

Kohli, Pandey look like the future of India's middle-order

17th January 2010, Sunil Gavaskar

AFTER the thrilling Tests in the southern hemisphere in the first week of the New Year, there has been a bit of a lull. Modern day tours have plenty of rest days so as to avoid burnout, so we are told. Two back to back Tests means that for nearly a week after that there will be no cricket played by the touring team before the next Test. This is hard on those in the touring parties who are in the reserves and want to show that they should be in the Test eleven as they get no opportunity to show their form.

Even for those out of form, there is no chance of trying to regain it by playing a first class match and so it becomes increasingly difficult for the team that is already down to raise the level of its game without any hard match practice. There is not even a two day game which can be used by the touring team to get back into the groove somewhat so all that they do is have net practice before the next game starts and that is hardly the ideal preparation for a Test match.

In cricket, the best thing to do when you are in form is to continue playing so that you do not lose the rhythm and if you are having a lean time then it is not nets, but a hard game of cricket that is going to get you back in form.



The gap in the Tests allowed the Tri-nations Cup in Dhaka to get centre stage and Sri Lanka won the trophy with a fine all-round display. The Indians realized that fielding second meant bowling with a wet ball and to overcome that disadvantage looked to get a few more runs.

Unfortunately, that approach does not always work and so some of the shot selection was a trifle ambitious and cost them their wickets. To be fair both Kulasekera and Welegedara also bowled well getting a bit more bounce and once half the team was back in the pavilion before even 75 runs were on the scoreboard it was going to be extremely tough for India to put up a total that they could defend.

Suresh Raina played brilliantly to get a century and then the Indian bowlers bowled very well too as they clamped down on the scoring of the Lankans. Sri Lanka had Jayawardene at the crease and while he was there nothing was impossible. He brought all his experience into play as he steered his team to a win.

He was not in the original squad because of an injury sustained in India but after the team lost three players in the first week of the Dhaka tournament through injuries, he was drafted back in the team and scored a century in the first game he played and put in a match winning effort in the finals too.

Virat Kohli also had a splendid tournament getting a century and another near ton and his consistency was admirable. He is coming of age as an international player and along with Manish Pandey who has had a terrific Ranji season, look like the future of India's middle order.

However he has to share with Mahela Jayawardene the accolade of the CEAT International Cricketer of the Week.