

Watson's cricket has bloomed under Warne

THE availability of the international Australian and New Zealand players has strengthened the respective teams and the team that seems to have benefited the most is the Rajasthan Royals.

Shane Watson who has had an extraordinary couple of seasons for Australia has given the first champions of the IPL just the balance they are looking for. Though he opens the batting for Australia, Shane Warne has not disturbed the well settled opening pair of Michael Lumb and Naman Ojha and has slotted Watson down the order where too he has been plundering runs and giving the Royals the press on the accelerator that is needed in the last few overs.

If anything, it is the first IPL that was the making of Shane Watson. When he came in for the Royals he had been in and out of the Australian team and was plagued by injuries which often meant that he never played a full series or completed a season. What the IPL did was not only give him a platform to express his prodigious talent but also got him to spend two months with one of the great motivators in the game, Shane Warne.



Warne gave him the self belief that may not always have been there earlier and he helped to make him less tense as could be seen with his body language which showed that he was clearly enjoying playing the game and not under pressure of expectations to perform.

It could well have been the tension of expectations that could be the reason for him tightening up and thus pulling a muscle here and there and thus missing out on a regular place in the Australian team.

After that season Watson has not looked back and is now poised to become one of the greats of the game. It was pretty much the same with Zaheer Khan who in the early stages of his career also used to get injured as his body stiffened up with the tension of the team and people's expectations of him. Once they established themselves in the team and were not under the kosh for a place in the team the injuries too virtually disappeared and both have hardly missed a game for their countries since then.

Injuries are part of the game and quicker bowlers have a fair share of them but both Watson and Zaheer are now among the fittest of international players. Shane Watson came cheap for the Royals who got most if not all their players at bargain basement prices and went onto win the first IPL with a group that was low on profile but high on motivation and effort.

Players like Watson, Munaf Patel, Swapnil Asnodkar, Siddharth Trivedi played some great games and with Warne spinning his magic the Royals were unstoppable.

Shane Watson has continued his good form with both bat and ball and though he does not look a dangerous bowler he has a great knack of picking wickets at crucial times and turn the game around for his team. There were some top efforts from the likes of Chris Gayle, Ganguly, Tendulkar and Murali Vijay in the last week but it is Shane Watson with his all-round performance who is the CEAT Cricket Rating T20 Player of the Week.