

## Ranji Trophy: Mumbai's Shardul Thakur aims to top bowling charts



Mumbai pacer Shardul Thakur, who is just four wickets away from topping the bowling charts for the Ranji Trophy season, believes today's semi-final clash against Karnataka is the perfect opportunity to fulfill his dream

Mumbai pacer Shardul Thakur had a couple of goals when he started the domestic season. First was to iron out the inconsistency factor and the second was to top the bowling charts in Ranji Trophy.

*Mumbai pacer Shardul Thakur*

The 23-year-old knew if he can be consistent, the wickets would follow. It certainly did. After six five-wicket hauls in nine matches, Thakur is now staring at fulfilling his second goal of the season — that is to be the highest wicket-taker in the Ranji Trophy this season.

At the moment D Siva Kumar tops the wicket-takers list with 44 under his belt. But with Andhra failing to make the semis, Thakur (40 wickets) is the favourite to take the top spot. Maharashtra's Samad Fallah (37 wickets) and Karnataka's S Aravind (35 wickets) are the only potential contenders challenging Thakur.

Thakur is eyeing today's semi-final clash against Karnataka in Bangalore as an ideal platform to claim the No 1 spot. "After our quarter-final victory (where Thakur claimed eight wickets in the match against Delhi), one of my teammates told me that I am now just four wickets away from becoming the highest wicket-taker of the season.

"It was one of my goals to be the top bowler and I am really excited to accomplish that goal in this match. It's a crucial match and it will also help my team," Thakur told mid-day before leaving for Bangalore.

Thakur has often been tagged 'erratic and over-weight', but the Palghar lad successfully shed a few kilos and also proved his critics wrong after ably spearheading the pace attack in Zaheer Khan (injured) and Dhawal Kulkarni's absence.

### **Modest achiever**

Thakur said he hasn't done anything extraordinary to produce an awe-inspiring performance this season. "You improve with time and by playing more and more matches. I had a satisfying off-season training. I also worked hard on my fitness and basics," he said.

Thakur believes his bowling form has boosted his confidence as a batsman. "I am more confident on the field in whatever I am doing. I am working hard to become an all-rounder. The innings of 87 against Uttar Pradesh helped gave me the belief. I have a long way to go to still," signed off Thakur.