



The ICC Champions Trophy has been one of surprises. The manner in which no-hopers England have played has been an eye opener. It's as if coming to a different environment from home, the players are feeling liberated and playing freely and in a much more positive way than they did in the series against Australia in England. Of course by the time you read this you will know if the semi-final result was different than the one in the one-day series between the two old opponents played recently. The confidence level of the Australians is staggering to say the least and they look as if they want to crush all opponents who come in their way especially after the loss of the Ashes to England. Ponting is batting splendidly and is the lynchpin around which the Australian batting revolves. Hussey too is coming into form and with Brett Lee bowling like the wind, the Australians aren't going to let go of the Champions Trophy easily.

There were huge hopes from hosts South Africa that playing at home they would be able to redeem themselves and improve their record in ICC events. Unfortunately they were caught on the wrong foot by the Lankans who hammered over 300 in the first game and from thereon it was an uphill battle for the Proteas.

They had to beat the Englishmen to qualify for the semis but their attack let them down again and they were chasing over 300 runs once more. The skipper Graeme Smith played the one-day innings of his life and almost took his team to a win. The other centurion at the Centurion ground was Shoaib Malik who scored a classy hundred against India. It was a perfect example of how an innings can be built slowly to start with and then accelerating to catch up with the scoring rate. It was magnificent stuff and enabled Pakistan to beat India and dash the hopes of a billion people.

For their magnificent batting, this week's CEAT International Cricketer of the Week is shared by Greame Smith and Shoaib Malik.