

Amla Proteas' batting mainstay

Sunil Gavaskar, 30th May 2010

Two of South Africa's most consistent players are repaying the selectors for the faith shown in them at the start of their careers. The hallmark of good selection is to be able to spot that extra spark in a player even though he may not have got the big runs or taken a bag full of wickets. If runs and wickets were the only criteria then the stats guys could well be the selectors and the scorebook their 'Bhagvad Gita'. India has the tendency to go for the popular choice and sometimes there is a leaning towards favoring players from a certain state because of the presence of administrators from there. To be fair to the administrators there have been very few instances of them actually pushing for a player from their state and much of what is talked about is fiction. True, some of the selectors especially those who have no confidence in their own ability do try and impress the powers that be by promoting players from that area and thereby hoping that their term as selectors will get extended.



These are the same people who will be the first to leak discussions in the selection meeting and invariably paint themselves as the only ones doing the right thing while blaming their colleagues or even the skipper and the coach as being the villains. They are fooling nobody not even the media whom they are giving this false info for everybody knows that it is they themselves who have actually been the bad guys and are using the strategy of thieves calling the others thieves. Not that selection in other countries is flawless and without the bias that all humans are susceptible to but to be able to admit errors and try and rectify them is also as important and shows a person as being honest to his assignment. In all the countries there is debate and discussion and some derision too after a team is announced and selectors get it in the neck for not picking a player from a particular state or selecting one from another state.

The two players on whom South Africa's batting revolves are Hashim Amla and AB de Villiers. They were slow to get going at the international level but the selectors persisted with them and today they are reeling runs and tons and strengthening the team with their outstanding fielding too. de Villiers is more stylish and a bigger hitter of the ball while Amla has an awkward style but is highly effective and hard to dislodge once he gets set. Amla is continuing the magnificent form he was in on the tour to India and in the West Indies has already shown that his wicket will not be easy. For his century and a near century in the first two ODIs he is the CEAT International Cricketer of the Week.