

MASTER CLASS

Both Australia and SA are sore losers

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2nd Jan 2011

It was a week of comebacks as England and India roared back after losing the previous week's Test matches. England had been demolished by Australia on a bouncy pitch at Perth and India had suffered a similar fate at Centurion. There are many similarities between the Australians and the South Africans. Both are sports-loving people who play the game hard with no quarters given or asked for. Both love winning, but are sore losers and quick to make excuses about their defeats and blame it on everything except their ability or the lack of it.

There was even the crazy suggestion that Australia had stopped winning simply because they had been told to tone down their aggressive verbal approach and attitude towards the opposition and the win in Perth, where the Aussies were clearly charged up, was given as an example of how the Australians had rediscovered their 'mojo'. It was pathetic, to say the least, where showing disrespect to the opposition is looked upon as a virtue and even more pathetic when a responsible official supports it!



The question that needs answering from the same official is, well, what happened in Melbourne? Did the Australians suddenly become silent? Did he seriously think that even when they were losing in the last couple of years they were mute on the field? That they only wished the opposition 'good morning', 'how is the family' and other such pleasantries? If he believed that, then he must be living in cuckoo land.

South Africa also fancy themselves as 'sledgers', especially against teams other than Australia where they feel they are superior to the others and these other teams should not have any comeback lines. So when a Sreesanth does a 'Rodeo-ride' impersonation after hitting 'serial sledger' Andre Nel for six, the other South African fielders try and shout him down. Wow! It's like saying we can do it but not you.

Sadly, nobody responsible has tried to nip this in the bud and that old saying that 'it's Test cricket and so it's got to be hard' is brought out as if Test cricket without swearing and abusing is not hard. Some in the media and some former players actually glorify it by saying it brings the viewers, which is a pity, for all along it was thought that it was the contest between bat and ball which the crowds came to watch and not who has a more foul vocabulary.

The champion West Indian side of the 1970s and 80s hardly said a word. They just ran in and bowled even quicker if they were frustrated by the batsmen or simply hit the ball further if they had to show that they didn't rate a particular bowler. That's why they were popular even when they were beating teams inside four days and great role models as well. Peter Siddle and Matt Prior had an exchange where Siddle gave the England wicketkeeper a send-off after getting him out and Prior suggested that it be settled in the grandstand after the day's play was over. How did that enhance the game or set a good example to the thousands of kids watching the game on TV? Good sense prevailed and it was left only at those gestures. Siddle got six wickets in the only innings that England played and stuck around stubbornly for 40 runs in trying to delay the inevitable in the second innings. Prior took six catches in the first innings and played a capital innings of 85 that helped England extend their lead.

They are the joint winners of this week's accolade of 'CEAT International Cricketer of the Week' for those deeds and not for the empty threats doled out to each other on the field.

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