

MAIL TODAY

Akram begins the search for India's next pace sensation

GETTING tips from probably the greatest left-arm pacer in the history of the game is a privilege very few budding cricketers get to have. One can only imagine how lucky the eight Gatorade pacers must be feeling after Wasim Akram was brought on board for their Centre for Pace Excellence for fast bowlers which was launched in the Capital.

Gatorade has been actively tapping fast bowling talent in India for two years and its protégés have also made it to the Ranji sides of teams like Rajasthan and Maharashtra, but its efforts were restricted to sending the finds to MRF Pace Academy for a few weeks. With the Centre of Excellence here, and with Akram as the technical coach, the talents will get to

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hone their skills for a longer duration and they will be monitored much more intensively.

Outlining his role at the Centre, Akram said that his job would be to help the pacers learn about the finer aspects of fast bowling.

"TA Sekhar (chief coach) has done a fine job in fine-tuning the bowlers, their run-up etc. My job is to teach them how to assess the batsmen. Bowling on the flat tracks in the sub-continent, you can't run in all the time, you will get injured. You need to know when to hold back," Akram said on Monday.

Not a big fan of tinkering with bowling actions, something

pace academies are notorious for, Akram said that during his eight-day stay, he will look to retain the original action of the bowlers. "Unless the pacer has an illegal action, I see no need of changing the action much."

Even though he retired after taking more than 900 international wickets, he felt that had such academies existed during his time, he might have ended up with a few more scalps.

"When I was bowling in the 1992 World Cup final, I got cramps after just two deliveries. I had to go round the wicket as it takes lesser effort to bowl from there. I didn't know about hydration and conserving energy at that time. Maybe I could have had 150 more wickets (if there had been such pace academies)."