

## Sports

# Smith ruled out of third Ashes Test after concussion

## Smith's absence will be a huge blow to Australia who hold 1-0 lead

**LONDON:** Australia's star batsman Steve Smith has been ruled out of the third Ashes Test beginning tomorrow after suffering concussion, Cricket Australia announced yesterday. The 30-year-old — who has scored two centuries and 92 in his three innings in the first two Tests — was felled by a Jofra Archer bouncer on Saturday in the first innings of the second Test at Lord's.

Smith's absence will be a huge blow to Australia who hold a 1-0 lead in the five Test series and victory at Headingley would ensure they retained the Ashes. Their other batsmen have not looked convincing — experienced opener David Warner has totalled just 18 in his four innings — with Smith being the lynch-pin.

"Steve Smith has been ruled out of the third Ashes Test at Headingley, with coach Justin Langer confirming the news after the batsman sat out Australia's training session on Tuesday," Cricket Australia announced on their website.

The team doctor Richard Saw had the final say on whether Smith played or not and he was seen speaking with him during team training yesterday. According to the website vice-captain Pat Cummins patted Smith on the shoulder and coach Justin Langer wrapped his arm around the former captain as the rest of the squad trained without him.

Smith — who has risen to number two in the world batting rankings — was pictured with his head in his hands and Langer looking glumly at the ground.

Smith, whose two centuries in the first Test were pivotal in Australia taking a 1-0 lead, returned to bat on Saturday despite the blow to the side of the head that felled him. He added 12 runs before being out.

However, he was unable to play on the fifth and final day on Sunday as he awoke feeling "groggy". Australia held on to draw the Test with his concussion substitute Marnus Labuschagne playing a key innings.

The Ashes series is the first being played under the International Cricket Council's new concussion substitute regulations, as part of the inaugural World Test Championship.

The regulations allow players who have suffered head or neck injuries to be replaced fully by a substitute, who was previously restricted to fielding alone. During Saturday's play Smith was wearing a helmet without the additional stem guard neck protection introduced following the death of his former Australia team-mate Phillip Hughes who was hit by a bouncer in a domestic Sheffield Shield match in Sydney in 2014.

Australia, bidding for their first Ashes campaign triumph on English soil in 18 years, lead the series thanks to a 251-run win at Edgbaston a fortnight ago. In that match, Smith marked his first Test since completing a 12-month ban for his role in a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa with superb innings of 144 and 142. Smith has two weeks to be ready for the fourth Test in Manchester, which starts on September 4, with a three-day tour match in Derby from August 29-31. — AFP



**LONDON:** In this file photo taken on August 17, 2019 Australia's Steve Smith falls to the ground after being hit in the head by a ball off the bowling of England's Jofra Archer (unseen) during play on the fourth day of the second Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia at Lord's Cricket Ground. — AFP

## N Zealand better acclimatised after close Galle loss

**COLOMBO:** New Zealand's loss in the first Test against Sri Lanka had been a lot closer than the six-wicket defeat suggested and the side had learned a lot about how best to play in local conditions, according to pace bowler Tim Southee.

New Zealand's only warm-up game was badly affected by torrential rain and the Black Caps went into the match in Galle a little underdone. Despite that, Southee felt his side had been competitive throughout and it was really only a century-stand between captain Dimuth Karunaratne (122) and Lahiru Thirimanne (64) as they chased 268 for victory that separated the two sides.

"We played some good cricket throughout the five days but Sri Lanka were just better in the back end of the game," said Southee, who was confirmed yesterday as the captain for the Twenty20 series following the second Test in Colombo.

"We showed glimpses throughout and the guys learned a lot from playing in these conditions. Hopefully we can put in the hard work and turn out a performance over the next test match."

Southee and his fellow pace bowler Trent Boult, who will miss the three-match T20 series along with regular captain Kane Williamson, were barely used on an unresponsive Galle pitch. The spin trio of Ajaz Patel, Will Somerville and Mitchell Santner combined for 128 of the 179 overs bowled by New Zealand in the match.

Southee bowled just seven overs in the first innings and 12 in the second. "It's a tough one because you know that you're only going to get a short spell, so you walk a fine line of not trying too much and trying to keep it tight but still trying to take a wicket," the 30-year-old added.

"I guess we're doing more of a support role for the spinners who are more attacking in these conditions."



**COLOMBO:** New Zealand's cricket team captain Kane Williamson (R) plays football with teammates during a practice session at P. Sara Oval cricket stadium in Colombo yesterday, ahead of their second cricket Test match against Sri Lanka to be played tomorrow. — AFP

New Zealand's top-six batsmen failed to truly fire in the first Test with only Ross Taylor, who scored 86 in the first innings, and wicketkeeper BJ Watling (77 in the second), posting substantial scores.

The fact the visitors set Sri Lanka a target at all was due to the tail wagging in their second innings, with Somerville scoring a career-best 40 not out, while Southee (23) and Boult (26) chimed in with handy cameos. Patel also scored 14 as the number 11.

"The tail did a great job to get a competitive score in

the third innings," Southee said. "If you look around the world the good sides do have contributions from the tail."

"When you have a batsman like BJ who bats so well with the tail then its about hanging in and trying to support him in the job he does. "If you're able to leak out as many runs as possible then that makes it tougher for the opposition." The second Test starts in Colombo tomorrow with Santner under the most pressure to hold his place and he could be replaced by leg spinner Todd Astle or all-rounder Colin de Grandhomme. — Reuters

## Indian bowler Sreesanth's ban reduced to seven years

**MUMBAI:** Indian fast bowler Shanthakumaran Sreesanth's ban for alleged spot-fixing has been reduced to seven years, with the sanction period coming to an end on Sep. 13, 2020, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has said.

The decision comes after the Supreme Court of India set aside the life ban imposed on Sreesanth by the BCCI and asked the board to reconsider the length of any fresh ban. "I am of the view that banning Sreesanth from participating in any kind of commercial cricket or from associating with any

activities of BCCI or its affiliates, for a period of 7 years with effect from September 13, 2013," BCCI ombudsman DK Jain said in a statement.

"The date from which, the period of ban imposed by the Disciplinary Committee had commenced, will meet the ends of justice." Spot-fixing involves the manipulation of individual incidents within a match which may not affect the outcome of the contest.

Sreesanth along with his Rajasthan Royals team mates Ajit Chandila and Ankeet Chavan were arrested by Delhi police on suspicion of spot-fixing during the sixth edition of the IPL in May 2013.

The BCCI followed the arrest of Sreesanth with their own charges against the player relating to the match against Kings XI Punjab, played on May 9. Sreesanth has maintained that all the charges against him are false. He has played 27 tests, 53 one-day internationals and 10 Twenty20 internationals, claiming a total of 169 wickets. — Reuters

## Waugh wowed by deceptive Archer's 'X-factor'

**LONDON:** England fast bowler Jofra Archer has the "X-factor" that unsettles opposition batting lineups, said former Australia captain Steve Waugh who believes the evenly-balanced Ashes series would be decided by a few key moments.

Archer made his Test debut in the drawn second match at Lord's and produced several spells of menacing quick bowling, hurrying the Australian batsmen up and forcing them into evasive action from deliveries that averaged more than 145kph. He was also involved in the Test's major talking point when Steve Smith was felled following a sickening blow in the neck from an Archer bouncer. He also hit Marnus Labuschagne, who replaced Smith on the fifth day and became the first concussion substitute in Test cricket, in the face grill of his helmet.

"It gives you the X-factor, knowing that you have that sort of bowler in your lineup when you can intimidate the opposition," Waugh told a Cricket Australia podcast. "You can make things happen on a flat pitch and potentially get wickets in clumps."

"He's a real asset to England." Waugh did not find any problems with Archer's stamina either after the Barbados-born

24-year-old bowled 44 overs and took 5-91 at Lord's. "If he plays four Test matches in a row that will test him out," Waugh said.

"So far he's come through with flying colours. (He bowled) 40 overs and each one was as quick as the previous one. "He had an impressive debut but Test cricket is about longevity and how you back up and how you handle conditions. But from England's point of view, so far so good."

Waugh, who stared down some of the fastest bowlers in the world like Malcolm Marshall and Shoaib Akhtar in a career that netted more than 10,000 Test runs, said that Archer had one of the more economical bowling actions he had seen.

"I can't say I have ever seen anyone bowl like that," he said. "He ambles in, gets very close to the crease, makes the most of his height. "He has got a very simple action and in a lot of ways a similar action to (Australian fast bowler) Glenn McGrath in that it's very repeatable. I can't see too much going wrong with it."

"His control is very good for that reason. He has that deceptive pace and has a wicked bouncer so that is something our team will have to analyse and work out to play him." While Australia had won the first test at Edgbaston by 251 runs, the way England fought back in the second test at Lord's indicated how close the Ashes series would be.

"It really depends on who wins the big moments," Waugh said. "It will come down to who is consistent. I think we can win the series and England will probably say they think they can. "It will make for a great last three test matches." — Reuters

## Former Aussie coach Lehmann delighted at Yorkshire return

**LONDON:** Darren Lehmann, who stood down as Australia coach in the wake of the ball-tampering scandal, is to take charge of the Leeds-based team in next year's inaugural The Hundred tournament.

The 49-year-old — who was cleared of involvement in the scandal which resulted in Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft being banned — told Press Association Sport he was delighted to be returning to Yorkshire.

The former Australian batsman who represented his country in 27 Tests and 117 One Day Internationals was part of the Yorkshire side that won the county championship in 2001, their first since 1968.

"It's great to be back. I hoped I'd get the chance when I heard about it and I'm so excited the opportunity came along," Lehmann told PA, 18 months on from the so-called 'sandpaper-gate' scandal in South Africa in March last year.

"It was a great experience of my career to play here, where the passion for the game is second to none. "The connection is strong, I have so many family and friends around and I was lucky enough to be involved in ending Yorkshire's long wait for a county championship win in 2001."

Lehmann, who underwent counselling following his resignation, told the BBC he had no interest in returning to international cricket. "No, I've gone past that," said Lehmann, who coached Australia from 2013-18.

"It's more about tournaments and having a bit of fun. "I'll certainly stay away from international coaching, I don't want to travel that much anymore."

Lehmann, who won two World Cups as a player and added a third when he coached Australia to the 2015 trophy, is pleased that Smith, Warner and Bancroft have all been recalled following their bans and are playing in the Ashes series which the tourists lead 1-0 after two Tests.

"I'm just looking forward to watching them play," said Lehmann ahead of the third Test which gets underway in Leeds at Headingley tomorrow. "The game has moved on and people have got to move on as well, I'm glad those guys are playing their part in a great contest between Australia and England."

"It's been an enthralling series." Lehmann, whose team is reportedly going to be called the 'Northern Superchargers', is one of four Australians already appointed coaches of The Hundred teams.

Shane Warne, Simon Katich and Andrew McDonald are the other Australians whilst South African Gary Kirsten has also been appointed a coach. Lehmann, though, is keen to promote English coaching talent.

"You'd be mad not to try and help young English coaches and work closely with them," he said.

"I'd certainly like to get people from the county system involved and work closely with them, you're always learning as a coach so I can learn from them and vice-versa." — AFP



Shanthakumaran Sreesanth