

QUARTER BY QUARTER

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FLORIN DOWN UNDER

A BOUNCER from Transylvania who became an overnight global sensation playing in this year's European Cricket League has been honing his bowling craft in Perth.

Pavel Florin, whose bowling action has been described as a "couple of hesitant steps" followed by a "grenade-like lob", took 1-28 off four overs last weekend and also executed a stunning run-out playing for Subiaco Marist, a WA Suburban Turf Cricket Association club based at Newman College.

Florin's trip followed a guest stint with Surrey Hills in Melbourne where he appeared on Channel Seven's *Front Bar* and bowled to West Indian legend Brian Lara.

The 40-year-old from Cluj-Napoca, Romania's second-biggest city which is located in the Transylvania region, became an instant cult hero after clips of his bowling with Cluj Cricket Club in the T10 ECL in July went viral.

Florin, who flies out of Perth today, said his unwieldy bowling action might even give him an advantage.

"Nobody bowls like this to you in the nets. First time it would be a surprise for you," he said.

"I bowl straight. I don't bowl no-balls and wides, because this is a big problem.



"This is my style. Nobody do this, I do this ... I try to use some tricks to be competitive.

"I need to improvise. My bowling is not beautiful, but I don't care because I love cricket."

Florin is yet to memorise all the fielding positions.

"I say to every captain, with me it is very easy just raise your hand and say right, left, back or forward and I run in that position you say stop, I stop," he said.

A sports lover, Florin estimates he has watched "more than 200 games of Aussie Rules" on TV, but doesn't barrack for a particular club.

Growing up in Romania, he wasn't interested in his country's national sport, Oina, which is a mixture of cricket and baseball, but instead tried his hand at American

football and futsal and won championships in both codes as a player and coach.

During one NFL practice, he noticed some Indian cricketers playing on an adjacent field and asked them for a try out.

"I was curious and I ask to let me hit a ball. They said I was good, I could be future captain of national team. It was a lie. But I like this lie so I go for it," he said.

Florin is aware of his limitations on the field, but is serious about growing cricket in his homeland and frustrated by a lack of International Cricket Council support.

"It is not enough to say 'Bravo Pavel'. In my country after I was internet sensation, nobody came to say 'I help you with this,'" he said.

Cricket fields are so rare in Romania, Florin has to drive 500km to play and practice. While driving to one session he was pulled over

by police who considered his cricket bat a weapon.

"We are not allowed to carry weapons and when I explained is not weapon is cricket bat they said 'what is cricket bat?'" he said.

Romania is ranked No. 38 in the world in cricket and No.9 in Europe but there are only about 100 registered players from a population of 20 million.

The good news for Florin's fans is Romania is now an internationally recognised T20 country — so can qualify for the World Cup — and his local club has again won the right to play in the second ECL, set for La Manga, Spain, from May 31 to June 7 next year. It will be broadcast live on Fox/Kayo.

West Australian Vin Sandhu, former Subiaco-Floreat grade player, met Florin during a stint as commentator for the ECL and sponsored his visit to Perth.

"He is a very relatable cricket story. Club cricketers in particular can relate to having to travel to a game, the bond you have with your teammates and the ups and downs of it and the fact you are blessed with a certain amount of ability but the reason you play is you love the game," Sandhu said.

SHEEPISH HOGG NOT BLAMELESS

AUSTRALIA'S two-Test whitewash of Pakistan was mild-mannered compared to the tempestuous past.

March marked the 40-year anniversary of a fiery two-Test series between Australia and Pakistan at the MCG and WACA Ground.

The Tests were marred by three incidents, the first when Pakistan seamer Sarfraz Nawaz successfully appealed for handling the ball against Andrew Hilditch.

This came just hours after the visitor's No.11 Sikander Bakht was 'Mankaded' (run out) by Alan Hurst, without warning. Tempers rose even further when Australian pacer Rodney Hogg smashed his stumps after being dismissed when he walked down the pitch to do some "gardening" and Javed Miandad removed his bails.

In a recent interview with the *Sunday Herald Sun's* Jon Anderson, Hogg sheepishly admitted to throwing a bucket of water from the sixth floor of a hotel in Perth on to Imran Khan and Miandad when the pair were going out to dinner.

"That did happen, but as to who did it, I will borrow a Jack Dyer quote which runs along the lines of, 'I'm not going to say anything in case I say something,'" Hogg said.



NORBERT'S ROCKETS

JORDAN-BLAZE Lightbourn, pictured, has a name made for an athletics career.

The born-to-run 15-year-old is blazing a trail on the athletics circuit, snaring a medal collection so vast he has lost count of the number of medals.

'JB', and fellow athletes at St Norbert College face the best young athletes from schools across Australia at this weekend's 2019 Australian All Schools Championships and Nitro Schools National Final at the WA Athletics Stadium.

JB, a 200m sprinter and long-jumper who joined Little Athletics six years ago, hopes to beat his personal best jump of 6.44m. "This is one of the most talented group of athletes that has represented St Norbert College," head of sport Luke Ford said.



Rising star: WA'S Nic Harman. Picture: Michael Wilson

FOURSOME

A TABtouch customer placed a \$1 mystery First 4 bet on the Winterbottom Stakes at Ascot.

The computer spat out Hey Doc to win, Vital Silver to finish second with Trekking and Rock Magic to fill the minor placings. The customer collected half of the First 4 dividend, pocketing \$7042.10.

HARMAN SPLITS DIFFERENCE

WA'S Nic Harman is one step closer to a Tokyo Olympic berth after an impressive showing in last Sunday's Fukuoka Marathon in Japan.

Harman, 24, recorded a negative split in only his second marathon, running the second half in 66.29min after an opening 67.35.

His time of 2hr 14.04min put him in 13th place overall and a ranking of four in

Australia for marathon times this year. Australia will take three men to Tokyo for the Olympic marathon. Harman sits behind Brett Robinson (2:10.55), Jack Rayner (2:11.06) and Liam Adams (2:11.36).

Harman will look to run under the Olympic qualifying time of 2:11.30 in Hamburg, Germany next April and has registered for the world half marathon in Poland in March.

"He's still a way off that qualifying time but the thing with Nic is he's young and his improvement curve is huge," Harman's coach Raf Baugh said.

Harman ran his first marathon on the Gold Coast this year when he recorded a time of 2:22 despite a virus in the lead up. He also had close second places in the Perth and Melbourne half marathons.