

## 2 When the Lights Change

Every leader has experienced it. You prepare thoroughly, you know the brief, you have thought through the likely scenarios – and then the situation unfolds in a way that none of your preparation covered. The meeting that changes direction in the first five minutes. The negotiation that moves onto ground you hadn't anticipated. The conversation that goes somewhere you were not ready for. In those moments, most people do one of two things. They reach for the plan that no longer fits, or they freeze while trying to find a new one. Neither works. And the more thoroughly someone has prepared for specific scenarios, the more likely they are to struggle when the actual situation diverges from them.

This is one of the most underexamined problems in leadership development. Most preparation is built around coverage – anticipating what might happen and planning responses. But in genuinely unpredictable conditions, coverage-based preparation can actively work against performance. What it builds is rigidity dressed as readiness.

What actually separates those who adapt well under pressure from those who don't is something different – and considerably more transferable. Elite cricket provides an unusually clear test case, because matches unfold across days in constantly changing conditions, and the difference between sides that adapt and sides that don't is immediate and measurable.

### A Game Within a Game

There is something oddly revealing about the pink ball Test in cricket. It sits on the schedule like a quiet exception. The same players, the same format, the same ground and the same rules. And yet the moment daylight fades and the floodlights take over, the whole character of the game shifts. The pink ball behaves differently under lights. Batters who looked settled an hour earlier suddenly find themselves exposed. Bowlers who worked all afternoon without reward begin finding movement that was unavailable to