

Oz selectors right to ignore Hussey's critics

Sunil Gavaskar

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TEST cricket is back and as always it is separating the men from the boys. It is this format where bowlers and captains are trying to get batsmen out and not merely try and stop the runs. This is where bowlers attack more than in limited overs cricket for they are not restricted by the number of overs they can bowl and also unrestricted by how many fielders they can have in catching positions. This is the format where batsmen know they have to work hard for every run and boundaries and sixers are at a premium. This is a format that tests the player mentally as well as skill wise and that's why it is called Test cricket.

Michael Hussey was on the chop list of most 'knowledgeable' Australian writers in the game after the series against India. If the selectors had listened to them the series would well have been lost, for but for Hussey's fighting innings in the first and third Tests, Australia would have been dismissed for not too many and would have been finished. Hussey played a superb innings on a Perth pitch which had the usual bounce but not the usual pace and maybe because he is a local, he was able to adjust to the bounce and his batting to ensure that Australia were in a commanding position and went on to win the game.

Mitchell Johnson too spent the time away from the game after being left out of the second Test to go back to the drawing board and came back refreshed and with the inswinger which hadn't been seen often.



That was just what was needed for suddenly with the ball boomeranging back in to the right-handers and leaving the left-handers the batsmen did not know which to play and which to leave. In South Africa too, the pitch had a bit of bounce and movement for Dale Steyn and he along with Morne Morkel made life miserable for the Indian batsmen. Having been dismissed cheaply, there was still plenty of life left in the pitch but in the absence of Zaheer, India had nobody to exploit it. That South Africa smashed over 600 runs on the same pitch barely losing four wickets is a telling testimony of how the Indians bowled.

Unfortunately, unlike in Australia where there was help for Mitchell Johnson, there is nobody to guide the Indian bowlers and that is why they have been struggling for the last season or so. Jacques Kallis got his first double century and he also picked catches in those big hands of his and also did his bit with the ball.

There were others who also enjoyed themselves, particularly Hashim Amla, who continues his torment of India and then AB de Villiers demolished the Indian attack with a century off just 75 balls faced and that too in one session.

'The Master' tried his best to delay the inevitable with a fine century which was a mind-boggling 50th of his career but it wasn't enough as India lost by an innings. This week's CEAT International Cricketer is Jacques Kallis for his outstanding all round performance in the Test.
PMG

(This column is a review of international cricket between December 17 to 23)