

## KP saves his best for old foes

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Every time I bumped into Kevin Pietersen when he came to India for the IPL right after England's tour of Bangladesh, I ribbed him on his not getting a century against the minnows. I said, how could he call himself a great batsman if he could not get a hundred against Bangladesh? KP's retort at first was typically feisty, saying he would rather not have a ton against Bangladesh on his CV, but when I suggested that at the end of one's career all centuries count, and not just those against tough opponents, he agreed and said he felt sick when he got out on 99.

If anything, it is harder to get centuries against weak opposition, for there is a tendency to relax and not be as focused or intense. Matthew Hayden is another who has got centuries against just about every team, but not against Bangladesh, despite playing about half-a-dozen Tests against them. Batting is a one ball game, because one mistake later you can be back in the pavilion unless the fielder drops a catch. That is why good captains sometimes bring on non-regular bowlers when a partnership is developing, so that batsmen drop their guard and play overambitious shots and get out.



When he got the double century in Adelaide, I sent Pietersen a message about how he had benefitted by saving himself for the sterner Test against Australia and not getting a hundred against Bangladesh. He was chuffed about it and replied cheekily that 'you always have to be selective where and when you get them'. He had been struggling for a big score for quite a while now, which is unusual because he is too good a player to fail for that long. Like all great players, he made up for that with a double ton. The third Ashes Test starts on Thursday and Pietersen will be brimming with confidence and looking to carry on his good form, like Cook is doing. He is the CEAT International Cricketer of the Week for his fabulous double century in the second Ashes Test.

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