

Commonwealth Bank Series 2011-12

## Wasim Akram reveals Starc advice

Daniel Brettig

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Mitchell Starc's presently irresistible blend of swing, speed and direction is all in the wrist - the result of a fiendishly simple piece of advice from [Wasim Akram](#).

Since a brief meeting with Wasim at the SCG nets during the New Year's Test against India, Starc has plucked 14 wickets at 13.42 in all competitions, finding the rhythm to test the very best batsmen.

Twice he has removed Sachin Tendulkar, lbw to a ball curling back in the Perth Test, then pounced in the gully as he stretched to cover a Starc delivery snaking across him in Sunday's Melbourne ODI. That dismissal was largely the result of the batsman's knowledge that he could just as easily receive a delivery that swung back: exactly the sort of doubt a left-arm bowler must create.

Watching it all from the commentary box has been Wasim, who said his words to Starc had focused on sending the ball down with a snap or flick of the wrist at the point of delivery, a gambit known to enhance swing. It appears to have done the trick for Starc, who turned heads when he next appeared in the Twenty20 Big Bash League before returning to the national side.

"One thing I like about him is he's got the in-swinger going to the right-hander, he's got the pace, he's tall and he's fit," Wasim told ESPNcricinfo. "When I saw him in the nets we just mainly spoke about the swing bowling and wrist positioning.

"I told him when he comes in to bowl to the right-handers like he does normally, to flick his wrist at the last moment to gain the most swing - the snap. On these wickets [in Australia] if he learns to do that he will get a lot more wickets.

"If he's done well after talking to me for half an hour, the credit goes to him. He's picked it up so well, he's a nice guy and I've told him next time I'm around, I'm here for the one dayers so if he wants to come up to me I would like to have a word to him about reverse swing as well."

Wasim's advice, which also covered how to use the variation from around the wicket to pose more questions for batsmen when the ball lost its shine, was delivered with a



Mitchell Starc's half-hour chat to Wasim Akram has brought another dimension to his bowling

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healthy helping of encouragement, for the former Pakistan captain liked plenty of what he saw in Starc even before he had seen him bowl in the flesh.

"It is a very simple, beautiful action, an easy action, upright, wrist is straight, everything is very natural to him, so that is a plus," Wasim said. "He's got a bright future. I had a very quick arm action, but his action is very beautiful, nice and smooth. Now he is flicking the wrist he'll be more dangerous and over the next three to four months he is only going to get better. With his action there is less chance of injuries, that's for sure and a good sign for him."

While Starc has benefited from Wasim's empathy for left-arm bowlers, the older man said he was also impressed by the way the Australian attack has been harnessed by a former international foe, Craig McDermott.

"He has a very good coach in Craig McDermott, who has been there and done it himself and he knows the psyche," Wasim said. "I have a problem with coaches who've never played cricket at that level. First-class level, fine, but that level is different. You need to be able to explain it to a youngster that 'look, I have done it' and that's how they pick things up very quickly."

Starc is not the only left-armer Wasim is hoping to aid during his time in Australia he is also open to working with Mitchell Johnson during his rehabilitation from foot surgery. Their paths may yet cross in Perth this week while the triangular series visits the west.

"Being a left-arm bowler I can explain much more to left-armers than right-armers. The wrist positioning, angle, the crease," Wasim said. "I remember seeing Johnson three years ago in South Africa, he was bringing the ball back in, he was getting wickets left, right and centre, but after that series it was gone.

"Being a left-arm bowler at this level if you don't have the in-swing you'll be struggling, you're not going to get many wickets. I can work with him and if he can get in touch I would love to help him - he's a very talented cricketer, and he has a future as well, as long as he can get his in-swing back."

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