A look at the semifinalists

World Cup hosts England will face reigning champions Australia in a semi-final showdown between the old rivals on Thursday, while India carry the hopes of a cricket-obsessed nation into their last four clash with 2015 runners-up New Zealand on Tuesday. Here AFP looks at the state of play with the four semifinals going into the final week of the tournament:

England: England appeared to have rediscovered the game that took them to the top of the ODI rankings just in time as they bid to win their first World Cup title.

Eoin Morgan's men have bounced back from defeats by Sri Lanka and Australia with convincing wins over fellow semi-finalists India and New Zealand.

Both of those matches have seen Jonny Bairstow score hundreds and resume his impressive first-wicket partnership with Jason Roy, who missed the Australia defeat with a hamstring injury.

Bairstow and Roy have recorded three successive century stands in the tournament and the foundation they lay at the start of an innings is critical to England's success.

With pacer Jofra Archer having taken 17 wickets, England's attack looks in good shape. The key questions facing Eoin Morgan's

men ahead of their semi-final with Australia are can they handle the title-holders' newball threat if the likes of Mitchell Starc are on song and will their "aggressive" approach be enough if they are facing a run-chase in a World Cup where batting first increasingly appears the way to go?

It may be that England's campaign could come down to the toss of a coin.

India: India came in to the World Cup carrying the hopes of over a billion fans in the cricket crazy country and Virat Kohli's side have lived up to the expectations so far by

FINAL GROUP TABLE

Team India Australia England New Zealand	M 9 9 9	W 7 7 6 5	L 1 2 3 3	N/R 1 0 0	15 14 12 11	NRR 0.809 0.868 1.152 0.175
Pakistan Sri Lanka South Africa Bangladesh West Indies Afghanistan	9 9 9 9 9	5 3 3 3 2 0	3 4 5 5 6 9	1 2 1 1 1 0	11 8 7 7 5 0	-0.43 -0.919 -0.03 -0.41 -0.225 -1.322

SEMIFINALS LINE-UP

Date	Match	Venue	Time
July 9	India vs New Zealand	Manchester	3:30pm
July 11	England vs Australia	Birmingham	3:30pm

finishing top of the 10-team group table. They steamrolled South Africa, Australia and arch rivals Pakistan in their first three

completed matches. It was against minnows Afghanistan that they faced their first scare only to scrape

through in the last over with paceman Mohammed Shami claiming a hat-trick.

England proved to be a stumbling block









for rampant India as they went down to the hosts by 31 runs at Edgbaston despite a century from Rohit Sharma.

Sharma extended his blazing run of form with his record fifth hundred in a single edition of the World Cup as India humbled Sri Lanka in their last group match. Australia's loss to South Africa enabled

Kohli's side to finish top and set up the semifinal with New Zealand on Tuesday. It is ironic that India's only washout in the

group came against New Zealand, who had beaten the two-time champions in a warm-up game in May. India though start as favourites against the

Kiwis, who have who have lost their last three group games. Australia: Befitting a team that has won

four of the last five World Cups, Australia are again primed to push for silverware despite blowing a chance to finish top of the group.

Shamed duo David Warner and Steve Smith marked their returns to major international, after their 12-month bans for ball-tampering, with efficient half-centuries in Australia's opening two wins of the tournament.

Warner made an unbeaten 89 against minnows Afghanistan while Smith struck 73 in the team's 15-run win over West Indies.

Aaron Finch's side ran in to a red hot India and were outplayed in a 36-run defeat at the Oval. Later paceman Mitchell Starc admitted that lessons learnt from the Indian defeat were

a major reason for their surge to the semis. A shock loss to South Africa in Australia's final group game left them finish second in

the table to set up a tricky semi-final clash with England.

But five-time champions Australia overwhelmed Eoin Morgan's England in their group clash at Lord's and hold a 6-2 advantage in their World Cup meetings.

New Zealand: On paper the Black Caps appear to be the weakest of the teams that have made it through to the last four.

They only pipped Pakistan -- who beat them in the group stage -- on net run-rate and they come into the knockout phase on the back of three successive defeats having also lost to fellow semifinalists Australia and England.

They did reduce Australia to 92-5 with Trent Boult taking four wickets and they will be desperate to have impressive fast bowler

Lockie Ferguson, their leading wicket-taker at the tournament with 17, back from a hamstring injury that saw him miss the England match when they face India in the semi-finals.

But New Zealand's biggest issue is runs not wickets. The top order, apart from captain and star batsman Kane Williamson -- who made match-winning hundreds in group games against South Africa and the West Indies -- have been struggling.

New Zealand, whose group match against India was washed out, could do with someone like opener Martin Guptill, the leading run-scorer at a 2015 World Cup where he made an all-time tournament record 237 not out against the West Indies -- finding his best form again.







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WORLD CUP FAREWELLS

This was the final World Cup for a number of stars of the game, with some declaring their retirement from the ODI format altogether. Here, we look at some of the finest players and their final farewell. (Clockwise from bottom L) Imran Tahir started the World Cup in fine fashion, scalping the first wicket of the tournament by dismissing England's Jonny Bairstow with the second ball of the tournament. India's MS Dhoni has come in for plenty of criticism owing to his slower knocks, but he is the only one among this group of players still in the tournament and he will be looking to make his mark as soon as possible. Meanwhile, it is a contrasting story for Lasith Malinga and Chris Gayle. Malinga came into the event on his last legs while Universe Boss Gayle arrived in good form. However, it was Malinga who lit up the tournament and, if momentarily, threw the tournament wide open with a trademark, match-winning performance against England while Gayle faded into the sunset in lacklustre fashion. Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza did not have the best time either, failing to fire with the ball and watching his side drop down to an eighth-place finish in the group stages. However, none did worse than Shoaib Malik, who scored

PHOTO: REUTERS

eight and two ducks before being dropped from the team altogether.

