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**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE – 27**

**V JIP END SEMESTER EXAMINATION**

SEMESTER EXAMINATION: OCTOBER 2021

(Examination conducted in March 2022)

**JN 5319 – Sports Writing and Cultural Criticism**

**Time – 2 ½ hrs Max Marks - 70**

**Instructions:**

1. This paper is for students of V Semester JIP.
2. This paper has THREE PARTS.
3. You may use the dictionary.

**Part-A**

**I. Read this piece by S. Dinakar from The Hindu, January 06, 2022**

These are glory days for Indian pace bowling. The sight of Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami running in and tormenting the batters is one for eternity. This pace pack hunts down batters with ruthless efficiency. The execution of plans is clinical.

As India eyes a historic maiden Test series win on South African soil, the focus will be on its rampaging pacemen. India now has plenty of gunpowder. It can blow away line-ups.

As pace predators, Bumrah and Shami are a study in contrast, compounding batters’ woes.

**Deceptive action**

Bumrah is tall, has a unique high-arm action. His load-up is so much away from the body that it is incredible his arm is stretched fully and is straight and high as he delivers the ball. The bounce he gets is natural.

And for a long-lever bowler, he has a deceptively, whippy, quick-arm action that generates speed. His victims pick his action a fraction late; by then the damage is done.

In the Centurion Test, brushing away an ankle niggle, Bumrah showcased his full repertoire.

He had castled Rassie van der Dussen with a delivery that came in sharply from outside off, and also took the ball away sharply from the off-stump. And he had the yorker ready — bowling incisive yorkers is a lot about understanding your release point — for night-watchman Keshav Maharaj.

The intelligent Bumrah has compelling pace variations, alters the angles. The manner in which he trapped a battling Dean Elgar leg-before on the final day of the first Test is a case in point.

The role of India’s previous bowling coach Bharat Arun in Bumrah’s development has been significant.

Returning to the land where he made his Test debut in 2018, Bumrah has 106 wickets from 25 Tests at 22.33 (strike rate 50.5). In 2021, Bumrah had 30 scalps from nine Tests at 26.53 (SR 61.7).

Shami’s methods are different. Firstly, he is much shorter than Bumrah and his arm is not as high at the point of release. If Bumrah’s bounce is steepling, Shami is a skiddy customer.

Shami’s seam position is exemplary and his ability to seam the ball both ways from an off-stump line makes him dangerous.

With Shami, you get speed, precision and two-way movement. Once he finds his rhythm, he can be a handful. He can reverse-swing the ball capably, too.

Not for nothing does he have 203 wickets from 55 Tests at 27.00 (SR 49.2). He finished 2021 with 23 scalps from five Tests at 22.47 (SR 43.4).

Both Bumrah and Shami can be a distinct threat to the southpaws as well, adeptly switching angles. And both are accurate with their length and line. They can also mix up their length to disrupt the batters’ footwork.

**The support cast**

The lively Mohammed Siraj has a beautiful away-swinger and a potent in-dipper. He is a capable support seamer with 36 wickets from 11 Tests at 27.94 (SR 54.8).

And Shardul Thakur (16 wickets, five Tests, at 23.75, SR 41.17) can provide crucial breakthroughs with bounce and subtle movement.

And to think that Ishant Sharma (311 Test wickets) and Umesh Yadav (156 scalps) are sitting out... these are truly glory days for Indian pace bowling.

**Answer the following question in 150 - 200 words. (1x15=15)**

1. a.) Find the actual lead of the above piece.
b.) There are many numbers used the above piece; what purpose do each of them serve? Contextualize.

**Answer any TWO of the following questions in 100-150 words each. (2x10=20)**

1. What are the positives of Bumrah? Why does author use the phrase “study in contrast”?
2. What differences do you observe between a general news story the above piece? Why is it so?
3. a.) Suggest a headline for the above story.
b.) Try to explain any two of these phrases used in the story: Potent in-dipper, ankle niggle, away-swinger, pace predators.

**Part - B**

**II. Read the below article by Nirmal Shekar published by The Hindu, June 8, 2016.**

**Ali and the illusion of immortality**

Even he had to pass on, depart this life, go the way of all flesh? Even the great, seemingly immortal gladiator, Muhammad Ali, had to meet his end, an often-mundane process that all of us have to go through at some time or the other; unless you believe in what pseudo-science’s snake oil salesmen have to say — that immortal human beings would walk the earth by 2045.

With all the revolutionary advances in medicine, they tell us that death may become optional in a few decades. But that belief seems like a desperate attempt to turn daydreaming (to stop thinking about the terrifying certainty of eternal demise) into a form of science — gerontology.

But a few lesser mortals like some of us — who harbour no illusions and know that death is the end of everything for the individual — who have no access to multi-million-dollar laboratories, and even less access to the latest findings that are being tested out do believe that we are all in queue, that one day we might have to vacate the tiny space that we occupy in a planet that the late, debonair scientist Carl Sagan called “The Pale Blue Dot.”

Then again, life would be much less invigorating, much less interesting, much less worth living if we were to rid ourselves of the notion that there are a few exceptions to the rule. And for sports-lovers, there was no more obvious candidate to mock at The Grim Reaper than Muhammad Ali.

“Maan, I am Muhammad Ali maan. I ain’t no mortal. I am indestructible. I am The Greatest. I float like a butterfly and sting like a bee. Look around for others to take to the nowhere land. You can’t touch me.”

During a light moment, you can almost imagine Ali saying that to death’s special representative. And you can imagine too that the angel of death would have been so enchanted and awed by the great man’s sense of humour and courage in the face of definite extermination that he might have left the Black Superman alone.

This thought occurred to me in the most unlikely of circumstances — in a noisy motor boat amidst jubilant young men and women on holiday inhaling loudly and then screaming in awe at the scenery in the backwaters of Poovar, a quaint little coastal village not far from Thiruvananthapuram.

That was when the Sports Editor of The Hindu called last Saturday and requested me to write a tribute to Ali on his passing.

After all, this was going to be my best holiday — no iPad, no laptop, no newspapers, no television. Reality intrudes on expectations.

But reality normally intrudes on great expectations just when they are about to come alive. And what is more, I was in a state of shock even after 36 years as a sports writer, after having written tens of thousands of words on the planet’s greatest and most popular sportsman.

Suddenly I felt that I needed time alone to come to terms with the news that the man I first heard of and quickly adopted as my sports hero at age eight — once I started my career as a sports journalist, I strictly steered clear of fandom and Ali was the sole exception — was gone. It was an ideal setting to recollect my memories of the great man’s life and times.

But as desperately as I needed my quiet period of mourning — after all my own immortal idol had just been proved merely mortal like the fishes that were joyously jumping in and out of the dull green waters of Poovar — I finally told this newspaper’s Sports Editor that I would do it, no matter that it was a tough ask.

We celebrate great sportspersons because they offer us illusions of immortality in an area of activity where the shelf life of a professional is rather short. And when it comes to the greatest of them all, it is almost impossible to believe that the person is a mere mortal like a John Nobody.

What is more, the man who beat Father Time again and again in his storied career outdid his greatest enemy outside the ring — Parkinson’s disease — for well over three decades and once again proved that what applies to ordinary mortals was not applicable to him.

Once again it was a reminder to all of us that for most of the time our lives run on a fuel called illusion. And when it is shattered, it feels like we are annihilated by a massive explosion. Sport will not be half as exciting and soul-lifting without its great debates.

This is precisely why it is quite remarkable that there is hardly any suspense as to who will be the majority choice as the most influential sportsperson in the last 150 years.

In the year 2000, Time magazine was so sure about the identity of the person that it did not even think it necessary to wait till the end of the year to feature Muhammad Ali as the sportsperson of the century.

As we have witnessed for almost a century and a half, the mass media can churn out instant fame, and celebrity can reach an extraordinary level of intensity. But we also know how ephemeral fame can be. Yesterday’s hero may be a has-been, if not a nobody, today.

In this context, the unquestioned No. 1 status that Ali enjoyed as the single most influential sportsman of all time is a truly extraordinary phenomenon.

From the poverty-stricken villages of sub-Saharan Africa to the glitzy tree-lined avenues of Beverly Hills in Los Angeles, from the over-crowded, narrow, cobbled lanes of Kolkata to the steamy sweat-stained inner-city gyms in Chicago, Manhattan and London, Muhammad Ali is a name that is instantly recognised.

How? And why? In a crowded, often cataclysmic, but always eventful era, how is it that a single sportsperson who dominated the world of heavyweight boxing in the 1960s and 1970s came to enjoy the sort of fame that has eluded some of the greatest political leaders, scientists and artists?

The answer lies in the fact that there has never been an athlete quite like Ali. He fought his fights in and outside the ring like a superman from another planet.

But then, in sport as in life, immortality is nothing but exceptional genius steering our thoughts along the wrong path.

Yet sport would not be worth one tenth of the time we spend watching it and reading about it without the illusion of immortality that it creates.

And nobody in sport ever seemed quite as immortal as Muhammad Ali.

At his peak, and for much longer, death was the last thing you thought of while talking about Ali. But this much is sure. Whatever course sport takes in the future, the legend of Ali will live on as long as civilisation, as we know it, does.

**II.A. Answer the following question in 150-200 words. (15x1=15)**

1. a.) How much of Ali do you see in this Mohammad Ali tribute?

b.) If you were the editor commissioning this tribute, what would you have replied to the author after reading the copy?

**II.B. Answer TWO of the following questions in 100-150 words each. (2x10=20)**

1. Shekar writes, “We celebrate great sportspersons because they offer us illusions of immortality in an area of activity where the shelf life of a professional is rather short.” How does the statement relate to your sports/sportsperson fandom?
2. How has your idea of sports writing changed over the last semester?
3. Think of a particular match of any sport that has stuck in your mind and attempt a narrative of it as you remember.

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