

## Nehra showed that experience matters

Sunil Gavaskar, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2010

India regained the Asia Cup after a gap of about 15 years and it was a sweet win over Sri Lanka who deprived them in the finals the last time. That was when Ajantha Mendis was foxing most batsmen with his carrom ball delivery and baffling the best in the world too. A couple of years down the road thanks to video technology most of his tricks have now been found out by batsmen so he is not even a regular member of the team since he is not the world's greatest fielder or batsman. In the modern game a player has to be good in at least two aspects of the game so that if he is unsuccessful in one aspect he can still contribute in the other. Teams will still look to pick some specialist bowlers but unless he is in such good form that he will pick at least a couple of wickets he is not going to be much use to the team. It is particularly hard on the bowlers since they get to bowl only 10 over's in the game and so has to ensure that even if he does not take wickets he is not expensive and has not allowed the opposition to get away. More crucially he cannot be a liability in the field if his quota of overs has been dry and without wickets.



India has struggled a bit with its new ball bowlers and it was good to see Ashish Nehra strike early and put Sri Lanka on the back foot. Nehra is pretty much a rhythm bowler and is using his experience shrewdly. He is not looking to go flat out every ball and is thus able to exercise greater control over the line and length that he wants to bowl. His has been a fairy tale comeback and it is inspirational how he has overcome a career threatening injury and has wrested back his place in the team. What his effort has shown is that there is no substitute for experience in a tight game and a make or break matches.

Elsewhere too, the experienced guys were shining for their countries. Jacques Kallis got the 35th Test century of his fabulous career and added another half-century in the second innings too and in return Shivnaraine Chandernaul got yet another ton and saved his team from an embarrassment with his gutsy, no flair batting. Graeme Smith too has helped himself to runs and the way the South Africans are toying with the home team will make those asking awkward questions about his captaincy after the loss in the ICC World Twenty20 wait a bit more before asking for his head.

There is no such danger for Mahendra Singh Dhoni who led from the front in the Asia Cup and ensured his team got the elusive trophy. When he bats in that aggressive manner he is always in charge of the situation and it was his positive batting as well as his catching that stood out in India's win.

In England the Australians are finding that England after their unexpected win in the ICC World T20 is growing in confidence and self belief. That is amply seen by the century that new boy Eoin Morgan got when it looked like Australia were going to impose themselves on England again. Instead in a refreshing turn around it is Morgan who is creating doubts in the Aussie minds. England is 2-0 up and looking good.

However, it is India's skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni with his batting and work with the gloves who is the CEAT International Cricketer of this Week.