

Aussies have lost the killer punch

Sunil Gavaskar

The cricket season in the southern hemisphere has begun in right earnest now with the England team also reaching Australia to defend the Ashes which they won last year at home. The Australians are playing the Sri Lankans before that and are struggling which is not such a good sign for them. More revealingly, they are losing close games which shows that they lack the killer punch which was the hallmark of their cricket not too long ago. India and New Zealand have also begun a three match Test series, which may turn out to be an anticlimax after the gripping two Tests against Australia just a fortnight or so back. In the United Arab Emirates which is Pakistan's 'home venue', the South Africans are finding that having easily won the T20 series, the slightly longer format of 50 overs is turning out to be a different cup of tea as the Pakistanis have lifted their game and are battling it out and giving the Proteas a run for their money. Abdul Razzaq played a hurricane innings to take his team to an improbable win that has lifted the gloom around Pakistan cricket and given it new breathing space. Razzaq has been a dangerous batsman for a long time, but has not been able to play such an innings for a few years. The wait was worth it, as he produced a stunning array of shots to take his team to a win in the final over of the innings with just one wicket left.

South Africa have found a good player in Colin Ingram who bats confidently and is also a brilliant fielder. In a season which the ICC World Cup is to be played, most teams are looking to fill in some of the slots, as also hoping that a player will come through who will be a game changer with bat and ball.



The Lankans are also strong contenders for the World Cup and they have showed just why by winning the one-day series against Australia in style. They have a balanced team with lots of experience and some of the younger players like Perera and Matthews are going to be big names in the game in the future.

Hashim Amla has been in wonderful touch this year and his record in all forms of the game is awesome. He has seldom put a foot wrong and his calm demeanor helps settle any nerves in the dressing room. The South Africans may just be a bit distracted with the publication of Herschelle Gibbs' autobiography, in which he has talked about some issues, but the best way to deal with those is to keep winning matches and if the Proteas can do that, then it's the game that will be the topic of discussions and nothing else.

There was a close run for this week's award with Shahid Afridi, Perera, Colin Ingram also in the fray, but it is Amla's consistency with a half-century and then a century that wins him this week's CEAT International Cricketer of the Week accolade.