

Ranji Trophy 2019-2020: Natarajan makes his presence felt

Thangarasu Natarajan made waves when he, from obscurity, became a big-money IPL signing in 2017. Now the seamer is proving he is no one season wonder.

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Thangarasu Natarajan comprehends the value of sweat and toil. Nothing in life has come easy for this Salem pacer who has broken through the shackles of poverty and consequent roadblocks to emerge as Tamil Nadu's No.1 pacer.

Along the way, he has matured, learnt new tricks, overcome injuries and become stronger physically and mentally.

So far in a Ranji season dominated by the Tamil Nadu spinners, Natarajan has pulled his weight with 18 wickets at 17.94; he has struck with the new and old ball.

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And at Chepauk, on a dry, spinner-friendly pitch, Natarajan turned in a spell of pace, movement and lift to strike two early blows to derail Railways in its second innings.

"I am able to move the ball both ways, away and into the right-hander from over the wicket. And I can take the ball away from the left-hander," the 28-year-old Natarajan told *Sportstar* on Wednesday.

Natarajan realises he carries much of Tamil Nadu's pace bowling hopes on his shoulders. "I like the responsibility. I am bowling with more control now. I am bowling around the fourth stump of the right-hander and making him play. And I get the old ball to reverse."

Someone who has always been lively, Natarajan said, "Now I am consistently able to bowl in the mid 130 kmph. And I am also comfortable bowling round the wicket."

Being a left-arm seamer has its own advantages and it's encouraging that Natarajan has learnt to harness the angles..

And the yorker remains his weapon. "I have got a lot of wickets with this delivery in the shorter formats. In the longer formats too, I tend to mix the yorker with the lifting deliveries."

Tamil Nadu coach D. Vasu, a left-arm pacer in his time, has helped Natarajan evolve. "He told me the advantages of a smooth release to get swing, instead of snapping my wrists all the time."

Natarajan lays emphasis on fitness to avoid breakdowns; He had to be operated on his shoulder in 2017. "I work out a lot in the gym under trainer Dhanasekaran. I know and understand my workload."

Turning out for Jolly Rovers in the first division league, he has also imbibed much from Bharat Reddy. “Conversations with Bharat Anna are always rewarding,” he said.

The paceman made waves when he, from obscurity, became a big-money IPL signing in 2017. Now the seamer is proving he is no one season wonder. Natarajan is a stayer.