

Kohli's men look to sweep series

Pant's form is, however, a worry

INDIA IN WI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KINGSTON (JAMAICA)

Rishabh Pant will be desperate to pay back the faith reposed in him by the team management when India looks to steamroller West Indies with another dominant show in the second World Test championship encounter starting on Friday.

Tinkering unlikely
It is unlikely that India will be tinkering with its playing XI after a big win even though Pant's form has been a bit of a concern of late.

More than the runs scored, it is the manner of his dismissals that is causing frustration, considering that the Indian cricket establishment has invested heavily in the 21-year-old from Rourkee. His sequence of scores across formats during this current tour has been 0, 4, 65 not out, 20, 0, 24, 7.

With veteran Wriddhiman Saha back in the dressing room and the gutsy K.S. Bharat waiting in the wings, Pant can ill-afford to take things for granted.

Opener Mayank Agarwal wasn't in his element either in the first Test but it is expected that he would get another opportunity, which he rightfully deserves having worked hard in Australia.

The middle-order per-

formed admirably with Ajinkya Rahane back in form with an under-pressure half-century and a century.

Hanuma Vihari also justified his selection with a 93 in the second innings, meaning that Rohit Sharma's wait to make the side could just get a bit longer.

The pace bowling was near flawless in the first game with Ishant Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah looking menacing. Mohammed Shami was also very effective in short bursts, while Ravindra Jadeja proved his utility as an all-rounder.

For West Indies, there hasn't been much to write home about as none of its players even got a half-century in two innings. The saving grace for them was the new-ball pair of Shannon Gabriel and Kemar Roach, who bowled their hearts out.

The teams (from): India: Virat Kohli (Capt.), K.L. Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Mohammed Shami, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Wriddhiman Saha (wk), R. Ashwin, Umesh Yadav and Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

West Indies: Jason Holder (Capt.), Kraigg Brathwaite, Darren Bravo, Shamarr Brooks, John Campbell, Roston Chase, Rahkeem Cornwall, Shane Dowrich, Shannon Gabriel, Shimron Hetmyer, Shai Hope, Keemo Paul and Kemar Roach.

Match starts at 8 p.m. IST.



Flip side: The manner of Rishabh Pant's dismissals marked a downside to India's dominant show in the first Test. ■AP

Bumrah's spell in first Test one of the best by an Indian pacer: Arun

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KINGSTON (JAMAICA)

Jasprit Bumrah's situational awareness is unmatched and his five-wicket haul in the second innings of the opening Test against the West Indies is one of the "best spells of fast bowling" by an Indian, feels the team's bowling coach Bharath Arun.

Bumrah, who was given a month's break after the World Cup, looked rusty in the first innings in Antigua but came back to claim five five for seven in 8 overs as India thrashed West Indies by

318 runs in the opening World Test Championship match.

"Bumrah is a thinking bowler. He is aware of situations and adjusts himself beautifully. If you see the lengths that he bowled in the second innings, he pitched the ball up and was getting appreciable movements," Arun said.

"That's the best spell of fast bowling I have seen from an Indian in a long, long time," he added.

For Arun, a coach's priority is to ensure that execu-

tion part is perfect as the outcome is then taken care of.

"Well, wickets are the outcome but I am not always looking at the outcome. I am looking at the execution part and that was exactly what was discussed with Bumrah after the first innings," Arun said. "His execution (in the first innings) was a trifle short and with his style of bowling, he should have pitched it up. Wickets were not a concern as the process of bowling right lengths will eventually get you wickets."

No Dhoni, but Hardik is back

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

All-rounder Hardik Pandya, who was rested for the tour of the West Indies because of lower-back issues, has been picked for the three-match T20I series to be played against South Africa.

Hardik has replaced seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar who was in the team for the T20I series against the West Indies.

V.V. Subrahmanyam reports from Hyderabad

BCCI senior selection committee chairman M.S.K. Prasad informed *The Hindu* that M.S. Dhoni was not considered, as the panel preferred to give more chances

to the young Rishabh Pant. "We will focus on him for some more time," he said.

Prasad added that Dhoni has himself not responded to them about his plans.

The chairman refused to engage in any debate on the subject.

The squad:

Virat Kohli (Capt.), Rohit Sharma (vice-capt.), Shikhar Dhawan, K.L. Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant (wk), Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Krunal Pandya, Washington Sundar, Rahul Chahar, Khaleel Ahmed, Deepak Chahar, and Navdeep Saini.

The schedule:

Sept. 15, Dharamshala; Sept. 18, Mohali; Sept. 22, Bengaluru.



M.S. Dhoni.

■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Dube and Axar star for India-A

The former takes advantage of three reprieves; Chahal claims five

SA-A VS INDIA-A

M.R. PRAVEEN CHANDRAN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The fielding from both sides was slipshod and catches were put down fairly regularly, but in the end, the three catches which South Africa-A dropped off Shivam Dube cost it the match.

Dube profited from the reprieves to carve out a game-changing innings of 79 not out (60b, 3x4, 6x6).

His hard-hitting knock and an unbroken 121-run seventh-wicket stand with an equally belligerent Axar Patel (60 not out, 36b, 6x4, 3x6) was the cornerstone of India-A's emphatic 69-run win in the opening unofficial one-day cricket match at the Sports Hub here on Thursday.

Dropped on three, 13 and 66, Dube's charge saw India-A amass 327 for six in a match reduced to 47 overs due to wet outfield.

South Africa conceded 105 runs in the last eight ov-



Making it count: Shivam Dube carved out a game-changing innings of 79 not out. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ers as both Dube and Axar cut loose.

Late assault

The visitors, till the late assault from the southpaws, were very much in the game after left-arm spinner Bjorn Fortuin put in a tidy shift in the middle overs to straggle the run-rate.

After Shubman Gill's blaz-

ing start, India-A lost three quick wickets and then, Manish Pandey (39) and Ishan Kishan (37) repaired the damage with a 75-run stand for fifth wicket. They both departed in quick succession to give South Africa-A the advantage.

However, profligate bowling by medium-pacers Junior Dala and Beuran Hen-

dricks in the death overs was cannon fodder for both Axar and Dube, who muscled the ball over the fence with ease.

South Africa-A needed a bright start from its openers but Janneman Malan and Reeza Hendricks were circumspect.

Damage

Spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Krunal Pandya did the initial damage to derail the chase. Hendricks (110), who rode his luck, and Zondol (30) added 66 for the fourth wicket.

But the run-rate kept increasing and it was all over when Hendricks holed out after reaching his century.

Heinrich Klaassen struck a few lusty blows to minimise the damage.

The scores: India-A 327 for six in 47 overs (Shubman Gill 46, Anmolpreet Singh 29, Manish Pandey 39, Ishan Kishan 37, Shiva,m Dube 79 n.o.) bt South Africa-A 258 in 45 overs (Reeza Hendricks 110, Khaya Zondo 30, Heinrich Klaassen 58, Yuzvendra Chahal five for 47).

Akshath puts India Green in command

DULEEP TROPHY

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA
BENGALURU

An assured 146 by opener Akshath Reddy put India Green in a commanding position on the opening day of its Duleep Trophy clash with India Red.

Akshath's 15th First Class hundred, and his 137-run stand for the third wicket with Siddhesh Lad, helped lay the foundation for a massive total after Green elected to bat. At stumps at the Alur grounds on Thursday, Green was 308 for four, with Priyam Garg and Akshay Wadkar at the crease.

Blunting the attack

Akshath fell in the final half-hour of the day's play, caught on the mid-wicket boundary slog-sweeping Akshay Wadhare. It brought to an end his 248-ball effort, after he had firmly blunted the Red attack all day. "I missed an opportunity there," he said later. "There were only six overs left. I wanted to keep the shot down but the ball was



Giving it the treatment: Akshath Reddy came up with an assured century against India Red. ■FILE PHOTO

too full and it went up."

Akshath had only ever looked in trouble in the morning, when Jaydev Unadkat, Sandeep Warrier and Avesh Khan had beaten the bat several times during a testing first hour. He dropped anchor thereafter, and was not distracted even by the multiple stoppages to get the ball changed.

The last domestic season was Akshath's most produc-

covers for four. Sarwate was later neatly dispatched over the sight-screen, as was part-timer Mahipal Lomror. Akshath completed his hundred (off 174 balls) with a boundary off Sarwate, stepping out to the left-arm spinner before drilling him through mid-wicket.

At the other end, fellow opener Faiz Fazal had fallen for 18, caught at fine-leg pulling Avesh. Dhruv Shorey made 44 before edging the Madhya Pradesh paceman behind, shortly after lunch. Lad looked confident during his 64, which included two huge sixes, one of which landed outside the compound. The Mumbai batsman eventually perished at attempting another big shot.

India Green clearly had a plan against Wadhare and Sarwate, not wanting either spinner to settle. The two bowlers, who toiled hard, could be in for another long day under the sun.

The scores: India Green 308 for four in 90 overs (Akshath Reddy 146, Siddesh Lad 64, Dhruv Shorey 44, Priyam Garg 30 batting) vs India Red.

Top stars have it tough

Rain affects Wednesday's schedule

US OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

Serena Williams nearly crashed out of the rain-hit US Open on Wednesday while top-ranked defending champion Novak Djokovic battled through shoulder pain and Roger Federer advanced despite a weak start.

Eighth seed Serena, seeking her 24th career Grand Slam title to match Margaret Court's all-time record, got a scare before ousting 17-year-old US wildcard Caty McNally 5-7, 6-3, 6-1.

"I survived tonight. I'm not too pleased with the way I played at all," said Serena. Djokovic, winner of four of the past five Slam titles, was treated for a sore left shoulder throughout his 6-4, 7-6(3), 6-1 victory over Argentina's 56th-ranked Juan Ignacio Londero.

Djokovic's injury casts grave doubts on his bid to be the first US Open repeat winner since Federer won from 2004-2008, admitting he wondered if he would even get through the first set. Federer, who last tri-

umphed here in 2008, rallied to beat 99th-ranked Bosnian Damir Dzumhur 3-6, 6-2, 6-3, 6-4.

The 38-year-old Swiss third seed, who also dropped the first set against Indian qualifier Sumit Nagal in his opener, answered the wake-up call despite 17 first-set unforced errors.

There were wins for seventh seed Kei Nishikori, French Open champion Ashleigh Barty and third seed Karolina Pliskova. However, seven-time Grand Slam winner Venus Williams crashed out.

Kvitova knocked out

On Thursday, Czech sixth seed Petra Kvitova, a two-time Wimbledon champion, was knocked out by Germany's 88th-ranked Andrea Petkovic 6-4, 6-4.

IMPORTANT RESULTS

Thursday: Second round: Men: 15-David Goffin (Bel) bt Gregoire Barrere (Fra) 6-2, 6-2, 6-2; **Women:** Andrea Petkovic (Ger) bt 6-Petra Kvitova (Cze) 6-4, 6-4.

Wednesday: Men: 1-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt Juan Ignacio Londero (Arg) 6-4, 7-6(3), 6-1; 3-Roger Federer (Sui) bt Damir Dzumhur (Bih) 3-6, 6-2, 6-3, 6-4; 7-Kei Nishikori (Jpn) bt



Petkovic... packing a punch.

■AP

Bradley Klahn (USA) 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5. **Women:** 5-Elina Svitolina (Ukr) bt Venus Williams (USA) 6-4, 6-4; 10-Madison Keys (USA) bt Zhu Lin (Chn) 6-4, 6-1; 3-Karolina Pliskova (Cze) bt Mariam Bolkvadze (Geo) 6-1, 6-4; 8-Serena Williams (USA) bt Caty McNally (USA) 5-7, 6-3, 6-1; 2-Ashleigh Barty (Aus) bt Lauren Davis (USA) 6-2, 7-6(2).

EXCLUSIVE

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC

Fast-rising Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal was ecstatic when he was drawn to meet the legendary Roger Federer in the opening round at the U.S. Open. Nagal caused a flutter by getting the better of the legend in the first set before going down in four. The 22-year old shared his experience in an interview with *The Hindu*. *Excerpts:*

Congrats on your match on Monday. How would you assess yourself?

First of all, thank you. Coming from not playing too many hardcourt tournaments this year and then qualifying for a slam, beating really good players in the qualifiers [qualifying rounds], then playing Federer and taking a set off him, playing in the biggest stadium in tennis history... I think I couldn't have asked for more. Overall, I was happy with my performance, with the tournament, with the way I



Guts and gumption: Sumit Nagal was hardly overawed either by the big stage or the celebrated opponent. ■AFP

competed.

How was the transition from clay to hardcourt?
I didn't have too much time to practise on hardcourt as when I was playing at Hamburg, [in] my last tournament I fell on my ankle, it was not in great shape so I had to take a few weeks off and had to pull out of the next two tournaments after Hamburg. But since then I tried whatever I could. I tried to spend as much time on the hardcourt, but I didn't play great tennis but I was competing a lot, I was

fighting every point. I think that's what matters.

In 2018 you were ranked in the 400s after injuries and match losses. You're now ranked 190 and on the first night of the Open you took the first set from Federer. Did you think that would happen?

The funny part with tennis is, anything is possible. You do not know what is going to happen the next morning because you wake up and feel amazing and the other person can feel like [it's] his worst day ever. Tennis is a

sport – as you have seen – [in which] a lot of people who have done amazing in a week or two weeks, they just continue their run. So you always, always keep trying, keep giving yourself an opportunity and you never know where you are going to end up.

Tell us about the moment you heard you'd be playing Federer – apparently you got a text message?

Yes, I got a text message from my coach saying you are playing Federer and I was so, so happy and I was like, "Yes!". Because when we saw the draw on Thursday and we saw that Federer was going to play a qualifier, I wanted so bad to play him. And this is what I got. So it was amazing, what happened that night.

Apart from the fact that it was Federer you were playing, what specifically stood out for you about Monday's match?

Ah, the crowd. The crowd and atmosphere. You cannot complain about it. It is phenomenal to play in New York City, in Flushing Meadows, under those big lights, so

many thousands of people cheering, making noise. It's just a great, great, great feeling.

You chose tennis in a land of cricket...

I used to play a lot of cricket when I was young. I used to spend a lot of hours on cricket. But my dad was not too happy about it, he wanted me to play an individual sport and that's how I got into tennis.

Meeting Mahesh Bhupathi was a turning point in your journey...

Meeting Mahesh was a turning point. He has played a big role in my tennis, in my life. He has been a part of my journey for the past twelve years. I have been playing tennis for fourteen years, so it does affect [things] a lot. He has always been there... whenever I needed funding, he would find whatever he could to support me.

What next for you?

I am planning to play some tournaments on clay in Europe and South America and then maybe finish the year with some hardcourt tournaments in China and India.