



(R) New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson is destined to have his place among the cricketing greats once he hangs up his bat, but of immediate concern to him would be to stave off the Australian bowlers, with the likes of (L) Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa looking in from the outside due to the strength in depth of their pace and spin riches. PHOTO: CA/NZC

# Trans-Tasman rivals face off No rest for quickies, says Langer

Lord's is all set to host another big-ticket rivalry as Australia and New Zealand, the 2015 finalists, face off in the 37th match of the ICC World Cup 2019 on Saturday.

New Zealand suffered their first defeat of the tournament, when they were outclassed by a resurgent Pakistan in their previous clash by six wickets. While James Neesham and Colin de Grandhomme impressed with a 132-run partnership for the sixth wicket in tough batting conditions at Edgbaston, the opening pair of Martin Guptill and Colin Munro failed once again.

ever-inspirational Mitchell Starc, haven't allowed their opponents to get away, striking at crucial junctures on a consistent basis.

The only area of mild concern for the five-time champions is the form of their middle order, as they face a strong New Zealand bowling unit, led by a shrewd captain on Saturday.

Martin Guptill, the New Zealand opener, hasn't been able to produce a performance of note after his stroke-filled 73\* against Sri Lanka in his side's opening game. Guptill, who scored an unbeaten century in his only outing at Lord's, back in 2013, will look to find his rhythm back as the tournament enters a critical phase.

The star left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc leads the wicket charts for Australia in this World Cup, much like he did in 2015, with 19

## FACTS

- Australia opener David Warner has scored 531 runs -- the most by any player in the current Australia World Cup squad -- in the 11 matches he played against New Zealand.
- Australia batsman Steven Smith smashed 164 -- his career best ODI score -- against New Zealand back in 2016 at the Sydney Cricket Ground. This remains the highest individual score by any player in the two sides' current World Cup squads to have played against each other.
- Ross Taylor has amassed 973 runs -- the most by any player in either sides' current World Cup squads -- in the 28 matches he played against Australia.
- Australia quick Mitchell Starc has scalped the most wickets by any current Australia bowlers against the Kiwis. He took 18 wickets in the eight matches he played against New Zealand. Starc also registered his career best figures of six for 28 against New Zealand back in 2015 in Auckland.
- Trent Boult of New Zealand has scalped 25 wickets -- the most by any player in the two teams' current squads -- in the 10 matches he played against Australia.

REUTERS, London

Australia coach Justin Langer thinks it is unlikely that frontline quicks Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins will be rested at the World Cup even if the defending champions have already qualified for the semifinals.

Langer's side secured their spot in the last four with a 64-run win over hosts England at Lord's on Tuesday and return to the famous north London ground on Saturday to face neighbours New Zealand in their penultimate round-robin tie.

With the Ashes series in England to come after the World Cup, Australia might be forgiven for giving the pace duo a rest but Langer said the players would probably not want to put their feet up at any stage of the tournament.

"I would be surprised if either of those guys rest up," Langer told a news conference.

"The challenge is going to be that we have long layoffs now, a bit of a layoff here, then five or six days in Manchester, we have to manage that really well. So I don't think they will want to rest."

Left-arm Starc is the top wicket taker at the World Cup so far with 19 from

seven matches and while Cummins started well with 11 from his first five matches, he drew blanks against Bangladesh and England.

Langer said he was not concerned at all with the 26-year-old's form.

"He hasn't got the wickets in the last two games, but he's still been a huge part of our side," Langer added.

"He's someone who's so reliable that you go to when you either need a wicket or you need some control in a game. He provides so much for the side."

Both pacemen were put into the shade a little on Tuesday, however, when Jason Behrendorff took five for 44 after bowling James Vince through the gate for a duck with the second ball of the England innings.

"To come to England and bowl on the big stage as well as he did, it will be a great confidence boost for him," said Langer, who coached the left-arm seamer at Western Australia.

"I've seen it for a long time ... he is a very good athlete and he's an incredible professional so he will do everything possible to play."

"And he's a really nice person. To see those sort of people get a reward is really pleasing."



With New Zealand looking to seal off a semifinal spot sooner rather than later, it wouldn't be surprising if Kane Williamson and the team management ring in some changes in the playing XI.

Australia have once again proven why they are a team to be feared at ICC tournaments, having won six of their seven games and become the first and, so far, only team to confirm a spot in the semifinals. The opening pair of Aaron Finch and David Warner has been delivering consistently, with 996 runs between them. The bowlers, led by the

scalps. Starc, who registered a career-best 6/28 against New Zealand at Eden Park in the 2015 edition, and later took the crucial wicket of Brendon McCullum in the final, will once again be Aaron Finch's key weapon.

London will be dry and sunny, with no chances of precipitation and a bit of humidity. Teams batting first have won each of the last three ODIs at Lord's, and both captains, considering their strong bowling attacks, will look to bat first and back themselves to defend a total.

## INFO ZONE

| HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP |      |             |
|---------------------------|------|-------------|
| AUSTRALIA                 |      | NEW ZEALAND |
| 7                         | WON  | 3           |
| 3                         | LOSS | 7           |
| 0                         | TIE  | 0           |
| 0                         | NR   | 0           |

| HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS |      |             |
|----------------------|------|-------------|
| AUSTRALIA            |      | NEW ZEALAND |
| 90                   | WON  | 39          |
| 39                   | LOSS | 90          |
| 0                    | TIE  | 0           |
| 7                    | NR   | 7           |

**LAST MEETING**  
June 2 2017 at Edgbaston in Birmingham. No result.

## KEY PLAYERS



| AUSTRALIA   |                  | NEW ZEALAND |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| PAT CUMMINS |                  | TRENT BOULT |
| 26.76       | BOWL AVE         | 24.96       |
| 31.1        | BOWL STRIKE RATE | 29.7        |
| 5.14        | ECON             | 5.03        |
| 5/70        | BBM              | 7/34        |
| 93          | WICKETS          | 156         |
| 1, 0/41     | LAST MATCH       | 1/48        |

# 'Indian batsmen must follow Kohli'

AFP, London

World Cup winner Krishnamachari Srikkanth has praised India captain Virat Kohli for his record-breaking feats but says the rest of the batting line-up needs to get its act together.

Unbeaten India are cruising towards the semifinals, with five wins from six games plus one washout.

"To reach 20,000 (international) runs quicker than any man before him is a fantastic achievement but his true greatness lies in his adaptability," Srikkanth wrote of Kohli in a column for the International Cricket Council.

"The captain can play every role for his team, across every format."

But the former opener said the concern was that the batting was "slightly the Virat Kohli show", following four consecutive 50s from the skipper.

"At the top of the order, Rohit Sharma has not fired the last couple of times, and that means KL Rahul needs to do more," he said.

"He has made some fantastic starts but then got himself out -- he will know better than anyone that he must convert those starts into big scores. Everyone knows he is capable of doing it, he has done it before and will need to correct his course."

"In the middle order Vijay Shankar and Kedar Jadhav have yet to really convince. I think it's fair to say that their approach needs some fine-tuning."

Srikkanth, who won the World Cup with India in 1983, said he would consider putting Rishabh Pant, who replaced the injured Shikhar Dhawan in the squad, in at number four.

"They have brought him over here now,



he is ready to go and, most importantly, he has played in England before so understands the conditions."

Srikkanth praised India's bowling attack.

"Mohammed Shami has come in and been a real wicket-taker -- the same guy who was so impressive at the last Cricket World Cup four years ago."

"And the best news of all is that the wrist spinners are coming to the party."

"As this tournament reaches the business end, they are going to be more and more important and Kohli will be so pleased with how they are performing."

Srikkanth said India's next game, on Sunday against England, was the biggest game of the World Cup so far.

"They (India) come into the game unbeaten and will be desperate to keep it that way while England are in 'must-win' territory now."

"India can afford to lose, but they won't want to -- carrying that positive mindset into the semifinals is absolutely crucial."

# Buttler undermines 'external pressure'

REUTERS, Birmingham

England are still in control of their destiny at the Cricket World Cup and the mood is pretty good in the camp despite "external pressures", wicketkeeper-batsman Jos Buttler said ahead of Sunday's blockbuster clash against India.

Eoin Morgan's men entered the tournament as the number one one-day team on a mission to end England's agonising wait for a first 50-overs World Cup title, that too on home soil.

Back-to-back defeats by Sri Lanka and Australia have not only cost them their top ODI rankings but also jeopardised their semi-final prospects in their home World Cup.

Buttler conceded the team were feeling the pressure but assured they were not panicking.

"Mood in the camp is still very good," Buttler told reporters at Edgbaston.

"Naturally there are some external pressures. It would be naive to say we got blinkers on and not aware of things going on outside or the pressure of the tournament."

"We know we didn't perform well enough in the previous two games to be beaten but we still got the opportunity to put that right and the guys turned up with smile on their faces and ready for a big week."

The straightforward way to reach the semi-finals will be to beat India and New Zealand -- teams they have not defeated at the World Cup since 1992 -- while even one loss would put them at the mercy of other results.

Lasith Malinga's four-wicket masterclass in Leeds derailed England's chase against Sri Lanka and Australia outplayed them next to compound their crisis.

"Against Sri Lanka, we're very disappointed with the way we played, we should have got over the line in that game," Buttler said of his team's failure to chase down 233 in that match.

"Against Australia, we unfortunately did not get the early wickets that we were hoping to and they did get those early wickets. That was big phase of the game and credit to Australia."

"We got two massive fixtures to come, obviously a huge game on Sunday. Everything is still within our hands, these are stuff we can control and that's what we will be aiming to do."

## MR EFFICIENT



Making his return to the team in place of Lungi Ngidi, South Africa pacer Dwaine Pretorius bowled brilliantly against Sri Lanka in a World Cup encounter yesterday. The thirty-year-old removed Kusal Perera, Avishka Fernando and Kusal Mendis -- the top three Sri Lankan batsmen. Pretorius remained economical as well, conceding just 25 runs in his ten overs, two of which were maidens. Sri Lanka were eventually bundled out on 203 as South Africa, who endured a disappointing World Cup campaign so far, look to finish the tournament on a high.