Anderson urges next generation to embrace Test cricket as exit looms

AFP- England great James Anderson hopes future players will relish the challenge of Test cricket rather than just go "chasing the dollar" as he prepares to bow out of the five-day game against the West Indies.

The series opener at Lord's, starting on Wednesday, will be the Lancashire paceman's 188th and final Test match after a record-breaking career spanning two decades.

No fast bowler has taken more than Anderson's 700 Test wickets and only India batting hero Sachin Tendulkar has played more matches (200) in the format.

The cricketing landscape has radically changed since Anderson, 41, made his Test debut against Zimbabwe at Lord's in 2003.

Cricketers no longer have to become established at Test level to enjoy successful careers. With the advent of lucrative Twenty20 franchise tournaments, notably the Indian Premier League, they can earn a lot more money for a lot less work.

For fast bowlers in particular, the rewards of shorter-form cricket are particularly enticing as the workload is much lighter.

But Anderson told reporters at Lord's on Monday that the longest version of the game had shaped him.

"Test cricket is literally the reason that I am the person that I am," he said.

"It has taught me so many lessons through the years, built my resilience to a lot of things. I think the fulfilment you get

from putting in a shift in a day’s cricket is different to anything else you can do in the game.”

Anderson cut short his time in white-ball cricket to extend his Test career. He is now third on the all-time list of wicket-takers behind Sri Lanka’s Muttiah Muralitharan and Australia’s Shane Warne, both spinners.

“I know you can earn a lot of money from bowling four overs (in T20 cricket), but for me personally, I would never get the same sort of joy or fulfilment from taking wickets that are caught on the boundary compared to really giving a batter a working-over and figure someone out,” he said.

“I just hope there are enough kids and young professionals out there who still want that to be the case, rather than going chasing the dollar.”

– No choice –

Anderson was effectively forced into Test retirement by England chiefs, who want to rebuild ahead of the 2025/26 Ashes in Australia.

While accepting his career had to “end at some point”, Anderson insists he is “bowling as well as I ever have”.

Asked if he could have kept playing, the paceman added: “It’s difficult to say. I’ve not really got a choice.”

Signs of a new-look England side will be on show at Lord’s after the hosts named their team two days before the start of the three-match series.

Anderson, 42 later this month, has been selected alongside the Surrey debutants wicketkeeper Jamie Smith and fast bowler Gus Atkinson.

Third-ranked England have played an entertaining, attacking brand of cricket over the past two years under captain by Ben

Stokes, but have won just four of their past 11 Tests.

After their 4-1 series loss in India earlier this year, coach Brendon McCullum promised the team would “refine” their aggressive approach, dubbed “Bazball” in his honour.

The West Indies, ranked eighth in the world, are a shadow of the team that dominated global cricket in the 1980s but they produced a major upset in January when they beat Australia by eight runs in Brisbane.

It was their first Test victory on Australian soil in 27 years.

Former West Indies captain Jason Holder, set to return to Test cricket after missing that tour, said: “I was just so happy for the boys when they did what they did in Australia.

“It gave me a renewed energy to come back to the group and try to be a part of something special again.”

AFP