

By accepting defeat gracefully, Ponting showed he's grown as a leader

Sunil Gavaskar

It's been a terrific fortnight for Indian sport. There has been an unprecedented haul of medals in the Commonwealth Games and in cricket, India beat Australia in both the Tests and have thus convincingly answered all those who doubt the number one ranking India has in Test cricket. The Commonwealth Games was preceded by some unseemly controversy about the readiness of the venues, the facilities and the quality of these facilities when they were ready. While some of the views were understandable, for there was still plenty of work to be done, some were obviously motivated by concerns which were far from genuine.

Whenever a developing nation gets a big event, there are always doubters especially from the developing world who will question all aspects of the preparation. South Africa found it before the Football World Cup and now India has realized that some of its so-called friends are hardly that. The Football World Cup went off without a major incident and has been hailed as one of the best organized events ever. All those who predicted a horrible event were proven wrong and had to eat their words. The same happened with New Delhi games and what many did not seem to understand was that, unprecedented rains lasting till the third week of September made it impossible for some of the projects to be completed in time. Even the Athens Olympics in 2004 was somewhat similar where some venues were completed on the eve of the start of the mega event. Not all countries have the same financial muscle and the wherewithal to ensure that venues are ready months ahead of the start of the event. Even the previous two Cricket World Cups played in the sub-continent had plenty of doubters but went off without a hitch. What was amusing was that in 1999, when England had the World Cup

the opening ceremony was so boring and without any connection to the game, that all those who had criticized the opening ceremony of the previous World Cup in the Indian sub-continent had no place to hide. No wonder the London Olympics people are already saying that it's opening ceremony and the efficiency of the Beijing Olympics may not be able to be replicated by them.

India has a huge media now, and maybe it is time now for the owners to send two units to cover major events in other countries. One for the actual sporting event and the other simply to find fault with the arrangements, hospitality facilities etc. It is the simplest thing to do, for if one goes with a closed mind like most of those who criticized the Delhi games, then it will be a matter of seconds to find fault with anything over there too.



Be that as it may, the performances of the athletes and the cricketers was heartwarming and will hopefully lead to a better structure that can produce winners regularly and not once in a while. Lessons can certainly be learnt from Australia about how it produces world class performers in all sports and in return, we can teach them how to accept defeat gracefully.

Ricky Ponting was gracious in accepting that India was the better team and that his team could have played better. Despite being booed by the Bangalore crowd which was a big surprise since it is one of the better crowds in India, he praised them for turning up in such huge numbers and with that one statement he showed how he has grown as a leader.

India's cricket win was total team effort but there was one special performer. It is 'the master' Sachin Tendulkar, with his incredible double ton and the invaluable half-century that helped India bag a 2-0 series win over the Australians, is the CEAT International Cricketer of the Week.