

Bond targets comeback against Australia

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Shane Bond is aiming to return to international cricket in New Zealand's home series against Australia in March. He is recovering from a stress fracture to his lower vertebrae at New Zealand Cricket's High Performance Centre.

Bond, 29, is working on his action, the cause of the problem, under the guidance of Ashley Ross and Dayle Hadlee. "I've really gone back to the drawing board, and have broken things down," he told *The New Zealand Herald*. "You realise that some things, like a fault in your delivery stride, can stem way back to the start of your run-up."

Using the same bio-mechanic technology that helped to scrutinise Muttiah Muralitharan's action, Ross and Hadlee have focused on four aspects of Bond's action that need tweaking. "It's a matter of getting comfortable with those changes and I'm pretty close to that now." Bond added. "The hardest thing to do [is] getting the changes ingrained so they become second nature. I'm probably about 90% there and it's coming out all right, so I'm reasonably pleased."

One of the main changes is to remove his tendency to dive in late to the bowling crease. "I need to eliminate that as much as I can," he said. "The rest of it is basically trying to get my hips and shoulders working together so everything is working on one plane."

Bond hasn't avoided matches altogether, and has been playing as a batsman for his club team in Christchurch, High School Old Boys-Collegians. Bowling will have to wait for the moment, though. "It's up to me to get fit and strong. I've trained really hard and if it doesn't work out, then I can live with that." Ideally, he hopes to return as a bowler in a few competitive games for Canterbury in January in a late bid for the home series against Australia. "If things go perfectly, I'd like to be available for that series."

New Zealand could use a fully-fit Bond, especially after they were whitewashed in the recently concluded two-Test series against Australia.

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Shane Bond is focusing on four changes in his action © Getty Images