



The World Cup semifials will start today with India taking on New Zealand and all eyes will be glued to each sides' No. 3 batsmen and captains, Kane Williamson (L) and Virat Kohli. However, the Kiwis will be far more dependent on their captain than the Indians, whose other batsmen have also been firing throughout. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Full circle 11 years later

SPORTS REPORTER from Manchester

Leading rival sides in a World Cup semifinal may provoke a feeling of deja vu for India skipper Virat Kohli and New Zealand captain Kane Williamson when they head out for the toss today to kick off their World Cup semifinal in Manchester. 11 years ago, two of the world's best batsmen were unknown to casual cricket fans and were leading their countries' Under-19 sides in the U-19 World Cup semifinal in Malaysia.

11 years on, little has changed as the two are still the main batsmen in their respective sides and while Kohli has played second fiddle to the prolific Rohit Sharma in this tournament, Williamson has scored 481 runs -- 28.73 per cent of New Zealand's runs. Kohli trails



slightly on 442.

At their respective pre-match press conferences yesterday, the two skippers enjoyed being reminded of the match 11 years

"Actually, I'll remind Kane also, I'm sure he remembers, when we meet tomorrow I'm going to remind him," Kohli said



when asked whether he thought 11 years ago that they would be squaring off in the real deal. "It is quite a nice thing to realise that 11 years later, we are captaining our respective nations again in a Senior World Cup. Neither me nor him, could have ever anticipated that one day this will happen."

Like Kohli, Williamson was

also caught up in this World Cup too much to think about a youth game 11 years in the past.

"I actually hadn't thought about that at all so I guess that's kind of cool, isn't it, that a few years later, we're here again, perhaps on a slightly different stage, but pretty special and a lot of respects to being able to lead your country out in a semifinal on the biggest stage," Willamson later said yesterday.

Both greats claimed that they saw something special in the other in their young days.

"It's not even 2008, I remember 2007 we went to New Zealand and we were playing an U-19 Test match and he played a shot off one of our fast bowlers, who was quick, off the back foot and I remember standing in slips and telling guys: 'I have never

seen anyone play a shot like that'," Kohli recalled.

"He was a formidable player, growing up -- that seems odd to say because we were at the same age playing against each other on a number of occasions and then to go into international cricket at a youngish age, then IPL and these different sorts of things. It's been a pleasure watching Virat play and evolve into the superstar he is."

New Zealand lost that semifinal 11 years ago, but not all details of that match may be repeated today.

"I got Kane's wicket? Did I?" laughed Kohli. "I don't know if that can happen again now."

"Oh dear. Tell me how (laughter). He used to be an all-rounder I think back in the day, but hasn't bowled as much recently," was Williamson's take.

# Kiwis bid for upset

AFP, Manchester

Sachin Tendulkar may have unwittingly provided New Zealand with extra motivation to cause a huge upset in Tuesday's World Cup semi-final against India when he wished MS Dhoni happy birthday and "all the very best for the next two games".

The implication of the retired batting great's remarks was that India wicketkeeper Dhoni, who turned 38 on Sunday, and his team-ates already have one foot in the July 14 final at Lord's against England or Australia.

India, whose group match against 2015 runners-up New Zealand was washed out, have suffered just one defeat at this World Cup so far, against England, and ended on top of the 10-team group stage, making them strong favourites to beat the Black Caps.

India captain Virat Kohli's side appear to have an embarrassment of riches at their disposal, with Bumrah saying: "It's a good headache to have when everyone's performing and everyone's in good nick and that's something you love to have going into a crucial game like next week's semi-final." But if New Zealand, whose attack is set to feature experienced left-arm quick Trent Boult and fit-again fast bowler Lockie Ferguson -- can find a way through India's top three, they could expose a lengthy tail.

The Black Caps, who only qualified for the semifinals on the basis of net run-rate, have lost their last three games -- against Pakistan, holders Australia and England.

"People aren't expecting us to win and from my point of view I think that's a good place to be in," New Zealand coach Gary Stead told reporters at Old Trafford on Sunday.

Batting first has become an increasingly successful tactic at the World Cup in general and at Old Trafford in particular, where it's been part of the winning strategy featured in all five previous games on the ground.

"India are also a fantastic chasing team as well," said Stead. "But when you get to this stage of the tournament, sometimes pressure can do funny things on people as well. If we can apply enough pressure, then you never know what might happen." But in order for that to happen Stead's side will have to be competitive with the bat.

"Kane has stood up brilliantly for us," said Stead. "I don't think we'll be doing anything drastic, we know we have to be better than what we have been so far."

India may have the look of cricket thoroughbreds, but Ferguson made it clear the Black Caps had no intention of just making up the numbers.



## INFO ZONE

#### **HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP NEW ZEALAND** INDIA WON LOSS

#### **HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS** INDIA **NEW ZEALAND**

55	WUN	45
45	LOSS	55
1	TIE	1
6	NR	6
	LAST MEETING	

June 13 2019 at Trent Bridge in Nottingham. Match abandoned due to rain.

### **KEY PLAYERS**



103



27

INDIA		NEW ZEALAND	
OHIT SHARI	MA K	ANE WILLIAMSON	
49.19	BAT AVE	47.9	
88.68	BAT STRIKE RATE	82.17	
42	50s	38	
27	100s	13	
264	HS	148	
8657	RUNS	6036	

LAST MATCH

## 'Fast start could lead to India upset'

AFP, London

Former New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori believes the Black Caps can cause a World Cup semifinal upset against India if they can shake off their recent struggles with a fast start on Tuesday.

"New Zealand arrive in the semifinals as the outsiders, but make no mistake about it, they will still have high hopes," Vettori said in his ICC Media column.

"When you get on a bad run as a team, you have to return to the individual. If one man can find a performance, then that can permeate its way through to the whole team very quickly and build confidence, often within a game.

"A three-match losing streak can evaporate pretty quickly with a great ten overs at the start. Just look at South Africa against Australia this past weekend.

"That is why the start of is going to be so important. If New Zealand get off to a great start, with bat or ball, the streak will soon be forgotten."

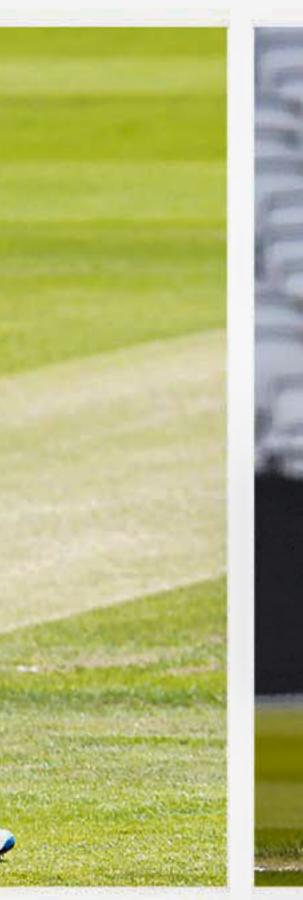
Vettori urged New Zealand to copy the aggressive approach shown by England when they scored 337-7 to beat India earlier in the tournament.

"England against India at Edgbaston probably showed New Zealand the way to approach setting a big total," he said.

"Jasprit Bumrah is basically unplayable at this stage, and against England he was his usual economical self.

"But despite that, England targeted everyone else. They were aggressive from the off against the spinners, against Hardik Pandya and they even got to Mohammed Shami at the death as well."





India will be banking on pacer Jasprit Bumrah (L) to continue delivering the goods as he has done so far at the World Cup with his death bowling and stingy spells, while New Zealand will be bolstered by the return of express pacer Lockie Ferguson. PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS

# Today's three key battles

AFP, Manchester

Two-time champions India face 2015 runnersup New Zealand on Tuesday in the first World Cup semi-final in Manchester.

India topped the group stage with seven wins from nine matches, while New Zealand limped into the last four after three successive defeats. Here, AFP Sport looks at three key battles in the knockout match at Old Trafford:

Kohli v Williamson - Lead thy way There will be a sense of deja vu for India's Virat Kohli and New Zealand's Kane Williamson, who were captains of their sides when India and New Zealand met in the 2008 Under-19 World Cup

semi-finals. Kohli's India won the game and went on to clinch the title at Kuala Lumpur and Williamson would dearly love to avenge that loss when they meet again for much higher

stakes on Tuesday. Kohli has led India into the last four with five half-centuries and is two wins away from what could be his first World Cup triumph as captain of the senior side.

Williamson has also been inspirational for New Zealand, with two masterclass centuries and a fifty as his team return to the semi-finals four years after losing the title match against Australia.

His elegant batting and shrewd brain make for a deadly combination for the Kiwis, who are bidding to cause an upset against India at Old Trafford.

Sharma v Guptill - opening charge Rohit Sharma is in the form of his life after hitting a record five centuries in a single edition of the World Cup to lead the tournament's batting charts with 647 runs.

Sharma comes in to the semi-finals fuelled by three successive centuries -- 102, 104, 103 -and two opening stands with KL Rahul of over

But can he continue his blazing run on the big stage? Martin Guptill's form has been in sharp contrast with that of Sharma as the Kiwi

opener managed just 166 runs from his eight outings. The Black Caps will be hoping for a change

of fortune for Guptill, who was in smashing form in the last World Cup when he hit the tournament's best ever individual score of 237 not out against West Indies.

Bumrah v Boult - Pace wars Yorker king Jasprit Bumrah has led the Indian pace attack with speed and accuracy and remains key to the team's chances against New Zealand.

Bumrah has claimed 17 wickets in eight matches and has stifled the flow of runs for opposition batsmen with his ability to consistently bowl yorkers in the death overs. He is ably supported by fellow fast bowlers Mohammed Shami and Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

But New Zealand can also boast significant firepower in their pace attack with left-arm

quick Trent Boult leading the way. With his ability to move the ball both ways, Boult is a threat to India's famed batting line-up and claimed 15 wickets from eight group-stage

games. His 4-30 against West Indies on June 22 at Old Trafford was one of the best spells of fast bowling in this edition of the World Cup, while he also claimed a hat-trick against Australia.