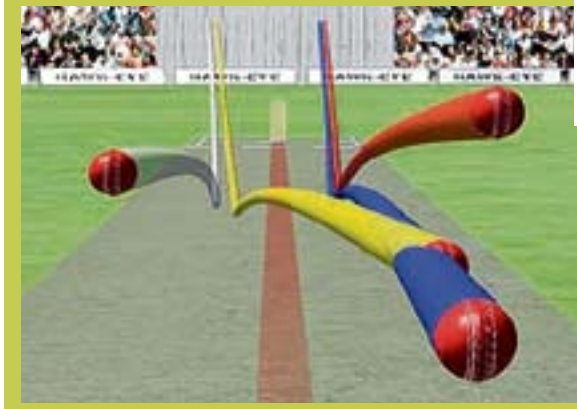


The key points from Cardiff

Captain's orders

Australia are the masters at applying pressure on a cricket pitch and this was illustrated just after tea in Cardiff yesterday. Before the break, Peter Siddie had exposed Graeme Swann's weakness against the short ball, hitting the batsman three times in the course of an extremely hostile over (shown below). After tea, Ricky Ponting was keen to renew the assault



The Australia captain, a full 50 yards away from the wicket, called to capture Siddie's attention. Then, miming his instructions for the world – and Swann in particular – to see, he made clear his demands to the bowler



Then, in case any confusion remains, Ponting completes the pantomime by showing just where the ball should end up, which is around the ribs and just below the thing that the Australia captain is questioning – Swann's heart. The graphic (top right) shows how Siddie's attack was nearly all short-pitched

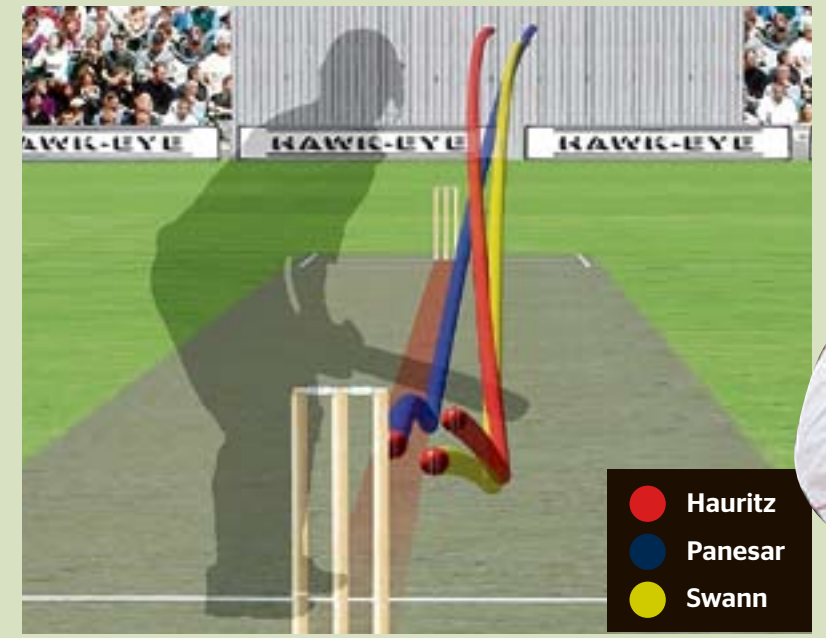
England's failed gamble

England took a gamble on picking two spinners against Australia for the first Test, but the gamble backfired. While a grim rearguard action in the final hour of play yesterday earned the home side a draw, there was little to doubt Australia's dominance with bat and ball. Changes look certain to be made before the second Test at Lord's



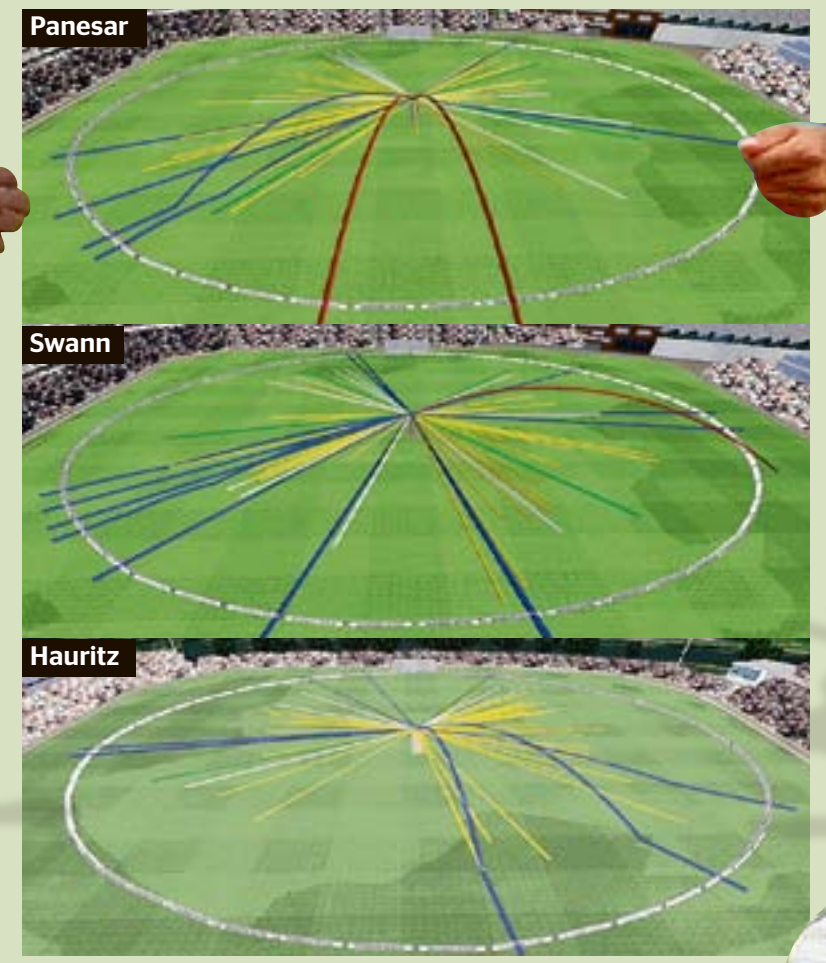
Counting the cost

The wagon wheels on the right show how each of the three specialist spin bowlers fared in the first innings at Cardiff. Hauritz, bottom, not only took three wickets but proved quite economical. By contrast, both Panesar and Swann came in for some stick, Panesar even being hit for two straight sixes



Spinners compared

The graphic above shows how Hauritz was able to get more spin, bounce and drift from the Cardiff pitch than either of the England spin bowlers



Twin spin attack came with a warning from history

The last time that England picked two spinners in a home Test match against Australia was in 1993 at Edgbaston. It was Mike Atherton's first Test as captain and England went in with an attack including Peter Such and John Emburey. Australia won by eight wickets. England had expected the pitch at the SWALEC Stadium to take spin, but the pitch did not break up as much as was expected and what spin was found turned out to be slow and easily handled by Australia's batsmen.

It was an area where England expected to dominate. Nathan Hauritz, the lone specialist spin bowler in Australia's squad, had been widely derided. He also had the impossible job of filling the gap left by Shane Warne. Yet it was the England spin attack of Graeme Swann and Monty Panesar that had no impact on the match, taking one wicket between them for a cost of 246 runs.

In comparison, Hauritz was a success. The graphic on the left shows how Hauritz managed to get more spin, bounce and drift than the two England spinners. It was reflected in his figures too, taking six wickets in England's two innings for 158 runs. Among his victims were the key wickets of Kevin Pietersen in the first innings, and Andrew Strauss and Matt Prior in the second innings.

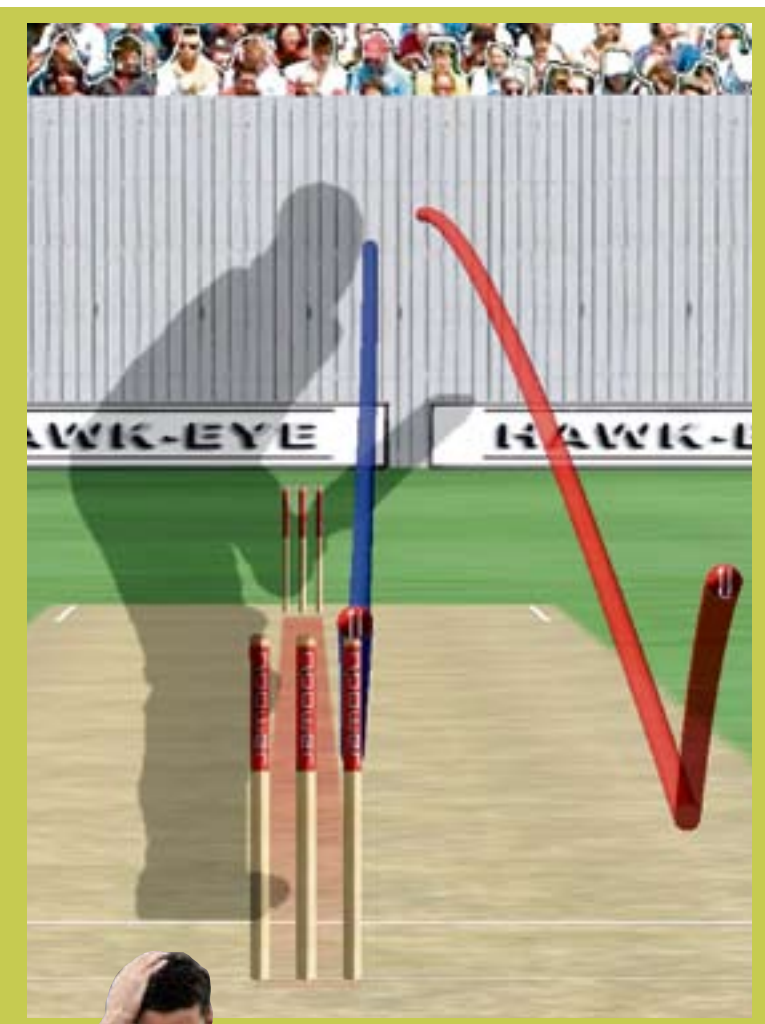
And while Swann and Panesar both contributed with the bat yesterday, it was their performance with the ball that makes their positions in the team vulnerable.

It had been 16 years since England faced Australia on home soil with a twin spin attack, it could be some time before they do so again



Hauritz makes his mark

Nathan Hauritz came into the first Test with plenty to prove, as he was filling the boots of Shane Warne. His performance may not have been a match-winning one, but he took six wickets and was more economical than the England pair



Pietersen's mind games

Kevin Pietersen is the best batsman England have, but his performance in the first power Test in Cardiff has left many wondering if he has the mental toughness required to become one of the game's true greats. His dismissal in the first innings, when well set, to a ball wide of off stump by Nathan Hauritz (see red line, above) that he tried to sweep but succeeded only in top-edging to short leg via his helmet, was irresponsible. It was a high-risk shot that gave away his wicket at a time when he was dominating the bowling.

Perhaps more worrying, however, from an England viewpoint was Pietersen's lack of judgment in the second innings yesterday. Having gone out to bat the previous evening with England reeling at 17 for two, he knew that his priority was to see out that last session, which he did. Then he had to return on the final day and occupy the crease for as long as possible. That was not to be, however, because he left a straight ball from Ben Hilfenhaus that knocked back his off stump (see blue line, above).

It was the first wicket to fall on the fifth day and, with England's best batsman gone, Ricky Ponting's men scented blood. If it were not for the heroics of the obdurate Paul Collingwood and England's bowlers, the home team would have lost

The likelihood of winning the Test

The win likelihood graph is calculated using the data collected by the Live Cricket Predictor in Timesonline's Ashes section. Whenever a fan makes a prediction we know what prediction they made and when they made it. Users can make up to ten match-winner predictions for every wicket fall

