

## 1ST SEMIFINAL: NEW ZEALAND V SRI LANKA

# Fleming targets SL top-order

AFP, Kingston



**Bond from illness.**  
New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming believes Sri Lanka's top-order batting is a weakness the Black Caps can expose when the teams meet in Tuesday's first World Cup semifinal.

The pitch at Kingston's Sabina Park is expected to be far bouncier than the one in Grenada on April 12 where Sri Lanka beat New Zealand, yet to reach a World Cup final, by six wickets in a Super Eights match.

And the belief persists amongst opponents that if they can remove dashing opener Sanath Jayasuriya, one of the stars of Sri Lanka's 1996 World Cup winning team, early they are into a vulnerable batting line-up.

"We feel if we can get through their top-order we can keep it to a (manageable) score," said Fleming.

New Zealand's bowling attack, taken apart by Australia during Friday's 215-run thrashing in Grenada, is set to be strengthened by the return of all-rounder Jacob Oram from a right heel problem, and fast bowler Shane

### HEAD-TO-HEAD

Total meetings	67
Sri Lanka win	29
New Zealand win	34
Tied	1
No Result	2
Match abandoned	1

**Left-handed opener Fleming ibw**

those conditions."

Oram believes pitch conditions will help New Zealand make good on Fleming's assessment of Sri Lanka's batting.

"The Jamaican pitch is going to have a bit more bounce and seam than we've experienced everywhere else in the West Indies, so I know a few of the guys at the top of the bowling order are keen to extract some sort of bounce," said Oram.

"If that's the case hopefully we can expose them. I'm not saying they can't handle the bounce but, like a lot of the subcontinental teams, it's pretty foreign to them."

However, Sri Lanka skipper Mahela Jayawardene was adamant he and the rest of his side's strokemakers would relish the Sabina Park surface.

"Like any other cricketers in the world, our batsmen love to play on bouncy tracks when the ball is coming on," Jayawardene said.

"And we've got a very decent bowling attack to complement

those conditions."

Meanwhile, Oram said he'd no doubts about his own fitness.

"I'll be fine. It's my left foot, my landing foot and that's the one that's getting a lot of stress put through it when I'm bowling," said the giant all-rounder.

Sri Lanka's attack Tuesday is likely to be even stronger with unorthodox fast bowler Lasith Malinga set to return after three games out with ankle ligament damage.

Fellow quick Dilhara Fernando has an ankle problem too but all-rounder Farveez Maharoof, who took three wickets in an over last time out against Ireland, could once more provide cover.

### TEAMS

**NEW ZEALAND:** Stephen Fleming (captain), Peter Fulton, Ross Taylor, Scott Styris, Craig McMillan, Jacob Oram, Brendon McCullum, Daniel Vettori, James Franklin, Shane Bond, Jeetan Patel/Michael Mason.

**SRI LANKA:** Upul Tharanga, Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Chamara Silva, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Russell Arnold, Chaminda Vaas, Lasith Malinga, Muttiah Muralidaran, Dilhara Fernando/Farveez Maharoof.

**Umpires:** Rudi Koertzen and Simon Taufel.



PHOTO: AFP

**NOT EYE TO EYE:** Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene (R) and New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming cross paths as they arrive at their team hotel in Kingston on Monday ahead of their World Cup semifinal clash at Sabina Park today.

## SL keep faith in Tharanga

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka will persist with out-of-form opener Upul Tharanga for the World Cup semifinal against New Zealand, the country's chief selector said on Monday.

The left-hander's poor form -- he has scored just 17 runs in his past three innings -- raised speculation that former skipper Marvan Atapattu could replace him at Jamaica's Sabina Park on Tuesday.

But Asantha de Mel, the chairman of Sri Lankan selectors, said Tharanga's good deeds far outweighed his recent failures and he deserved to stay in the team.

"We must not forget that Tharanga scored two centuries against England last year and also scored two centuries in the Champions Trophy," de Mel said just before leaving for the Caribbean on Monday.

"In this World Cup also he was

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## Maharoof to give 200%

AFP, Kingston

Sri Lanka seamer Farveez Maharoof pledged to give 200 per cent if that's what it takes to defeat New Zealand in the World Cup semifinals here on Tuesday.

Maharoof made a compelling case for a starting place in the team with a man-of-the-match performance against Ireland last week where he took four wickets, including three in an over, as well as pulling off a stunning run-out.

"I will give 200 per cent in the match and I would back myself to perform," said the 22-year-old from

Colombo.

"We have played really well so far. It will be a case of continuing to give it our best."

Maharoof, a former captain of his country's Under-19 side, seized his chance against Ireland in Grenada to make a case for semifinal inclusion with Dilhara Fernando ruled out through injury.

"I got injured earlier in the tournament against Bangladesh but I just kept working hard in the nets. This is my first World Cup and it is something I have been looking forward to ever since I became professional three years ago."

Sri Lanka's bowlers have been mightily impressive in the World Cup.

Maharoof has nine wickets but he is behind teammates Muttiah

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## Razzak in ODI top 10

AFP, Bridgetown

Seven of the top 10 batsmen in the latest ICC rankings are from teams involved in this week's World Cup semifinals.

Of the top 10 only Kevin Pietersen, Ramnaresh Sarwan and Mahendra Singh Dhoni will not be in Jamaica or St Lucia on Tuesday and Wednesday for the penultimate stage of the competition.

Sri Lanka opener Sanath Jayasuriya has moved up to third following his run of good form while there have also been moves in the right direction for Sarwan of the West Indies, AB de Villiers and Herschelle Gibbs of South Africa and Australians Matthew Hayden and Michael Clarke.

Hayden has moved up one place to seventh spot and is enjoying his highest rating for nearly three years following his third century of the World Cup against New Zealand on Friday.

England's Pietersen is still on top spot, closely followed by Australia captain Ricky Ponting in second.

Sarwan's good showing in the Super Eight stage of the tournament has propelled him up no fewer than 10 places to sixth.

In the bowling rankings, South Africa's Shaun Pollock is still in front but he is slowly being caught by Shane Bond and the latest Australian fast bowler to make a challenge, Nathan Bracken.

The 29-year-old New South Welshman has moved past his teammate Glenn McGrath and now occupies third spot.

Another Australian to have an excellent tournament so far is Brad Hogg.

He has moved up nine places to 14th and 19 places since the World Cup began.

Hogg's teammate Shaun Tait is also in impressive form, having moved up 66 places since the start of the tournament, into the top 50 for the first time.

Bangladesh left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak reached the top ten with his impressive haul of 13

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## Let mind games begin

AFP, Gros Islet

Heavyweight hitters Jacques Kallis and Matthew Hayden kicked off the mind games ahead of Australia and South Africa's potentially explosive World Cup semifinal on Wednesday.

Kallis is one of four survivors from the dramatic tied semifinal against Australia at the 1999 World Cup in Birmingham, together with former captain Shaun Pollock, wicketkeeper Mark Boucher and batsman Herschelle Gibbs.

All four insist that the experience of playing in what at the time was rated the greatest one-day game of all time will have positive benefits in Wednesday's clash at Beausejour.

But Hayden, the 2007 tournament's most prolific run-maker with 580 to his name at an average of 82.85 as well as three centuries, is not convinced and believes that Graeme Smith's Proteas are frightened.

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TODAY'S MATCH

Teams

Match

Time

Venue

New Zealand v Sri Lanka

1st semifinal

8:30 pm

Jamaica

Michael Vaughan

(England cricket captain)

"I'd love to say we're glad to see the back of him. He's scored a lot of runs against us and it will be nice to play against the West Indies without him. He's had a great career and we wish him well."

While paying tribute to just-retired Brian Lara.

### What to WATCH

#### BTV & SET Max

ICC World Cup 2007

(First Semifinal)

New Zealand v Sri Lanka

Live at 8:30 pm

#### TEN Sports

UEFA Champions League

Man United v AC Milan

Live at 12:00 am (Wednesday)

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