



SOUTH AFRICA

GRAEME SMITH'S TROOPS ARE LOOKING FOR A SECOND STRAIGHT SERIES WIN IN AUSTRALIA

WORDS BY RICHARD ASHER

GRAEME SMITH

- Left-handed batsman
- Cape Cobras



The burly left-hander needs little introduction to Australian fans. He marked his Test debut with a half-ton against the Aussies, famously batted with a broken hand at the SCG last time he was here and now leads his third South African touring party to these shores. After capturing that elusive series win in Australia four years ago, Smith will have a lot of respect from the home side. The talismanic opener is often vulnerable outside off stump, but bowlers know that anything too straight will be put away into the leg side every time. Smith relishes fourth-innings run chases, and when he performs the rest of the side tend to follow.

ALVIRO PETERSEN

- Right-handed batsman
- Highveld Lions



The relatively inexperienced Petersen tends to suffer unfair comparisons with his illustrious top order colleagues, and Smith's opening partner is the one player in the top five not to have truly cemented his position in the South African team. After a century on debut against India in 2010, Petersen has already bounced back from being dropped once. He tends to respond well to pressure, and when his position has come into question he's usually come up with a timely big knock to silence the critics. The most recent of these came on tour ago in England, so expect him to keep his place for this series.

HASHIM AMLA

- Right-handed batsman
- KwaZulu-Natal Dolphins



Amla had a scratchy start to his career, but has overcome technical difficulties to turn into one of the world's most feared batsmen. Blessed with incredible powers of endurance and concentration, Amla made the highest Test score by a South African with a knock of 311 not out against England, his side's last tour. Supremely patient and rarely seen making a loose shot, Amla tends not to give his wicket away. Yet he's not a slow scorer: strong on the off side, he possesses an artful cover drive and will punish poor balls. He has yet to produce a big score in Australia, though, and that's something he'll be keen to address this summer.

JACQUES KALLIS

- Right-handed batsman
- Warriors



Quite simply the number one Test all-rounder. His pre-series record of 12,641 runs and 280 wickets speaks for itself, the latter all the more impressive considering he bats at four. On his first visit to Australia back in 1997, he made a memorable maiden Test ton in a match-saving effort at the MCG. Four tours later, on what is almost certainly his final visit here, the veteran will be looking to bookend his career in Australia with another big knock. He's recently returned to form with the ball after a lengthy dry patch, although he isn't quite guaranteed to break partnerships the way he used to. He remains an outstanding catcher in the slip cordon.

AB DE VILLIERS

- Right-handed batsman; wicket-keeper
- Titans



The popular de Villiers is known for his limited-overs batting exploits, but he has an excellent Test record too. He has given his wicket away at times, but has ground down bowlers nearly as often and can be tough to dislodge in the fourth innings — as Australia found out in Perth last time SA were here. He kept wicket during his team's recent tour of England following Mark Boucher's retirement, but it's unclear whether he will retain that job in Australia. Some feel his batting is affected by such duties, and the man himself generally prefers a role in the outfield, where he is superb. Had injury concerns at the time of writing, which could affect his tour.

JACQUES RUDOLPH

- Left-handed batsman
- Titans



After some heavy domestic scoring, veteran Rudolph made a long-awaited return to Test cricket one year ago when Australia toured South Africa. He dislodged Alvaro Petersen as Smith's opening partner, but could not convert his fine form into big runs at international level. By the end of last summer Petersen was back and Rudolph had been demoted to the middle order; since then he's made a couple of fifties and a hundred. The careful left-hander has yet to truly fire in his 'second' career in Test match cricket, and the 31-year-old isn't guaranteed a place in the starting line-up this Australian summer.

JEAN-PAUL DUMINY

- Left-handed batsman; right arm offbreak
- Cape Cobras



Australian fans who watched SA's last tour here will recall Duminy with little fondness. Duminy made 50 on debut in his side's epic chase of 414 in Perth, then made 166 in a huge ninth-wicket partnership with Dale Steyn at the MCG. The Melbourne knock went a long way towards setting up South Africa's series win. The good news for Australia is that he's struggled for consistent runs since, showed vulnerability to off spinners and had a spell out of the side. It's a toss-up between him and Rudolph for the number six berth, although there's room for both if de Villiers keeps wicket. He bowls a little off-spin and has a handful of Test wickets.

DALE STEYN

- Right-handed batsman; right arm fast
- Cape Cobras



Considered (and ranked) the world's top fast bowler, Steyn is a remarkably consistent performer with an excellent pre-series Test average of 23.50. Bowls a disciplined line and length at high pace, can move the ball both ways and get aggressive when necessary. May not necessarily take the new ball if Smith's tactics in England are anything to go by. Steyn has been central to SA's rise to the top of the world Test rankings and any injury to their spearhead would boost Australia's chances in this series no end. He can also hold a bat, although he hasn't quite lived up to the promise shown by the 76 he scored in that MCG partnership with Duminy.

RORY KLEINVELDT

- Right-handed batsman; right arm fast medium
- Cape Cobras



Effectively the replacement for the injured Marchant de Lange in the touring squad, Kleinveldt looks to be in pole position for a call-up if any of the front-line bowlers hits injury in this series. He's a contemporary of Philander: these two have spent a number of years bowling in tandem for the Cape Cobras at Newlands. At 29, he's no youngster and has over 75 first-class matches under his belt. He's also got a spell at Hampshire and two T20 internationals for South Africa on his resume. Australian conditions will be a new challenge for Kleinveldt, though, and if he comes out of a Test debut in Australia with tidy figures he'll have done very well.

ROBIN PETERSON

- Left-handed batsman; left arm orthodox
- Cape Cobras



Peterson traveled to England in mid-2012 as South Africa's back-up spinner, and could fulfill the same role in Australia. He's never been a regular in the test side, but can claim six Tests dating back to 2004 — although none have been against Australia. He did once pick up five wickets against Bangladesh, but unfortunately he is best remembered for being smashed for 28 in one over by a rampant Brian Lara in a Test in 2003. Since then Peterson has become better-known as a one-day player. Should he play, it's at least fair to say that he can offer a great deal more with the bat than Tahir can.

MORNE MORKEL

- Left-handed batsman; right arm fast
- Titans



The lanky Morkel is a tremendously nice guy off the field, but it's no fun being on the wrong end of one of his bouncers. His height means he gets steep bounce off a length, which makes him a handful when he's accurate. Accuracy is not always a given though, as there are still days when his radar is woefully off. That said, Morkel had one of his most consistent tours to date on South Africa's successful visit to England in the middle of 2012, and bowling coach Allan Donald has been working hard to keep him steady. His batting has shown some potential, but it doesn't generally offer much resistance.

VERNON PHILANDER

- Right-handed batsman; right arm fast medium
- Cape Cobras



After several years on the domestic circuit, Philander's prowess with the ball at Test level has surprised even his own countrymen. Australia were the first to discover his threat when he debuted on home soil a year ago. After picking up 14 wickets in two Tests against the Aussies, he became the fastest bowler in history to reach 50 victims. He's proven himself up to the task on trips to New Zealand and England, where his nagging line, length and movement kept his average at a tick under 16 heading into this series. But he is still only 10 Tests old, and this summer will be his biggest challenge yet.

FAF DU PLESSIS

- Right-handed batsman; right arm legbreak
- Titans



With 26 ODIs and a handful of T20 internationals to his name, du Plessis is one of those squad members still awaiting that coveted first Test cap. He has appeared in the Test arena numerous times as a substitute fielder, so he's had a taste of the action and won't be overawed by the occasion. Those who've watched him in limited-overs action around the world will know that he's an aggressive batsman and a confident personality, but only time will tell if he can make the grade at Test level. He's in the squad as a back-up player but could get a start if injuries hit.

LONWABO TSOTSOBE

- Right-handed batsman; left arm fast medium
- KwaZulu-Natal Dolphins



It would be a surprise to see Tsotsobe in action during the Vodafone Test Series this summer, but if injuries hit South Africa's bowlers anything is possible. Another player better known for his work in the one-day arena, Tsotsobe played five Tests in 2010-11 and only had one stand-out performance: five wickets in the Boxing Day match against India late in 2010. It's been almost two years since his last Test match, and since he was not named in the original touring party he is only likely to appear if one or two of South Africa's quicks break down and have to head home.

IMRAN TAHIR

- Right-handed batsman; right arm legbreak
- KwaZulu-Natal Dolphins



Another bowler to have made his debut against Australia one year ago, Tahir brings something completely new to the South African side in the shape of leg spin. It's something South Africa pined for in the Shane Warne era, but the Pakistan-born Tahir has yet to show signs of Warne-esque levels of plunder. He's picked up his fair share of wickets, but mostly those of the lower order. Specialist batsmen have found him easy pickings too often, but he has steadily improved his discipline and South Africa can be expected to stick with him for the time being. Tahir wears his heart on his sleeve and his celebrations are always a sight to behold.

THAMI TSOLEKILE

- Right-handed batsman; wicket-keeper
- Highveld Lions



Tsolekile may play all three Tests against Australia, or he may play none. Unlike de Villiers, he is a specialist wicket-keeper. The question is whether coach Gary Kirsten feels the need to use one. He is a lot more experienced now than he was when he played his three Tests back in 2004, having proven himself a solid player in domestic cricket since then. He's still quick between the wickets and a useful batsman, but the jury is out on whether Kirsten thinks Tsolekile — or any other specialist keeper in South Africa — has what it takes to replace Mark Boucher on a permanent basis. But if injury does keep de Villiers out of any Tests, Kirsten's hand will be forced.



Fielding is a South African strength and Jacques Rudolph is a case in point

SOUTH AFRICA TEST STATISTICS

ALL STATISTICS CORRECT
AS AT 22 OCTOBER 2012

BATTING AND FIELDING

PLAYER	Mat	Inn	NO	Runs	HS	Ave	SR	100s	50s	4s	6s	Catches
Hashim Amla	62	108	9	4946	311*	49.95	51.63	16	23	627	6	56
AB de Villiers	77	129	14	5618	278*	48.85	54.92	13	29	649	42	108
JP Duminy	16	26	5	789	166	37.57	43.32	2	4	92	6	14
Jacques Kallis	155	262	40	12641	224	56.94	45.79	43	55	1409	92	187
Morne Morkel	42	50	7	618	40	14.37	49.12	0	0	93	2	12
Alviro Petersen	16	30	2	1187	182	42.39	51.34	4	3	142	8	9
Robin Peterson	6	7	1	163	61	27.16	71.8	0	1	19	1	5
Vernon Philander	10	11	0	211	61	19.18	46.06	0	1	25	1	3
Jacques Rudolph	46	79	9	2548	222*	36.4	44.07	6	11	356	7	29
Graeme Smith	102	179	12	8314	277	49.78	59.85	25	34	1055	23	137
Dale Steyn	57	71	16	808	76	14.69	43.3	0	1	79	20	15
Imran Tahir	10	11	4	78	29*	11.14	64.46	0	0	9	1	4
Thami Tsolekile	3	5	0	47	22	9.4	26.55	0	0	3	0	6
Lonwabo Tsotsobe	5	5	2	19	8*	6.33	35.84	0	0	2	0	1

BOWLING

PLAYER	Mat	Inn	Balls	Runs	Wkts	BBI	BBM	Ave	Econ	SR	5WI	10WM
JP Duminy	16	20	875	510	12	3-89	3-89	42.5	3.49	72.9	0	0
Jacques Kallis	155	258	19344	9137	280	6-54	9-92	32.63	2.83	69	5	0
Morne Morkel	42	79	8330	4554	150	6-23	7-98	30.36	3.28	55.5	5	0
Robin Peterson	6	11	959	497	14	5-33	6-94	35.5	3.1	68.5	1	0
Vernon Philander	10	20	2091	1006	63	6-44	10-102	15.96	2.88	33.1	7	2
Dale Steyn	57	107	11921	6745	287	7-51	10-91	23.5	3.39	41.5	18	4
Imran Tahir	10	19	1929	1045	26	3-55	5-160	40.19	3.25	74.1	0	0
Lonwabo Tsotsobe	5	9	870	448	9	3-43	5-83	49.77	3.08	96.6	0	0

AUTOGRAPHS

