intimidating,” he says.

Thakur was also part of a camp at the [MRF Pace Academy](#) in Chennai last year, where he trained under Australian legend [Glenn McGrath](#). “It was a short 10-day camp. He stressed on the skills and the routine part of the game. He told us how a fast bowlers’ approach should be before a match and in the off season. He also revealed how he got batsmen out by bowling on the off stump and restricting them,” adds Thakur, who loves following Dale Steyn.

Not only McGrath, Thakur says Zaheer’s role in his bowling has also been crucial. “He was very helpful. I learnt a lot from him. Apart from how to bowl in the match generally, he guided us on how to bowl in the morning, afternoon and evening sessions,” he adds.

Mumbai have a rich history of producing high-class batsmen, but they have also produced some of the country’s finest bowlers in Salil Ankola, Paras Mhambrey, Abey Kuruvilla, Ajit Agarkar and Zaheer Khan among others. Those are some big shoes to fill, isn’t it? “I have not thought about it. It is important to keep focusing, take up the added responsibility and challenge,” Thakur says.

Thakur has been quite handy with the bat as well. His 88 against Uttar Pradesh in adverse conditions to give Mumbai their first win earned him a lot of praise. “I started my cricket as a batsman. I enjoy batting as well and I would love to be called as a bowling all-rounder,” he says.

KNOW SHARDUL:

Full name: Shardul Narendra Thakur

Born: October 16, 1991, Palghar

*Is a right-hand fast bowler and right-handed batsman

*Plays for Mumbai in Ranji Trophy and Kings XI Punjab in IPL

*Has taken 59 wickets in 16 first class games with best figures of 6/53

*Was part of the MRF fast bowling camp under Glenn McGrath last year

*Did his schooling from Swami Vivekanand International School

*Completed his graduation in Commerce from Rizvi College

Shardul in Ranji Trophy 2014-15:

5/59 & 0/29 vs Bengal in Kolkata, Dec 28, 2014

6/63 & 3/70, 87 vs Uttar Pradesh in Kanpur, Dec 21, 2014

6/59 0/10 vs Railways in Delhi, Dec 14, 2014

2/55, 1/48 vs J&K in Mumbai, Dec 7, 2014

([Taus Rizvi](#) is a Principal Correspondent with DNA. A club-level cricketer, he believes cricket helps in knowing a person’s character. Taus can be followed on [@rizvitaus](#) on Twitter. The above news has been republished with permission from [DNA](#), where it [first appeared](#))