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Opportunity for Afghanistan to test themselves

The Afghan cricketers have already played a few formats of the game but they will realize that this is the best and the biggest, the one that separates the men from the boys. There is talent in Afghanistan cricket, with the exploits of Rashid Khan already being a big talking point, and I am sure that all of them are looking forward to making a mark in Test cricket. This is a historic moment for their country, and they should feel happy that they are starting off against one of the top teams of the game, because it is always best to test oneself against the best in the business. Besides, it will also help Afghanistan learn exactly where they stand in terms of this format.

India will be without Virat Kohli but, even then, India are a strong side and the Afghan players will have an opportunity to check out their own skills. If I were an Afghan cricketer, I would like to see this as an opportunity. There is a very fine line between pressure and opportunity and the Afghan boys should tread the path of opportunity to test themselves out on the big stage. Without any doubt India will be the favourites in this one-off Test but the Afghans will be looking for some turn in the pitch to control the hosts because the biggest strength of this team is spin and, that too, accurate spin.

India has at the helm Ajinkya Rahane who led exceptionally well in Dharamsala against Australia some time ago. This is a big game for him. He is out of the ODI team for the England tour, which I feel is unfortunate. He must be thoughtful after the roller-coaster ride he has had. After being left out of the first two Test matches in South Africa, he came back to play a crucial role in the win in the third match there, and now in the next Test that India are playing after that he is leading the team. He must be thinking, 'what is my right status as a cricketer'? He has to push all these thoughts out of the way and score runs, which will solve everything. He is a class act and very good in this format. He needs to remember that players go through this in their career; this is a small crisis and he needs to focus, keep it simple, bite the bullet, and just score runs.

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Time, strong domestic structure need of the hour for Afghanistan

No surprises were thrown up at the Chinnaswamy Stadium but at the same time not many expected that the India-Afghanistan Test match would get over in just two days. The Afghan boys shouldn't worry about how long the Test lasted but should rewind the entire two days to realise what they need to do to get better in the longer format of the game.

This has happened with many other teams. When Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Zimbabwe were inducted into test cricket, their initial days were also sketchy. It is with time that they got better. Afghanistan, and for that matter the other new entrant, Ireland, will have to be given more time to understand and come to terms with the demands of the longest format of the game. With time they will learn.

Ireland's outing against Pakistan will give them lot of confidence and at the same time give the Afghans the belief that if they can, so can we! World cricket needs more good teams and only exposure can make them all better.

The Aghans were still in T20 mode and the lack of footwork was pretty apparent when they played pace bowling. Umesh Yadav bowled good pace and it did put doubts in the batters' minds. Test cricket is about patience and proper shot selection. As much as solid shots, judgement outside the off stump and letting deliveries go is very important to succeed and with the course of time and proper coaching they will learn.

What they need to have is a good domestic structure as the talent is very apparent with the Afghan boys. Rashid Khan bowled well in patches and it must have been a good learning exercise for him bowling those long spells. He needs to give the champion Kumble a ring as he is not far away!

Test cricket is about bowling maidens and putting pressure back on the opposition, especially when batsmen are not coming at you, as it happens in T20.

The Indians lived up to their potential. Shikhar Dhawan and Murali Vijay made the most of it. Even Hardik Pandya had a good outing. All the bowlers came to the party. It was good to see Umesh and Ishant Sharma bowl with fire. Hopefully Ishant's length will remain like this in the big games as well. Ravi Ashwin foxed the Afghan batters with his variation and congratulations to him on becoming the fourth highest wicket-taker in Indian cricket in such quick time. So, well done India. We are looking forward to England.