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AUSTRALIA TOUR OF INDIA, 2017

India still in good hands if Kohli misses out: Smith

Cricbuzz Staff • Last updated on Fri, 24 Mar, 2017, 03:02 PM





Steven Smith feels Ajinkya Rahane reads and understands the game well. © AFP

Steven Smith, the Australia captain, reckons Ajinkya Rahane is a capable leader and will do a good job in case regular skipper Virat Kohli misses out of the fourth and final Test in Dharamsala, starting on Saturday (March 25), due to a shoulder injury. The 27-year-old, who addressed the media on the eve of the match, was also pleased with his team executing the plans well so far in the series and is hopeful that they can continue to do so in the series decider. Excerpts from the press conference:

'Confident Rahane will be able to do a good job'

(On whether India will miss Kohli's leadership in the final Test)

No, I think they'll be fine. I think Ajinkya Rahane will probably step up to captain their side. I thought he did a pretty good job last week when he was out on the field in Virat's absence, so, I'm confident he'll be able to do a good job for them.

'Pleased with the execution of plans'

(On Australia's performance so far and whether he was surprised)

Not really. We've worked very hard, guys have been pretty clear in the way they've wanted to play and the game plans they've been able to formulate. For me, the most pleasing thing is we've been able to take it out in the middle. We've talked a lot, for many years, coming over to these conditions, and we've said the right things and we've got plans in place, but once we've got out in the middle, we haven't been able to put them together, and I think the way the guys have been able to put their plans together and execute them out in the middle, it's been great, really pleasing to be at one-all. The stage is really set now for a fantastic fourth Test match and the guys are really excited by that.

'There is some grass, but still looks a bit dry'

(On the pitch and team combination)

We haven't got a team yet. I'll name that at the toss tomorrow, so, yeah, the wicket, although there is some grass out there, it still looks a bit dry underneath, so I think it'll take a reasonable amount of spin as the game goes on. I think first-innings runs are going to be crucial, as they always are in Test matches here in India, so it's going to be important for us to go pretty big in

the first innings.

'I'm not very good at assessing wickets'

(On the importance of toss)

We'll wait and see. I'm not really sure how the wicket's going to play, to be honest with you. I thought the wicket at Ranchi wasn't going to play very good last week, and it played very well, so I'm not very good at assessing wickets. We'll wait and see once the game's started and obviously the guys will have to adapt to whatever we're dealt with out there and find the right way to play.

'Rahane reads and understands the game well'

(On Rahane and how different is he when compared to Kohli)

Oh, he's probably a bit more chilled out, out on the field? Probably not quite as emotional? But, no, look, I think he understands the game really well. I've been fortunate enough to play a fair bit of cricket with Ajinkya, and he always... I think he reads the game and understands the game really well, so if Virat was to miss this Test match, then I'm sure the Indian side will still be in very good hands.

'We've been able to rein things back and adapt'

(On whether Australia have played punched above their weight in the series)

Yeah, obviously, India are a very tough side to play against, particularly here at home. We've

seen the cricket they've played over this summer, they've played some very good cricket. For me, it was about us trying to find ways to play the way we need to play out here. And as I've said before, I'm proud of the way the boys have gone about their business, of formulating plans that can work in these conditions. It's so different to back home. You have to play a different sort of style of game, and know when to... I know, particularly for me, as captain, you've got to be able to defend at times, and know the right times to attack, and I learned a lot about that in Sri Lanka, in the series we had over there, and I think it helped me as a captain in good stead for this series.

It's so hard to just attack all the time as you probably can in Australia. The fields are so fast and guys can score boundaries pretty quickly and take the game away from you really quickly, so guys have brought into that and been able to defend at times when they want to just attack. The Australian style has always been to sort of attack, so it's been great we've been able to rein things back, both with bat and ball, and adapt to what you need to do in these conditions over here.



"We rubbed our noses together, and (he) gave me some blessings, so hopefully it'll help me with my sleep." © Cricbuzz

'We probably get overboard at times'

(On what the team learnt from the meeting with the Dalai Lama)

Yeah, it (the meeting) was great. I asked him a question about sleep and how he could help me, and he gave me his blessings. We rubbed our noses together, and (he) gave me some blessings, so hopefully it'll help me with my sleep over the next five days.

Probably relaxes (us) a little bit. He is all about compassion and fondness for each and every human being. It was nice to hear from someone as prestigious as the Dalai Lama. It was a wonderful experience for all of us. If we can learn anything from it, we probably get overboard at times as cricket is a tough game. In the end of the day it is just a game and you need to realise it and perhaps that is what the team can take forward.

'Exciting time for the team and me'

(On former players getting in touch ahead of the fourth Test)

Simon Katich sent me an email overnight and said it is great what we guys have done over here so far through the series and asked to continue that here and wished (us) good luck for Dharamsala. So it was great to hear from Simon. But yeah the stage is set perfectly and it is an exciting time for the team and as for me, I'm not worrying about the end game and result, but concentrate on the process and doing the right thing and if we can do that longer than we did in Ranchi or Bangalore the rest will take care of it.

'He went for precautionary scan, everything is fine'

(On Pat Cummins's fitness)

He is really good actually. He went for precautionary scan in Delhi before we came here and everything came back fine. So his body is going really well and (it is) great to see him back in the Tests and doing very well and play the way he did and bounce two of three Indian wickets was very impressive. He got a great deal of bounce and pace and he is doing well and hopefully

we can see a huge impact on him here.

'Looks like a good player for future'

(On Shreyas Iyer, who scored a double ton against Australia in the practice game)

He is pretty aggressive and he probably hit the first ball he faced for a six if I remember correctly. On a pretty good wicket where there was not much of pace on the wicket in Mumbai and we didn't play any of our frontline pacers, so he played really well there. It is just one game but he definitely looks like a good player for future.

'Not really bothered if we are favourites or underdogs'

(On who has the momentum heading into the game)

I'm not really bothered if we are the favourites or underdogs to be honest with you. It is a game of cricket, 1-1 in the series and everything to play for in this game. As I said earlier, I'm not worried about the end result or the match, I'm just focussed on controlling what we can and take it one ball at a time and the process. We have to concentrate much more than what we have been doing and it is a beautiful place in Dharamsala and it is just exciting for us as a team.

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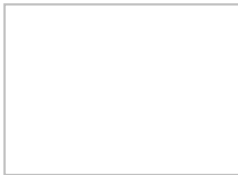
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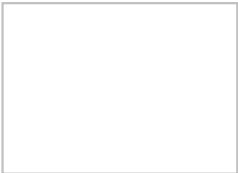
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