



SA's Ngidi on his Test debut 'goosebumps'

Stuart Hess

LUNGI NGIDI will likely have awoken today still wearing the same toothy grin he has had since Aiden Markram handed him his Proteas cap, on the eve of his Test debut last Friday.

Ngidi, 21, claimed match figures of 7/90 in 26.2 overs, finishing off India's innings at Centurion yesterday and putting the seal on a 135-run victory, as well as a series triumph over Test cricket's No 1-ranked team.

"It's difficult to describe, it's not something I'm used to," Ngidi said of the adulation that came his way after every wicket, and at the end of the match from a tiny but vocal last-day crowd at SuperSport Park.

Ngidi moved to the Titans in 2013 after matriculating from Hilton College in KwaZulu-Natal, and being granted a bursary from the University of Pretoria.

He was a surprise selection for the second Test, following the series-ending injury to Dale Steyn at Newlands last week. But Ngidi took his chance with aplomb and on an unusually docile track at his home ground, he impressed Proteas captain Faf du Plessis, who said he hadn't seen Ngidi bowl up close before he joined the team last Thursday.

"Not ever when I looked at Lungi did I sense any nerves, he was really calm, he just wanted to bowl. His control impressed me," said Du Plessis.

Ngidi's first taste of international cricket came at SuperSport Park, in a T20 international last season against Sri Lanka, where he won the Man of the Match award. But it is safe to say that yesterday's Man of the Match accolade will rank higher.

"Every time it really does hit me, you get goosebumps and you're nervous... every time you're in the middle. To have people appreciate the work you're doing... is a blessing," he said.

His favourite of the six wickets he claimed in the second innings – when he registered figures of 6/39 – was an easy choice: "The moment for me was the captain's (Virat Kohli) wicket, that was very special."

Ngidi dismissed Kohli leg before wicket on the fourth evening, with a delivery that darted into Indian skipper off the pitch. "I'd sort of figured out a game plan," he said.

India arrived in South Africa having won nine Tests series in a row – seven at home. They missed out on setting a new record for the most Test series won consecutively.

Du Plessis said the Proteas want to keep their foot on India's throat for the next game, starting in a week's time at the Wanderers.

"You don't always get into a position to beat a team 3-0. I favour being ruthless, to try and dominate a team... It's about keeping your foot on the gas."

See Page 20

