

## Zaheer now uses his brains while bowling: Coach

India's pace spearhead Zaheer Khan is a 'complete bowler' now and he uses his brains while bowling, says his personal coach Sudhir Naik, who convinced him to embrace cricket instead of studying engineering.

'He is a mature bowler now, and is using his brains while bowling,' Naik, who spotted Zaheer's cricketing talent, told IANS.

Naik, a former Test batsman, was overjoyed with the left-arm pacer's superb performance on the recent tour of England.

Zaheer was the leading wicket taker with 18 scalps at 20.33 in the three-Test series against England and performed well in the One-Day Internationals too.

'He was in touch with me during the entire England series, and we would talk every week or 10 days,' Naik said.

Besides taking a bagful of wickets, Zaheer also showed a lot of aggression in England. 'The aggression was required. He is a complete bowler now,' stressed Naik.

According to Naik, Zaheer is now a thinking bowler. 'Earlier, like all youngsters, Zaheer also used to go for only pace. But he has now realised that raw pace will not do, and so he now uses his brains as well.'

The transformation in Zaheer's bowling came during his stint with Worcestershire in the England county cricket last year, after he was dropped from the Indian team.

Despite performing well in the Test series in Pakistan in January-February last year, Zaheer found himself sidelined for the Test and ODI home series against England.

Disappointed, Zaheer tried to regain form and improve his fitness in English county competitions. He scalped 110 wickets in all the matches he played for Worcestershire, and was rewarded with a recall to the Indian team.

On the tour of South Africa in 2006-07, he enjoyed bowling on the responsive pitches and ended up with 13 wickets in three Tests and was the top wicket taker in the ODI series with six wickets.

In England a few months ago, he was again the most successful Indian bowler with 18 wickets in the three-Test series besides doing well in the NatWest Trophy ODI series.

One reward for his consistent performance was that the board promoted him to the top grade of the annual contracts for 2007-08 worth a guaranteed sum of Rs.6 million.

In the just concluded ODI series against Australia, Zaheer took eight wickets, one less than Sreesanth.

Naik, who as the ground in-charge of the Wankhede Stadium prepared the pitch for the seventh ODI

Wednesday, said his protege's form has a lot to do with his age.

'He is at an age at which pace bowlers peak,' he said about the 29-year-old bowler who now plays for [Mumbai](#) in domestic tournaments.

A lot of credit for Zaheer's dream transformation goes to Naik. As the National Cricket Club (NCC) coach nearly a decade ago, Naik convinced him to forget about engineering and try his hand at making cricket a career.

Zaheer agreed to start with NCC and made a sensational international debut at the ICC Knock-out Trophy ODI tournament in Nairobi. And he has no regrets about embracing cricket instead of pursuing engineering, for which he had come to Mumbai from his native Srirampur in Maharashtra.

*Qaiser Mohammad Ali ( © IANS / India eNews)*