

India weigh Bumrah fitness gamble

India risk Bumrah’s fitness as England aim to clinch series at Old Trafford

● **Bumrah fitness decision crucial for India**

● **India trail 2-1 in five-Test series**

● **Stokes, Jadeja key for teams**

AFP | Manchester

India must make a crucial call on the fitness of star pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah for the fourth Test against England at Old Trafford. England can clinch the series with a victory in Manchester but they have top order questions to resolve, while Ben Stokes and Ravindra Jadeja will be looking to repeat their third Test exploits. Here we look at three talking points ahead of the first day of the Test on Wednesday:

India weigh up Bumrah decision

Trailing 2-1 in the five-match series after their painful 22-run

loss at Lord’s, India cannot afford other de-

feat if they are to win a Test trip to England for the first time since 2007. That perilous position has increased the pressure to make the right decision on the fitness of Bumrah.

India coach Gautam Gambhir made it clear at the start of the series that Bumrah would only be available for three matches due to a nagging back injury.

Bumrah, 31, played in the first and third Tests against England, with India losing both matches, and missed the second game, which the tourists won.

If India opt to use the world’s top ranked Test bowler in Manchester, it would likely rule him out of a potential series decider in the fifth Test.

“We know we have got him for one of the last two Tests. It’s pretty obvious that the series is on the line now in Manchester so there will be a leaning towards playing him,” Gambhir’s assistant Ryan

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Ben Stokes bowled his most overs in over six years—44 in total—including two intense final-day spells, underlining his unmatched will to lead from the front

ten Doeschate said.

The need to play Bumrah at Old Trafford has been heightened by injuries to India all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy and seamer Arshdeep Singh.

England’s brittle top order

England may be within touching distance of winning the series, but questions about their fragile top order remain unsolved.

Polarising opener Zak Crawley could only muster scores of 18 and 22 at Lord’s.

Ollie Pope, filling the number three spot, reached 44 in the

first innings but perished for just four in the second, while Crawley’s opening partner Ben Duckett was dismissed for 23 and 12.

England must decide whether to keep faith with Crawley, whose international career has been filled with highs and lows.

Scores of 267 against Pakistan and 189 against Australia showcased Crawley’s ability, but the 27-year-old’s frustrating habit of surrendering his wicket cheaply has led to calls for a change at the top of the line-up.

However, England have backed Crawley and Duckett to the hilt, and captain Stokes said: “They complement each other. Left-hand, right-hand.

“One is a giant, one is not. It is very hard for bowlers to settle in.”

Jadeja v Stokes

After England’s Stokes rose to the occasion at Lord’s and Jadeja nearly delivered a match-winning innings for India, the all-rounders will carry hefty expectations in Manchester.

Stokes led by example in England’s third Test triumph, scoring 77 runs in two innings, taking five wickets and producing a vital run-out of Rishabh Pant.

Significantly, Stokes was able to push his body through 44 overs, including spells of 9.2 and 10 overs on the dramatic final day.

Now 34, that was the most he has bowled in over six years after being plagued by injuries.

“It was an incredible effort to be able to do that, but that’s just how he’s built, I guess. He’s just desperate to be the man and make things happen,” England batsman Joe Root said.

Age was no barrier for the 36-year-old Jadeja either as he kept India in the Lord’s Test until the last moments.

Now an elder statesman of the team after the Test retirements of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, Jadeja’s gritty 61 not out from 181 balls took the tourists within a whisker of their 193-run target.

He also scored 72 in the first innings and made 89 and 69 in the second Test at Edgbaston.

“I always felt he has the ability to take pressure. With so much of experience, he normally comes with something that the team needs in any challenging conditions. Really, really valuable to the team,” India batting coach Sitanshu Kotak said.

England won’t play ‘nice’ against India warns Brook

● **Brook defends England’s aggressive approach**

● **Teams resume hostilities at Old Trafford**

AFP | Manchester

England batsman Harry Brook has warned India that his team “don’t always have to be nice” as they prepare to resume hostilities at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

After England battled to a fiery 22-run victory in the third Test at Lord’s, the teams will lock horns again with the series on the line in Manchester.

England on Monday named just one change to that side with Hampshire’s left-arm spinner Liam Dawson making his first Test appearance in eight years at the expense of the injured Shoaib Bashir, while Jofra Archer remains in an unchanged pace attack.

An England win would put them 3-1 up with one game to play, while India must take the last two matches to secure their first Test series triumph on English soil since 2007.

It promises to be another fiercely-fought encounter after India’s fielders clashed with England batsmen Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett in a time-wasting row at Lord’s.

That lit a fire under England when it was their turn to field,

with Archer giving a pumped-up send-off to India’s Rishabh Pant.

As the tension mounted in England’s 22-run win, Brydon Carse and India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja were involved in a mid-pitch collision.

But Brook is adamant Ben Stokes’ side did not go to far with their spikey approach in pursuit of victory.

“I’ve had a lot of compliments. Everybody said it was awesome to watch. It was good fun, I have to admit. It was tiring but it made fielding a lot more enjoyable,” he said on Monday.

“I think it put them under a little bit more pressure. The opportunity that arose for us to not be the nice guys was because of what they did. We just thought ‘we’re not standing for that’.

“We had a

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We had a conversation and said ‘it’s time to not be those nice guys that we have been before’. You don’t always have to be nice. Who knows, that might have played into our favour. It was good fun

HARRY BROOK

conversation and said ‘it’s time to not be those nice guys that we have been before’. You don’t always have to be nice. Who knows, that might have played into our favour. It was good fun.

“We were doing it within the spirit of the game. We weren’t going out there effing and jeffing at them and being nasty people. We were just going about it in the right manner.”

‘Wily old fox’

India pace bowler Mohammed Siraj was fined 15 per cent of his match fee and given one demerit point for his angry send-off of Duckett during England’s second innings, which ended with the pair brushing shoulders.

Brook re-

vealed it was at his urging after some choice words from head coach Brendon McCullum that they decided to fight back.

Asked whether that aggressive approach will continue as England look to win the series, Brook said: “God knows. We’ll see whether it happens again and whether it works.

“I brought it up the night before the last day: ‘Baz said the other day we’re too nice, I think tomorrow is a perfect opportunity to really get stuck into them’.”

Bashir took the final wicket at Lord’s but the Somerset spinner’s broken finger has opened the way for Dawson’s Test recall.

The 35-year-old, who has starred in county action for Hampshire leapfrogging the centrally-contracted Jack Leach as the replacement for Bashir, played the last of his three Tests in 2017.

He was a member of England’s ODI World Cup winning squad in 2019 and was recalled to the T20 side against the West Indies in June.

Apart from his bowling Dawson is a more than handy lower order batter with 18 first-class hundreds and an average of just over 35.

“He is a wily, old fox, very experienced and a very skilful cricketer,” Brook said.

“He’s willing to always fight for the team, he’s very competitive and it’s good to have him here.”

Childhood fan Mbeumo joins Man Utd re-build

AFP | Manchester

Cameroon winger Bryan Mbeumo said he “grew up wearing” the Manchester United shirt on Monday after joining the club from Brentford on a deal until 2030, with an option for a further year.

Mbeumo, 25, will reportedly cost the 20-time Premier League champions an initial £65 million (\$87 million) having scored 20 goals in 38 league games last season for the Bees.

Tottenham, now managed by former Brentford boss Thomas Frank, were also chasing the France-born attacker before United’s improved offer sealed the move.

United’s third bid, worth an initial £65m with £6m in additions, was accepted last week.

“As soon as I knew there was a chance to join Manchester United, I had to take the opportunity to sign for the club of my dreams,” Mbeumo said in a United statement. “The team whose shirt I wore growing up. This is

a massive club, with an incredible stadium and amazing fans, we are all really determined to challenge for the biggest trophies,” he added.

United coach Ruben Amorim has signed two other players during this summer in an attempt to avoid a repeat of last season’s catastrophic display.

They lost to Tottenham in the Europa League final and a 15th-place finish in the top flight was their lowest since 1973-74.

Wolves forward Matheus Cunha and teenage Paraguayan defender Diego Leon have also moved to Old Trafford.



Harry Brook in action (file photo)

