

Modern tours tough on fringe players

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There was a rare gap in international cricket last week after India's tour of the West Indies ended where no games were played. The ten-day gap was used by India to try and get acclimatised to the weather and conditions in England where they will be for almost two months and where they play four Tests and five One-Day Internationals. The series has been hyped up a fair bit by the British media and even as they are doing so, they are taking their usual pot shots at BCCI and Indian cricket. Perhaps, it is the fact that the Indian Premier League (IPL) took off spectacularly and has made all other domestic T20 tournaments look insipid in comparison. So even if their own teams have names like Warwickshire Bears or Leicester Foxes, they will still poke fun at the names of the Indian franchise teams.



Quite clearly, they still have a huge Australian complex so there probably won't be too much joking about the names of the teams in the Australian Big Bash which begins next year. It would be interesting to see how that shapes up for while there's excitement about the T20 format, the buzz that the IPL generates is generally absent in other T20 competitions. The match against Somerset was more a warm-up game which most players used to do just that and that was warm-up for the sterner Tests ahead. Most senior players in particular would have taken this game lightly while the new comers naturally would have wanted to impress the tour selectors and push for a place in the Test side.

The competition for the last middle-order batting position was between Suresh Raina, who had a good series against the West Indies and Yuvraj Singh, who was the player of the recently concluded World Cup. That was settled when Raina got a century while Yuvraj failed. This is the problem with modern tours where there is not much opportunity for the fringe players to show how good they are. It is hard for the tour selectors to pick players who haven't played for a while and replace those who have been failing.

There's just a two-day match after the first two Tests which again does not give much of a chance for the fringe players in the team to stake a claim for a place in the teams for the next two Tests. PMG