



The finalists' story so far

ICC

England and New Zealand have both had to ride out the storm to make this year's World Cup Final. It has been far from smooth sailing for either side, but in the end it is Kane Williamson and Eoin Morgan's side who have emerged on top, and deservedly so.

No one can complain that the two best teams in the tournament are not in Sunday's showpiece at Lord's. After contrasting group stages, they have peaked at the right time and are one win away from a maiden crown.

England kicked things off six weeks ago at the Oval by downing South Africa in impressive style. Jofra Archer caught the eye with the ball while Jason Roy, Joe Root and Eoin Morgan all made half centuries with the bat. But there was no doubting the star

of the show, Ben Stokes setting the tournament alight with a stunning catch, 89 with the bat and two wickets with the ball.

Next up, England travelled to Trent Bridge to take on Pakistan but their bright start came unstuck in a dramatic 14-run defeat.

Joe Root and Jos Buttler both struck centuries for the hosts but a Pakistan held on to secure a famous victory. England did not appear rattled however, a crunching 106run win over Bangladesh in Cardiff settling the nerves.



NEW ZEALAND

Roy continued his super form by crashing 153 and England ended up posting a then tournament-high 386 for six that proved beyond the fighting Tigers. Next up for England, their roadshow took them to the Hampshire Bowl to take on a fired-up West Indies.

Archer and Mark Wood bowled the Caribbean outfit out for 212 and Root struck his second ton of the tournament to see England home with eight wickets to spare.

GOLDEN

HARVEST

The bad news for England were the injuries sustained by Roy and skipper

Morgan that prevented either from batting. But while Roy's troublesome hamstring kept him on the sidelines, Morgan's back

spasm was soon a thing of the past as the captain produced the fireworks in their next game at Old Trafford. The captain smashed an

astonishing 17 sixes in his century and England broke their own highest total of the World Cup by posting 397 for 6 that proved way beyond Afghanistan. The hosts appeared to be making

serene progress through to the

knockout stages, but in Leeds Sri Lanka sprung a serious surprise. England's chase of 233 proved beyond them as Lasith Malinga rolled back the years to knock over the top

order. While Stokes did his best, they

ended up 20 runs short. That was their wake-up call, but England did not rouse from their slumber at Lord's four days later as Australia gave them a beating at the home of cricket.

Mitchell Starc and Jason Behrendorff did the damage with the

ENGLAND

ball and England again fell short in a chase and suddenly the No.1 side in the world were in danger of being dumped out of their own party.

But with their backs to the wall,

England came out swinging. India were unbeaten but

with Roy back in tandem, Jonny Bairstow produced his best knock of the tournament with a century as England set 337 for seven.

Rohit Sharma produced another ton as was becoming customary at this World Cup, but India fell just short and England were still alive.

Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka were all waiting to pounce if England gave them a sniff, and their last game was in Durham against New Zealand. But when they needed to produce their best, they went back to their aggressive best.

Bairstow cracked another century as England won the toss and posted

another 300-plus total, their sixth of the group stages.

The Black Caps fell short, but still went through the semifinals courtesy of their net run rate.

They had their fast start to the competition to thank for their passage through the knockout rounds.

They smashed Sri Lanka by ten wickets in their tournament opener in Cardiff, then edged out Bangladesh at the Oval. Afghanistan were sent packing by seven wickets at Taunton to maintain their perfect start before their India game at Trent Bridge fell victim to the weather -- a precursor for their rain-affected semi-final.

Their group stage progress continued serenely, Kane Williamson's stunning century carrying them to a four-wicket win over South Africa at Edgbaston.

Williamson scored a century again

as New Zealand posted 291/8 against the West Indies at Old Trafford.

That looked like being enough when Trent Boult and Lockie Ferguson ran through the top order but Carlos Brathwaite smashed a late century to get the Caribbean close.

But his attempt at a matchwinning six fell just a metre short, Boult claiming the catch on the rope to keep the Black Caps unbeaten and good value for the knockout rounds. But no sooner did they look well-set than the wheels started to come off.

Babar Azam's superb century helped Pakistan to a six-wicket win at Edgbaston and then at Lord's, their trans-Tasman rivals Australia taught them a lesson in an 86-run win.

They were also beaten by England and went into knockout rounds on a three-match losing streak. But they turned the tables on India

in an enthralling rain-affected twoday semifinal at Old Trafford. On a tricky pitch, Williamson and

Ross Taylor hit vital half centuries and when Matt Henry and Boult ran through the Indian top order, a surprise was very much on the cards.

MS Dhoni and Ravindra Jadeja did their best to get India close but Martin Guptill's sensational run out saw off Dhoni and the Black Caps finished off the job for an 18-run win. Then at Edgbaston, England

beating Australia by eight wickets to hand their old rivals a first-ever World Cup semi-final defeat. Archer and Chris Woakes did the damage before Adil Rashid tied up

saved their best performance for last,

the middle order. Only Steve Smith's 85 that got them to a total of 223. And when Roy and Bairstow

started like trains once again, victory was always going to be theirs.



Who will be the player of the tournament?

AGENCIES, London

After 44 days of cricket, we are just 2 days away from the much-awaited final of the World Cup. Be it England or New Zealand who win it on July 14 at Lord's, one thing is sure, the game will have a new world champion. In all these days, we saw some unanticipated hits and some unexpected misses while we also saw those, who outlived the expectations. Making a comeback to the international cricket after a year-long ban, Australia opener David Warner impressed with his style. He was aggressive, throughout, as if he was there to prove a point. Shakib Al Hasan was a surprise package all together. Kane Williamson, as calm as monk, guided New Zealand to their second World Cup final with his brilliant batting. Mitchell Starc unleashed mayhem with his yorkers, while Jofra Archer proved his worth in his maiden World Cup appearance for England. A lot of them have impressed, but only one will take home the Player of the Tournament award. Here is a look at all those player who are in contention.

SHAKIB AL HASAN

Bangladesh failed to make it to the last four of the World Cup but Shakib Al Hasan was in form of his life. Shakib ended a prolific World Cup 2019 with 606 runs, surpassing Sachin Tendulkar's record of the most runs scored in the group stage. The left-hander hammered two centuries and 6 half-centuries. Not only did he show his grace with the bat, the allrounder also impressed with his spin bowling. Shakib scalped11 wickets for his side at an economy of 5.39. So this complete player is very much in contention for the player of the tournament, unless the ICC jury is in a mood to not hand the award to a player belonging to the team that did not quite contend for cricket's greatest prize.

ROHIT SHARMA

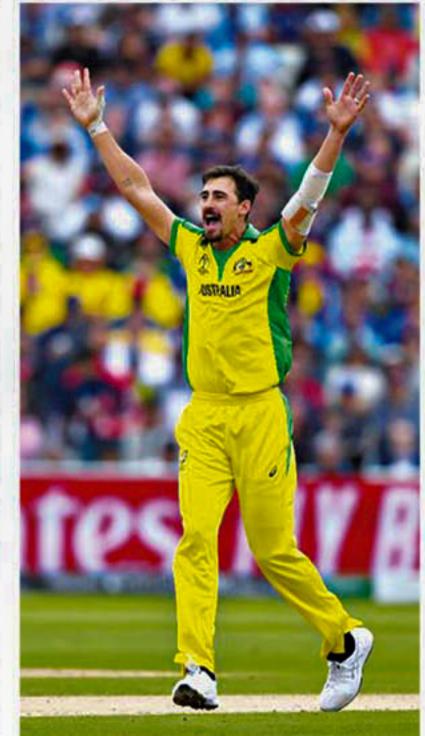
With a World Cup record five centuries in the 2019 event, India opener Rohit Sharma has been ahead of all other batsmen in the race. The India opener is the leading run scorer in the tournament with 648 runs from nine matches at an average of 81. Alongisde his five tons, he also has one half-century. Rohit was only 27 runs short of surpassing the legendary Sachin Tendulkar, who leads the list of batsmen with most runs in a single edition of the World Cup, but he managed just a single run as India's campaign at the World Cup came to an end with a semifinal defeat against New Zealand. Rohit was seen shedding tears then, but he may have something to smile about soon.

MITCHELL STARC

Australia suffered their first semifinal defeat in a World Cup as hosts England crushed the five-time champions by 8 wickets to reach their first World Cup final in 27 years. Although Australia's World Cup

journey ended, Mitchell Starc remains the highest wicket-taker in the tournament. The southpaw has picked 27 wickets in 10 innings at an economy of 5.43. Starc, also the player of the tournament in World Cup 2015, broke Glenn McGrath's record for most wickets in a single edition of the showpiece event. The pacer also has two five-wicket hauls and two four-wicket hauls in this edition of the tournament to put a strong claim for his second player of the World Cup award in succession.







lunchtime. There's only a 10 per cent chance of rain. It seems to be perfect weather for a game because it's neither too sunny nor too hot in London with temperatures peaking in the early twenties at 21 degrees. If the final does not finish on the scheduled day, play will resume from the same position the following day. So it will be a continuation, not a restart. If no play is possible on the scheduled day, then a full match will start on the reserve day. Wherever possible, the effort will be to make sure that the match is completed on the same day. So the match could be reduced to a T20 affair or extended by up to 2 hours. If there is no play possible on the scheduled day as well as the reserve day, then the trophy will be shared by the two finalists. PHOTO: ICC

FACTS

England's Joe Root has scored 925 runs -most by any English batsmen -- in the 20 matches he played against New Zealand.

England opener Jonny Bairstow has score the most number of hundreds by an English batsmen against New Zealand. He smashed a total of three centuries against the Kiwis so far.

New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor has amassed 1409 runs -- most by any players among the two sides -- in the 34 matches he played against England.

Kiwi opener Martin Guptill's unbeaten 189 that came against England back in 2013 in Southampton remains the highest individual score by any batsmen among the two sides while playing against each other.

England pacer Chris Woakes has scalped 19 wickets -- most by any current English bowlers -- in the 12 matches he played against New Zealand.

Kiwi pacer Tim Southee has scalped 36 wickets -- most by any bowlers among the two sides' current World Cup squads -- in the 21 matches he played against England.

INFO ZONE

HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP ENGLAND NEW ZEALAND LOSS

HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS ENGLAND NEW ZEALAND WON

LOSS **LAST MEETING**

July 3 2019 at Riverside Ground in Chester-le-Street. England won by 119 runs.

KEY PLAYERS





JASON ROY KANE WILLIAMSON 43.12 **BAT AVE** 48.04 107.54 **BAT STRIKE RATE** 82.00 18 50S 100S 13 180 148 85 LAST MATCH