



Gadgets fine-tuning England's success

Nilankur Das, Hindustan Times
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When it comes to gadgets, Indians generally don't like to lag behind. The world has moved on to iPhones, iPads and Tabs, and so has India. But when it comes to using technology in cricket, the Indian Board is not that keen. And this is not about the Decision Review System that was downgraded to 'optional' from 'mandatory' by the ICC.

The England Board's National Performance Centre in Loughborough is fast setting a benchmark in cricket coaching and infrastructure. Gadgets like the ProBatter, the Merlin and the TrackMan could be the world's envy very soon, considering the way England are improving. But the BCCI is not yet thinking on those lines.

Technology VS Stadia

For most of the state associations, each of which get Rs 25 crore every year for infrastructure development, it is still about making stadiums.

For England, infrastructure development is more about new coaching facilities. "We do not need to have floodlights at every ground. Cricket can be played without them. Yes, installation of floodlights and drainage work has started at all county grounds now," James Avery, the team's media manager said. "But all our counties have a Merlin each.

"We have a team full of youngsters here and almost everyone is a product of our EPP (England Performance Programme) and EDP (England Development Programme)," Avery said. England have six players in this 15-member squad who are 25 or below, the youngest being Jonathan Bairstow, who turned 22 on Monday.

"It's not like we don't have anything at all at the NCA," said ex-Mumbai coach Praveen Amre, who has taken a year off from first-class cricket to work at the grassroots. "England's needs are different. They need to get used to spin. Yes, it would be good if we had machines which would help our batsmen tackle the moving ball better. But then again coaching can only equip you with certain things. Players have to implement those in the middle," the former India batsman added.

The other change that England has undergone is in the use of tour-specific statistical inputs. Coach Andy Flower's appointment of Cambridge mathematics graduate, Nathan Leamon, as the head of video analysis, and his inputs on the Indian players on tour of England were crucial, feels Avery. "Hawkeye is a tool he uses and we knew a lot of things from his inputs during the series back home. Gemma (Chris Broad's daughter) does the video analysis for ODIs," Avery said.

England's success against Tendulkar this summer was reportedly partially due to analysis that showed he scored mainly on the on side early on.