

Angelo is a top class player

Sunil Gavaskar, 16th May 2010

The ICC Twenty20 World Cup has thrown up some talent but also exposed some players. The format is such that the bowlers invariably are on a hiding to nothing and have had to devise newer deliveries to stop the batsmen from belting them out of the ground. However when the boundaries are the regular size as they were in St. Lucia the batsmen found that hitting sixes was not as easy as in Barbados where the boundaries were shorter. What made up for the smaller boundaries was the bounce in the pitch which gave the quicker bowlers a weapon that they do not usually get in the T20 format. They did not have to bang the ball in short to get it towards the ribs of the batsmen but could get it there from just short of good length. Batsmen, so used to going on the front foot, couldn't find their balance when they had to transfer their weight onto the back foot and unless a batsman is a good player of the pull shot he is going to be tucked up and kept quiet. The resultant dot ball adds to the pressure and forces the batsman to try something different and that's where trouble starts. Most teams in the T20 format have tried to score too quickly on such pitches attacking the bowlers when the ball is hard and bouncing more and swinging a bit more too. That is why the miscuing of shots and balls going up in the air. The taller players like Pietersen have relished batting because he could raise himself to his full height and pull or square cut the ball. With the Australians getting to the finals it will surely be interesting to see how he tackles the Australian pace attack.



Sri Lanka was disappointing too in the semis as they caved in to the English team who bowled well within their limitations. They had planned for each Lankan player and Dilshan who likes to get onto the front foot but like most sub-continent batsmen is not always able to transfer his balance when confronted with the short ball perished once again to it. Like most Indian batsmen he too will get a fair dose of it in the future but unless the pitch has some life on it he won't be too bothered.

The Sri Lankans have found in Angelo Matthews a player of the highest class and temperament. At the international level it is temperament that separates the men from the boys and he has shown that he has it. In this tournament he has come in to bat in tough situations and still taken his team to a good total mixing caution with aggression. Add to that his clever change of pace while bowling and wholehearted fielding makes him the kind of player captains want in their teams. Sri Lanka may be out of the ICC T20 but Matthews with his spirited performances in it is this week's CEAT International T20 Player of the Week.