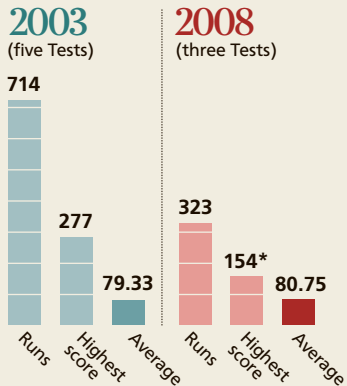




Kevin Pietersen's biggest challenge in his first Test as England captain is to find a way to dismiss Graeme Smith, his opposite number. Yet again the South Africa opening batsman has beaten the England bowlers. In 2003, he scored two double hundreds and averaged almost 80 as South Africa drew the series. This year, his two hundreds have been smaller but his average is a shade higher and England have already been beaten thanks to his 154 not out at Edgbaston last week

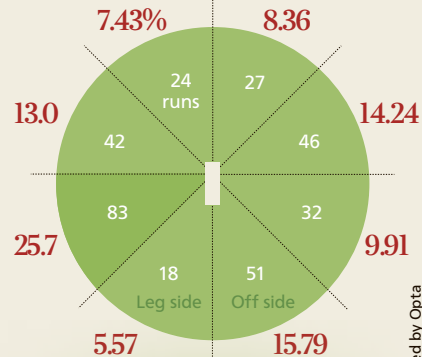
Smith in England



There is only pride to play for at the Brit Oval but Smith has scores to settle with the ground. In 2003, his series ended with a whimper as he made 18 and 19 (run out by Michael Vaughan, then leg-before to Martin Bicknell). How might England counter him now? Bicknell got him twice at the end of the 2003 series and he was also twice out to James Kirtley. Is picking under-rated swing bowlers the answer or is there another way?

Where he scores

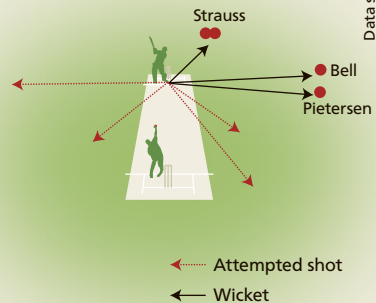
Smith has scored heavily all around the wicket, but his favourite area is through mid-wicket, where he has scored more than a quarter of his runs this series, using his dominant bottom hand to whip the ball across the line. Pietersen should consider turning Smith's strength into a weakness by bowling full and straight early on and looking for a leg-before decision, while protecting the mid-wicket area



How he has been out this series

On the four occasions Smith has been dismissed, each time he has been caught. At Lord's he was twice caught at backward point off James Anderson trying to score on the leg side, perhaps an example of his strength also being a weakness. In the first innings, an attempted flick got a leading edge and he was caught by Ian Bell, in the second he was trying to pull the ball but got a top edge to Pietersen.

In the first innings at Headingley and Edgbaston, Smith was caught by Andrew Strauss at slip, both times off Andrew Flintoff, who has a reputation as a good bowler against left-handers. On each occasion, Flintoff's pace, bounce and movement pushed Smith through problems as he tried to push the ball into the off side



Data supplied by Opta

South Africa's top order

Once you get rid of Smith you still have five other top-class batsmen to confront and though Kallis may look like the weak link, his career average of 56 suggests that he is due a big score...

