

How the captains have fared so far

With the ongoing ICC Cricket World Cup nearing its climax, here The Daily Star's Nabid Yeasin evaluates the impacts the captains of each team have had.

Aaron Finch: Australia
If former Australia skipper Steven Smith and former deputy David Warner had not been handed a one-year ban in March last year following the infamous 'sandpaper-gate scandal' during a Test match against South Africa in Cape Town earlier that month, Australia could have had a different leader in this World Cup. Aaron Finch, who was not even the immediate successor -- only after Tim Paine's five-match winless stint as captain was Finch called upon to take charge -- has already ensured that Australia were the first team to book a place in the semifinal, with two group matches in hand no less. Smashing two hundreds and three fifties, Finch is second on the top run getters' list with 496 runs to his name. Inspired by a 116-ball 100 from Finch, Australia strolled past archrivals England in their most recent encounter to take their place atop the points table. If anyone seems to be in total control, it is undoubtedly Finch, who could also reach the finish line ahead of the pack.

Kane Williamson: New Zealand
Calm, collected and lethal at the same time, Kane Williamson steered New Zealand to a very commanding position in the World Cup. Up until a six-wicket defeat against Pakistan on Wednesday, the Kiwis remained unbeaten in their first six games. However, had it not been for Williamson, things could easily have been worse for the Black Caps. Chasing a modest 241 for six posted by South Africa, New Zealand faltered to four for 80 in the 19th over. And when Williamson got down on



one knee and smashed an outside off a slower delivery from Andile Phehlukwayo over mid-wicket in the final over to bring up his ton, the 28-year old took off his helmet and made a simple gesture with his bat towards the pavilion while everyone had anticipated an animated jubilation for ensuring an eventual four-wicket win that would come off the next delivery with a boundary. Williamson's calm nature indicated that he knew it was long from over and that he would keep on rescuing his team, just like he did in the next game with a 154-ball 148 against West Indies.

Virat Kohli: India
For a team where all the players seem to know their particular roles and have been delivering consistently for a considerable amount of time, often the skipper does not have to come up with something extraordinary as just playing his role becomes enough. India skipper Virat Kohli has not yet pulled off something extraordinary for his troops, who are yet to be defeated. While his four fifties in five games is

an average display considering his own abilities, India's stern grip at the top-three shows that Kohli is yet to take a wrong step in the flagship event.

Eoin Morgan: England
England skipper Eoin Morgan must be scratching his head and trying to figure out how they have landed in a situation where the hosts are now required to win the remainder of their two matches against India and New Zealand. While Morgan's best display -- a match winning 71 off 148 -- came against a weak Afghanistan side, his worst was reserved for classic rivals Australia at Lord's as the English skipper could only manage four off seven in their 64-run thumping.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza: Bangladesh
44 overs, 279 runs and just a solitary wicket -- not very captain-like figures from Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, whose prime task as a frontline pacer is to scalp wickets and contain runs. Considering individual

performances, it has not been a dream World Cup for Mashrafe as he had more contributions off the field, such as during the post or pre match conferences, than he had contributed on the field. However, to see Bangladesh among the top-five teams with seven points from as many games, it must be said that the skipper is doing something right to guide his team to that position.

Sarfaraz Ahmed: Pakistan
Pakistan skipper Sarfaraz Ahmed has so far been discussed for almost only embarrassing or wrong reasons. While images and videos of him yawning during Pakistan's high-voltage game



against India had been the topic of banter throughout social media, his visible unwillingness to take the strike and put the finishing touch on the game against Australia, where Wahab Riaz's heroics was only complemented

by Sarfaraz's hilarious run-out, was widely criticised by journalists and cricket experts the world over. However, it is not the first time that Pakistan have bounced back from such situations. In fact, the results of this World Cup have been identical to those of the 1992 edition -- when Pakistan went on to lift the trophy. And while Pakistan fans would love to see it happen all over again, skipper Sarfaraz, who's highest till now is an unconvincing 55 against England, would need to transform into a pragmatic leader if he is to walk the path of the great Imran Khan, who captained Pakistan in 1992.

Dimuth Karunaratne: Sri Lanka
Even after becoming only the second batsmen to have carried his bat through an innings in the World Cup, Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne could not avert a 10-wicket thumping in their World Cup opener against New Zealand in Cardiff. Karunaratne again saw his team stutter after he had fallen for a valiant 97 -- his career best ODI score -- against mighty Australia in chase of a mammoth 334 for seven. However, Sri Lanka still have their semifinal hopes alive, courtesy of a magnificent 20-run win over England. Karunaratne, who has a comparatively inexperienced team, needs to not only play well but also inspire his troops to achieve what no one expected.

Jason Holder: West Indies
Jason Holder could have guided West Indies to a magnificent win over Australia -- a game that the Caribbean lost by just 15 runs. West Indies required 37 runs from 25 deliveries with three wickets in hand when Holder decided to pull a Mitchell Starc bouncer on the leg stump line but reacted late only to see it ricochet off his gloves and be taken by the keeper. However, it was

the best match for Holder in the ongoing World Cup as he scored 51 off 57 before returning economical figures of one for 28 in seven overs. While Holder remained expensive -- conceding 42 runs for three wickets in five overs -- in a dominating seven-wicket victory over Pakistan, Holder is yet to be the captain they need.

Faf du Plessis: South Africa
South Africa were the second most consistent team in this World Cup so far after Afghanistan as Faf du Plessis' men lost five of their seven games with the game against West Indies being washed out and a nine-wicket victory over Afghanistan. While du Plessis could point out factors such as Dale Steyn's injury and Lungi Ngidi's unavailability for the same reason in crucial matches, the skipper himself failed at crunch moments. His decision was also questioned when he opted to bat on a relatively slow track in Southampton against a spin-heavy India. Du Plessis's two fifties in the tournament, which came against Bangladesh (62) and Pakistan (63), were all for lost causes, indicating the impact he had for a team who have already exited the tournament.

Gulbadin Naib: Afghanistan
"We are already drowned darling, but we'll take you with us," were the words of Afghanistan skipper Gulbadin Naib ahead of their 62-run thrashing at the hands of Bangladesh. As it stands, that was the highest level of threat he posed in the tournament. Naib's highest score in the tournament -- a 75-ball 47 against Bangladesh -- never looked threatening. And while Naib could be credited giving India a good scare in a nail biting encounter, the only thing that the Afghans can do now is focus on their captain's words and make it difficult for Pakistan and West Indies.

It's 1992 all over again!

AFP, Birmingham

Twenty-seven years and a generation apart, Pakistan's World Cup bears striking similarities with their 1992 campaign -- when they started slowly but ended up lifting the trophy in Melbourne.

An identical sequence of wins and losses, and other eerie parallels, have struck a chord with millions of fans who believe that Pakistan could be set to come out on top once again.

In both World Cups, Pakistan started with a one-sided defeat to the West Indies, before recovering to win their second game -- against Zimbabwe in 1992, and England this time around.

At both tournaments, their third game was rained off and they then went on to lose their next two games and win the following two.

Not only that, but the final win in both sequences was against New Zealand, who were unbeaten in both 1992 and 2019 until they ran into Pakistan.

"It was same, the same sequence of results, points and then we wanted Australia to beat the West Indies for us to qualify," said legendary fast bowler Wasim Akram, who played for Pakistan in 1992.

"Then also we beat New Zealand -- who was unbeaten then too. A lot of similarities, I hope the end result is also similar now and we win the World Cup," said Wasim, now a TV commentator.

In another similarity, Wasim was the leading wicket-taker in 1992 with 18 and another Pakistan left-arm pacer, Mohammad Amir, is second on the bowler's chart with 16 so far.

"I am not sure if players are

It is becoming impossible to ignore the parallels with 1992. The similarities are freaky and even though the players won't have been thinking about it, there is no way they can put it out of their minds altogether. It's moving in the direction that they might qualify and if it does, that would be something very special if they could win the World Cup.

WAQAR YOUNIS

following all these (discussions) but this should motivate them," said Wasim. But Pakistan skipper Sarfaraz Ahmed played down any parallels with 1992.

"That's history but after we won against New Zealand someone told me that even in 1992 we chased down New Zealand's target with five balls to spare," said Sarfaraz, whose team reached their 238-run target in 49.1 overs on Wednesday.

Fans are now hoping that the similarities don't end there, and even that they continue beyond the World Cup.

"Imran Khan was Pakistan captain in 1992 World Cup and 26 years after that triumph he became country's prime minister, so Sarfaraz should also join politics and become premier in 2045," said one comment on social media.

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We'll find out [if I'm playing] later after practice. Team selection is after practice, so I'm hoping that there is an opportunity, yes (smiling). Two games left, it would be nice to end playing a game in a World Cup, yeah.

JP Duminy
South Africa player



South Africa's World Cup campaign may be done and dusted after a dismal performance, but skipper Faf du Plessis (R) was still doing his bit in training yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Bring on the boo boys, says Warner

REUTERS, London

David Warner says he's living the dream playing for Australia at the World Cup and no amount of booing from England fans eager to remind him of his one-year ban for ball tampering is going to spoil his mood.

The left-handed batsman shared an opening stand of 123 with his captain Aaron Finch as the defending champions beat hosts and pre-tournament favourites England at Lord's on Tuesday to book a place in the semi-finals.

It was Warner's seventh match for Australia after returning from the ban for his part in the Newlands scandal and his innings of 53 runs took his tournament tally to 500 at an average of 83.33.

There were boos for Warner and his former captain Steve Smith when they took the field but the 32-year-old from the tough southeastern Sydney suburbs was not letting it bother him.

"At the end of the day. People have the right to come in here, they pay their dollars and if they want to boo us, they can," Warner told reporters at Lord's. "As I said before, I thrive on that stuff, I love it. I went out to the corner there... and copped it."

"At the end of the day you have to smile -- they pay their money to come and watch

us and we are grateful for them to come and sit down and watch us.

"I always just smile. I take my glasses off and look everyone in the eye and just smile."

"That is what it's about, I am living the dream, I am out here at Lord's, playing cricket for my country."

Warner said 12 months out of international cricket and returning to his Randwick-Petersham club had effected a change in his outlook on his sport.

"For me it is about enjoying the game," he said. "When it is taken away from you, you realise what it is all about. Going back to grassroots was fantastic."

"I really saw smiles on people's faces to be out there on a Saturday afternoon, all the volunteers that come down and put time and effort in, whether it is making the drinks, making the lunches."

"People's parents, my mum, my dad coming down, it is just great. You can't take that for granted. I am just grateful for the second opportunity to come back here and represent my country and do the country proud. You know I am just excited to be back here and playing World Cup cricket for Australia."

Australia's next match is back at Lord's on Saturday against New Zealand.

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West Indies wicketkeeper Shai Hope missed the chance to stump MS Dhoni twice in the 33rd over when the Indian wicket-keeper batsman was batting on just eight from 14 deliveries. It was a series of comical errors from the Windies keeper. He saw Dhoni miles off his crease but, perhaps in his excitement, failed to gather the ball. Dhoni began running back once he noticed Hope's blunder and, in a hurry this time around, Hope reached down for the ball and attempted to flick it onto the stumps. However, his throw went well wide of the mark, allowing the Indians the chance to run a bye. Hope's embarrassment was finally complete when he missed the ensuing throw at the non-strikers end, but it was a happy moment for India.

PAKISTAN
ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP PARALLELS

	1992	2019
MATCH 1	LOST	LOST
MATCH 2	WON	WON
MATCH 3	RAINED OUT	RAINED OUT
MATCH 4	LOST	LOST
MATCH 5	LOST	LOST
MATCH 6	WON	WON
MATCH 7	WON	WON
FINAL POSITION	CHAMPIONS	