

## **Amla as prolific as Sachin at his best**

**Sunil Gavaskar**

There is one thing Hashim Amla has in common with Sachin Tendulkar. He is the only overseas cricketer apart from 'the master' who has a special place in the Bradman Museum. Sachin's shirt, gloves are autographed and in a special frame nicely lit up so that visitors to the museum can immediately see it. Hashim Amla also has his shirt autographed and framed in a similar manner. In Amla's case the novelty is that, his shirt is the one that did not carry the logo of the beer company which was one of the sponsors of the South African team. This was because of a special dispensation by the South African board to respect Amla's religious beliefs. However in the rush to get another logo on his shirt, that of a telephone company, the guys doing the embroidery did it upside down and that can be clearly seen.

Amla may not have the same drawing power of Tendulkar and probably even in his native South Africa, Tendulkar has more fans than Amla has, but in recent times the bearded Amla has been as prolific as Tendulkar was say about ten years ago. Of course, in the last two years the master has been in equally productive form, but that touch of ten years back was truly a magical one where he was demolishing the bowling and it was high quality too, as if he was practicing in the nets.

Amla had a fabulous series when the Proteas were in India earlier in the year and he will be the man that the Indian bowlers will have to watch out for when they tour South Africa later in the year. His style looks a

bit awkward, but as cricket has shown us time and again a player does not have to look pretty as long as he is pretty effective.



A.B. de Villiers is another young South African, who has been in great form ever since he learnt that batting was not simply about bashing the ball, but that there are times when the bowler has to be given his spell before looking to get the runs off other bowlers. These two look like carrying on the tradition of the top South African batsmen when Jacques Kallis decides he has had enough and Graeme Smith takes a back seat and looks to contribute as a player and not as skipper.

The Zimbabwe team is just about finding its way back in international cricket and the more they play against tough teams like South Africa the better it will be for them. Yes they may get walloped, but if they are good learners then they will take plenty from each game they play. The South Africans as expected were simply too good for their neighbors and apart from Brendon Taylor, there weren't too many Zimbabwean players who shone in the one day series. Taylor continues to impress and his 145 in the first odi was a superb effort.

However with two centuries in the series it is Hashim Amla who beats his team mates A.B. de Villiers, Juan Theron and Zimbabwe's Taylor to be the CEAT International Cricketer of the Week.