

Pont to launch 'Butterfly' during Cricket WC

TUESDAY, 09 NOVEMBER 2010

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Ian Pont, the Bangladesh bowling coach, has created a new slower ball that is claimed will revolutionise his pace bowlers armoury in time for the World Cup. The 'Butterfly' as it is known because it 'flutters' in its flight, is seen as the first delivery that behaves very differently to any other slower ball. The Bangladesh pace bowlers have been getting to grips the delivery in Dhaka for the first time this week with highly encouraging results.

"I wanted to bring something new to our bowling attack that could have a devastating effect on opposition batsmen", said Pont. "I sat down with fielding coach, Julian Fountain, and we both got our heads together. Since we both have baseball and pitching backgrounds, we tapped into what we knew about how a ball behaves in flight and the 'Butterfly' is the result. I predict it could be as useful as the back of the hand slower ball was when that first came in."

Pace bowlers, Mashrafe, Rubel, Shafiul, Rajib, Russel and Nazmul have been experimenting with the unusual grip in the nets. The ball, when bowled correctly, has zero rotation on it, something that makes the delivery completely unstable and changes the flight of the ball. The resulting outcome is a ball that can skip or hop in the air, drop out of the sky or simply dive down into the pitch when least expected. "I developed the SLOB (Slower Obsolete Delivery) a couple of years ago, which I see Brett Lee has been bowling a version of with great success. The Butterfly behaves in a similar way to the SLOB but can be bowled at lower speeds, even by spin bowlers. Whereas regular slower balls rely on a change of pace or even unusual swing patterns to work, the Butterfly works by a change of trajectory. I think it will really confuse batsmen."

Pont's innovation is well known and he is widely viewed as the world's leading technical fast bowling expert. His ABSAT methodology for teaching both speed and accuracy simultaneously, helped a young Dale Steyn and an experienced Darren Gough to be more effective. The Bangladesh bowling attack under Pont's coaching has genuinely improved. The 4-0 'Tiger Wash' of New Zealand last month proved this with all three of his pacers winning a match in the final over with cleverly bowled slower balls and accurate deliveries. The sight of a disconsolate Kyle Mills swinging at fresh air and having his leg stump flattened by a reverse swing yorker from Rubel Hossain with just 4 to win, created a memorable picture from the 5th ODI in Dhaka.

Earlier in the week Pont started the process of teaching the Bangladesh bowlers more pace. Both Rajib and Russel are seeing an uplift in speed with later movement, too whilst still maintaining good accuracy. And batsmen Zunaed and Jahirul volunteered to learn the secrets of seam and swing bowling from Pont in a bid to add further depth to the Bangladesh squad. "If we can find a top order batsman to bowl some overs seam up, then I feel it will add to what we have available for the captain. To have a Ganguly, Collingwood or Ryder type bowler to call on gives us some options," added Pont.

But Pont's big aim is to create an express pacer in Bangladesh even though he acknowledges that time is against him. "I feel we have bowlers like Rajib and Rubel capable of 144-150 kph speeds if we have the time to do that ABSAT development work with them. The schedule this year makes that tough but I would love to do that work. I am contracted only until the end of the World Cup with Bangladesh so time is also against me. But someone, somewhere in a country of almost 150m people is capable of becoming a speed sensation. The challenge is to put all the elements in place to make that happen," he said. "If we can find that person, I can do it."

For now, Pont's focus is on making the most of his resources in Bangladesh. "We are trying to make bowlers to be the best version of themselves as we can. This means also giving them an edge to compete with their higher ranked neighbours of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. We have started that process. New Zealand discovered what the guys are capable of. And with the Butterfly in their locker, it might just be the difference the team needs to pull off the results that will hopefully now be an expectation rather than a surprise."