

Dhawan out

of World Cup

Pant replaces him

REUTERS, Southampton

India's opening batsman Shikhar Dhawan has been ruled out of the rest of the World Cup campaign after fracturing his thumb earlier in the tournament, the country's cricket board (BCCI) said on Wednesday.

Dhawan sustained the injury against Australia but continued to play on, scoring a match-winning century. However, he did not take the field for the second innings.

Assistant coach Sanjay Bangar had said last week that they would make a call on Dhawan's injury after he was rested against New Zealand and Pakistan but the BCCI said his hand would need to remain in a cast until the middle of July.

"Shikhar Dhawan has been diagnosed with a fracture of the first metacarpal on his left hand following a ball impact injury during the team's first match versus Australia at the Oval on 5th June 2019," BCCI said in a statement.

"Following several specialist opinions, he will remain in a cast until the middle of July and therefore will not be available for the remainder of the World Cup."

Wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant, who was flown in as a cover and joined the team before Sunday's victory against Pakistan, is set to be named as Dhawan's replacement.

India play Afghanistan next on Saturday at The Rose Bowl.



New Zealand captain Kane Williamson acknowledges the applause of the crowd after scoring a match-winning unbeaten century against South Africa in their World Cup fixture at Edgbaston in Birmingham yesterday. The right-hander remained unbeaten on 106 off 138 deliveries as the Kiwis chased down Proteas' 241 with four wickets in hand.

A rare opportune moment

THIRD EYE

AL-AMIN

Over the last four years Bangladesh relentlessly tried to bridge the gap with the top teams in the cricketing world. They have made strong strides in the one-day format, although they were more successful at home.

However, among the top teams they got little chance to test their growing fighting skill against record five-time World Cup champions Australia over that period of time. Interestingly, Bangladesh did not play a single one-day match against the mighty Aussies since the last World Cup in 2015 when the group league fixture of the two teams at Adelaide was abandoned without a ball being bowled.

The Tigers' next one-day fixture against Australia during the ICC Champions Trophy in 2017 at the Oval in England was also abandoned as a no-result due to rain. It hurt the Aussies badly because they were only four mandatory overs away from winning the game at a canter.

Australia actually played their last one-day game against the Tigers in April 2011 which they won comprehensively by 66 runs. The long gap had something to do with Australia's reluctance to accommodate Bangladesh in their profiteering bilateral series roster.

Eight years on, the Tigers will get another opportunity to rub their shoulders

against the Aussies at Trent Bridge in Nottingham today. And the buoyant Tigers, on the back of two spectacular wins against South Africa and West Indies, could not think of a more opportune moment to showcase their new-found ability in a World Cup fixture where a last-four slot is on the line for both teams.

Australia will definitely swagger into the match as favourites and the head-to-head record speaks heavily in their favour. Bangladesh have won only once against Australia in their previous 19 meetings.

The Tigers' fans still cherish that famous win in Cardiff in 2005 against all-conquering Australian team as one of the finest moments in their sporting history.

But that fabulous seven-wicket win against West Indies last Monday, when the Tigers tore apart a quality pace attack to chase down a massive 321 with plenty of overs to spare, has raised the bar of fans' expectations. The Tigers' camp is up for another giant-slaying act.

Can the Tigers win against Australia? Do they have enough firepower to topple a team known to the cricketing world as ruthless professionals who have that uncanny ability to overcome adversity?

Firepower or not, the Tigers' biggest strength going into the game would be self-belief. Besides, Tigers' champion all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who has been enjoying the best form of his life in this World Cup with the bat, rightly said they would no long be intimidated by those

145kph deliveries.

If that was a warning for the famed Australian pace attack, continuity of executing those skills that the Tigers have been demonstrating in the tournament so far would be essential if they are to translate those words into deeds.

Shakib has been performing heavily. But it is also important for opener Soumya Sarkar to make a good start count. Tamim Iqbal got a start in the last game and his role as an anchor would be vital if Bangladesh are to put up a competitive total. The bowling was disciplined in the last game but showed signs of falling apart when under pressure before being rescued by Mustafizur Rahman. Australia are

one of the few teams who are masters of exploiting your weakness.

This Australian team are very good but yet to settle into a groove. They looked vulnerable at patches both against Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, both teams failed to exploit that.

Sri Lanka squandered a fabulous start. It was also the case with Bangladesh two years ago when they stumbled to 182 all-out despite a magnificent 95 by Tamim in that abandoned Champions Trophy game.

The Tigers might get another chance today. If they can seize that opportunity, the World Cup in all probabilities will get that missing 'dark horse'.



A New Zealand fan brought a giant Kiwi balloon to yesterday's game against South Africa and when asked what prompted him to do so, he credited the Bangladesh fans for inspiring him. "I went to the Bangladesh-New Zealand game at the Oval and I saw multiple people carrying massive soft toy tigers, obviously for Bangladesh. So, I thought we have to do something like that and Amazon provided," the man holding it said.

Saifuddin in doubt for Australia match

SPORTS REPORTER from Nottingham

Bangladesh pace-bowling all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin may miss today's World Cup match against Australia because of a lingering back injury. Bangladesh's highest wicket-taker in the tournament and joint fourth-highest overall, Saifuddin has had a back issue since the World Cup warm-up game against India on May 28.

The team management would not confirm whether he has been ruled out, but it was learnt that the injury has flared up.

If he misses out on the game today, he will most likely be replaced by fast bowler Rubel Hossain, who has not played a

match in this World Cup so far. In another potential blow to Bangladesh, Mosaddek Hossain is also a doubt for the game as he has been suffering from pain in his right shoulder since the match against West Indies on Monday.

Both players, along with opener Tamim Iqbal, were not present during an optional practice session at Trent Bridge yesterday.

Mosaddek is also a crucial member as he chips in with his part-time off-spin, which has become especially important as Mahmudullah Riyad cannot bowl because of a shoulder injury of his own. If Mosaddek sits out the game, he will likely be replaced by Sabbir Rahman, who has also not played a game in this World Cup so far.



BEST QUOTE

বোমাই চকলেট পিঠাশিও
 মিশি স্বাদে ভাঙাই মন।

Bangladesh are playing really good cricket and it's led by Shakib. We know Shakib's a big threat and has done a lot of the work for Bangladesh. He's probably in career-best form with the white ball. We know the line and length we want to bowl to him and we'll assess the conditions as well.

Alex Carey
 Australia batsman