

A bone-dry Nagpur pitch already sporting loose cracks two days out from the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series opener has both Australia and India considering stacking their side with spinners.

While the track produced for the first Test appeared well-grassed from afar, the eager cohort of Aussie batters who got their first close-up peek at the VCA Stadium surface on Tuesday morning came away anticipating turning conditions and up-and-down bounce.

Steve Smith assesses the Nagpur wicket on Tuesday // Getty

Vice-captain Steve Smith, couching his observations on the pitch with an admission of uncertainty over its precise characteristics, said Australia may look at picking three spinners.

However Smith's confirmation that allrounder Cameron Green has all but been ruled out of the Test would complicate that, as it would leave captain Pat Cummins as the solitary pace option in the team.

The discovery of what Smith identified as a dry patch at one end right where laser-accurate duo Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel will aim their left-arm spinners at left-handers will be a greater headache.

If incumbents Matthew Renshaw and Ashton Agar hold their spots, six of Australia's top eight batters would be southpaws, an abundance KL Rahul labelled "unique".

"Pretty dry, particularly one end," Smith told reporters when asked about the surface.

"I think it will take a bit of spin, particularly the left-arm spinner taking it into our left-handers. There's a section there that's quite dry.

"Other than that, I can't really get a good gauge on it. I don't think there will be a heap of bounce in the wicket, I think it will be quite skiddy for the seamers and maybe a bit of up-and-down movement as the game goes on.

"The cracks felt quite loose. I'm not entirely sure – we'll wait and see."

The pitch was watered in the afternoon as rolled-up carpets were placed at either end in the bowlers' danger area in front the stumps.

Carpets laid at either end of the Nagpur pitch // cricket.com.au

Local media have reported India may pick all four spinners in their squad for the match and opener KL Rahul suggested matter-of-factly it was no secret the selection of at least three would be considered.

But the absence of Green, who continued his recovery from finger surgery by bowling in the middle of the VCA Stadium on Tuesday, would make it difficult to follow suit.

"Possibly," Smith said of the prospect of partnering Nathan Lyon with two of Agar, Todd Murphy and Mitchell Swepson. "If Greeny was fit, it would be definitely more of an option.

"Without him I'm not entirely sure. We've got a strategy meeting this arvo where we'll talk about what we think. Ultimately it's down to the selectors to pick the team they think is best for the surface."

Much has been made of the most recent Ranji Trophy game played at the VCA Stadium and the fact that nine of the 10 final-innings wickets on day three fell to left-arm orthodox spin as Gujarat were bowled out for 54 chasing only 73.

That match was played on a pitch immediately adjacent to the one being used for the Test.

What has been overlooked was Gujarat's opening pace bowlers taking five wickets apiece on day one of that match, suggesting Cummins and Scott Boland – a strong chance to play his first Test abroad – could also get assistance from the track.

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Rahul suggested much of India's preparation however has centred on facing slow bowling.

"We know how the pitches are going to be in India and what to expect," said the opener. "Keeping that in mind, we've practiced

playing against spin ... we've tried to get used to spinning conditions and see how we can score runs.

"There will be a temptation to play three spinners, we're playing in India, there's no surprise that the pitch is going to spin.

"We still haven't decided on the final playing XI, there's still a couple of days left before it starts.

"It's still too early to really know what the pitch is going to do.

"We still have to come here on the day of the game and only then we will know what the pitch is going to (do). We can only look at it and presume it's going to play a certain way, but you never know with pitches."

Border-Gavaskar Qantas Tour of India 2023

February 9-13: [First Test, Nagpur](#), 3pm AEDT

February 17-21: [Second Test, Delhi](#), 3pm AEDT

March 1-5: [Third Test, Dharamsala](#), 3pm AEDT

March 9-13: [Fourth Test, Ahmedabad](#), 3pm AEDT

All matches will be broadcast live and exclusive on Fox Cricket and [Kayo Sports](#)

Australia squad: Pat Cummins (c), Ashton Agar, Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Peter Handscomb, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Lance Morris, Todd Murphy, Matthew Renshaw, Steve Smith (vc), Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Swepson, David Warner

India squad: (for the first two Tests) Rohit Sharma (c), KL Rahul (vc), Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KS Bharat, Ishan Kishan, Ravichandran Ashwin, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Umesh Yadav, Jaydev Unadkat, Suryakumar Yadav