

DEAN JONES

Published 22.2.19



The big question is what do India and Australia want out of this T20 and ODI series? This is the last chance for India to finalise plans before the IPL and then there's the World Cup. Australia, on the other hand, have 10 ODI matches before the World Cup, and sadly, Steve Smith and David Warner still have problems with their elbows and will not be able to play until about the fourth match against Pakistan next month.

Australia has more holes in this team at the moment than a fish net! What they need now is some calmness and stability. They've got to fix up the top end with the bat, particularly for the T20s. So that allows an opportunity for D'Arcy Short, who has got to improve because he hasn't played well in India before. Handscomb will get an opportunity to bat high along with Maxwell and Turner. Aaron Finch needs runs desperately.

Australia, stupidly, rotated Hazlewood, Cummins and Starc in their last ODIs against India, one they could have won if they had their best team in. They are still looking for a death bower in 50-50 and T20, so Jason Behrendorff and Jhye Richardson will get that opportunity here. Their leg-spinner Adam Zampa needs to stand up. For Justin Langer, whoever does well will be a huge fillip for the team going forward.

India are going with KL Rahul, who hasn't played well of late but gets another opportunity, with Rishabh Pant. If Rahul fires, they've almost got the perfect team! Shikhar Dhawan is another player who needs to get some runs. So this whole series for the hosts is about reminding players what their roles are, and that opportunity is everything.

India, no doubt, will be trying to win the T20 series and then smash Australia in the ODI series as well. They really don't need this series; they are settled. They probably have just two spots to pick for their World Cup team: Reserve 'keeper, and where to fit Rahul into their recipe for success. Australia on the other hand probably have six to seven spots!

Can Australia win this series? No, I don't think they can. Like the Apollo 13, I'm trying to see how they can make it a successful mission but I think they're not going to get around the moon yet. Australia need to get their reputation back of being world beaters, bring some fear back into the opposition. That's what this tour is about for Australia!

DEAN JONES

Published 28.2.19



I have to apologise profusely to the Australia cricket team. I didn't see that coming; I didn't think they'd be able to beat the Indians but they did it. They had a very professional, well orchestrated performance against this very strong Indian T20 team.

Normally, when you lose you learn more about your team than when you win, but I think the Australians got more out of this series victory than the Indians. Having D'Arcy Short opening the batting — he needed to play the spinners well — has made him more about himself in this innings than he has ever before. He has struggled in the subcontinent in the past but this was a very good knock by him under pressure. Moreover, the fact that he bowls some very good leg-spin adds to the fire power of this Australian bowling line-up.

Glenn Maxwell puts bums on seats. His hundred on Wednesday was electrifying but what we need from him is consistency especially with the one-day series about to start. He hasn't put two good scores back-to-back since 2015 where he hit 95, 66, 188, 102, and 42 not out. We have always known that he has the game but consistency has been the problem. And he needs to bat at No. 5 in ODIs for Australia.

The other great tick for Australia was the wonderful performance by Adam Zampa. This boy has struggled bowling to the Indian batsmen in the past and his none for 23 in the second T20 was a very good bowling display by him.

Now, form is everything. Form is gold. And hopefully the Australians can carry this form into the one-day series and give the strong Indian one-day unit a run for its money. India have to improve their bowling, there's no doubt. That can be easily rectified; they just need to do better analytics on the Australians, be more patient, hit the right markers and the right lines and lengths under pressure, and they should come out of it.

Another thing the Australians can take out of this is that while Virat Kohli played beautifully for his 72 not out, and Dhoni played well too, India still lost. The hosts will be disappointed by having put up 190 on the board and not being able to defend it. People say, "oh! It's just a T20 series", but India have a lot of pride in their performances and I'm expecting them to come out looking for revenge. The one-day series should be fantastic, should be high voltage, and it's a series that can't be missed.

DEAN JONES

Published 7.3.19



I feel that Australia are starting to believe that they can compete against India, and that's everything. They have pushed them hard, particularly in the last game, and India had to win "ugly", as Virat said. Still, I feel the top four batsmen have to take the responsibility of batting deep. They have to be brave with the bat to try and get momentum. There's a common denominator when teams win ODIs and that is one of your top-four batsmen batting deep, as Virat did; and probably one of the reasons we lost that last game.

The Australian batsmen must realise that no matter where the ball is pitched from one of the spinners, they must hit targets on the boundary. The boys are just starting to get squeezed, or dotting up as they say Down Under, against the spin of India. The rotation of strike is imperative if they are going to go on to make scores of 300 or more.

I'm happy to see Lyon bowl really well; Zampa picked up a couple of wickets in the mid's, while Pat Cummins bowled beautifully in the mid's too. They need to use him more during this time than at the death. I think Finch needs to worry less about the death and more about the middle and have his best bowlers bowl against India's best batsmen to get wickets. They need to have the right mental psychology to put more pressure on them. The aim should be to try and get the opposition six-down by the 40th over.

For India, Dhawan hasn't been doing that well but the fact is that even with players out of form they are still winning and that is a great advantage to have within the team. No matter what position they are in, India believe they can win. Australia have to bring their A-plus game to win whereas India can win with their B-minus game!

Australia's biggest problem in the third ODI might be that it is probably going to be Dhoni's last significant match in Ranchi. MS will rise; he loves playing on the big platform in front of his home crowd. It's going to be a tough one for Australia. Big time. They need a better plan for Kuldeep and Kedar, make them go for 50+ each or India will shut them down. If Australia can win on Friday, I cannot tell you how important it would be for their build-up for the World Cup. To beat the No. 1 team on their home turf would be huge. When Australia is on top, the stadium is silent. I want Australia to play for the silence. I want the silence to be deafening.

DEAN JONES

Published 12.3.19



Who would have thought it? Australia chasing down record scores? Solving their middle-order problems? Using three spinners? Ashton Turner making huge runs? Though this will probably not be their best XI for the World Cup, the Australians are well on their way to fixing the psychological problems of playing against the best team in the world. The last game against India was a huge fillip for their confidence, and they surely now believe that they will be very competitive in the upcoming World Cup.

The Indians, on the other hand, will be very disappointed in their performance up to now. There shouldn't be any panic within the team but they are probably starting to think that no matter what score they might put on the board, is it enough? That means the Australians are starting to control the mid overs; from the 11th to the 40th is where they've been able to take charge. It's been a very good coaching effort by Justin Langer; the use of Zampa, Lyon, and Cummins in the mid's being a huge relief to the team in getting wickets.

The Indian bowlers need to start to come back now and get their act together. They need to pick up more wickets in the mid's. So no doubt the analytical team will be studying Turner, Maxwell and Co. to make sure they don't get away in the middle overs.

The Feroz Shah Kotla pitch will suit the spinners, so maybe the Australians are the favourites to win this last match. There is a cricket god after all! I'm expecting the pitch to deteriorate a little bit as the game goes on so the team winning the toss will bat first. But what the Indians need is to get some more runs out of KL Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan, and Vijay Shankar.

One question mark for the Australians: can they go with Peter Handscomb as keeper and use Alex Carey's spot for a more utility style of player? Apart from that, I'm just so impressed by this Australian team for playing so well against this very strong Indian side. No matter what happens they have had a great tour, winning the T20 series and pushing India to the limit in this one as well.

Who would have thought Australia would be in this position? If I had said to you at the start of this tour that Australia would win the T20 series, and come back from 0-2 down to possibly win the ODI series 3-2, you'd have been thinking that I was on some beetle juice! Only three teams in a five ODI series have ever come back from losing the first two games and won. What a contest it should be! I'm looking forward to it.