

Australia and South Africa have just concluded a 3 Test Match series. The South African test team has emerged victorious, for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in a rubber on Aussie soil.

In the first Test Match the Springboks chased down a total of 414 runs to win the test match. The Oz bowling looked pedestrian and apart from Ponting and Clarke, the batting is a pale shadow of the all-conquering squads we have seen in the past. The retirement of the old guard, Mcgrath and Warne in particular have reduced the Aussie bowling attack to average. I do not believe that they will hold on to the #1 Test ranking for much longer. South Africa and India are chomping at the bit and are right on their tail.

South Africa won the 2<sup>nd</sup> test match, securing the win in the series and narrowly avoided a loss in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. If they had won in the last match they would have spring boarded over the Aussies to the #1 test ranking, but it did not happen and the series result was 2-1, to the Springboks. An absolutely absorbing and entertaining series, which defined test cricket at it's very best. Dale Steyn. Graeme Smith and JP Duminy are the heroes of this series. How can one forget Smith coming in at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> test match, with a broken hand, wincing every time the ball hit the bat but just hanging on doggedly ... JP Duminy in his first test series coming out with match changing match performances, one after another? A test match series for the ages, and definitely one that marks the changing of the guard; not something the Aussies will be pleased about.

One of the best opening batsmen of the modern era, Matthew Hayden has decided to call it a day. This will deplete the Aussie ranks even more. A brilliant attacking batsman who was successful in the long and shot format of the game and an absolute physical presence. He will be missed, not just by the Aussies, but by the whole global cricketing fraternity.

The Indians have had some time off from the International



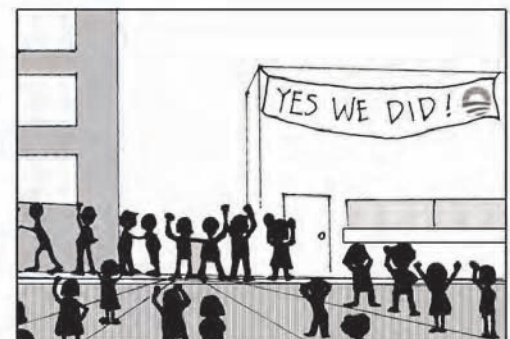
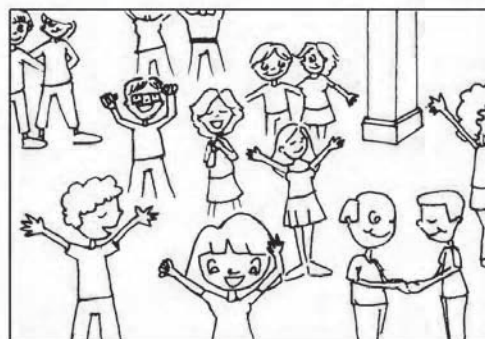
circuit and are playing domestic cricket. I believe that the BCCI should earmark a certain part of the year so that the Indian cricket fans get to see these players match up against each other. Ranji Trophy cricket is not the same when the best players in each state have no time to play for their own teams because they are on International duty or just need a breather from playing a packed schedule.

India has had an unfortunate respite from International duty due to the attacks on Mumbai. A tour to Pakistan was called off, and I know there are Pakistani fans who think that it is unfair that England came back to finish the test match series, but the bottom line is ... India is just safer than Pakistan ... even with the attacks in Mumbai. It is unfortunate, but it is reality.

On that note I will end this article. Signing off for now ...



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