

Trans-Tasman battle to determine new champions

AGENCIES



New Zealand and Australia renew their trans-Tasman rivalry in Dubai tonight as both teams look to clinch their maiden Twenty20 World Cup title.

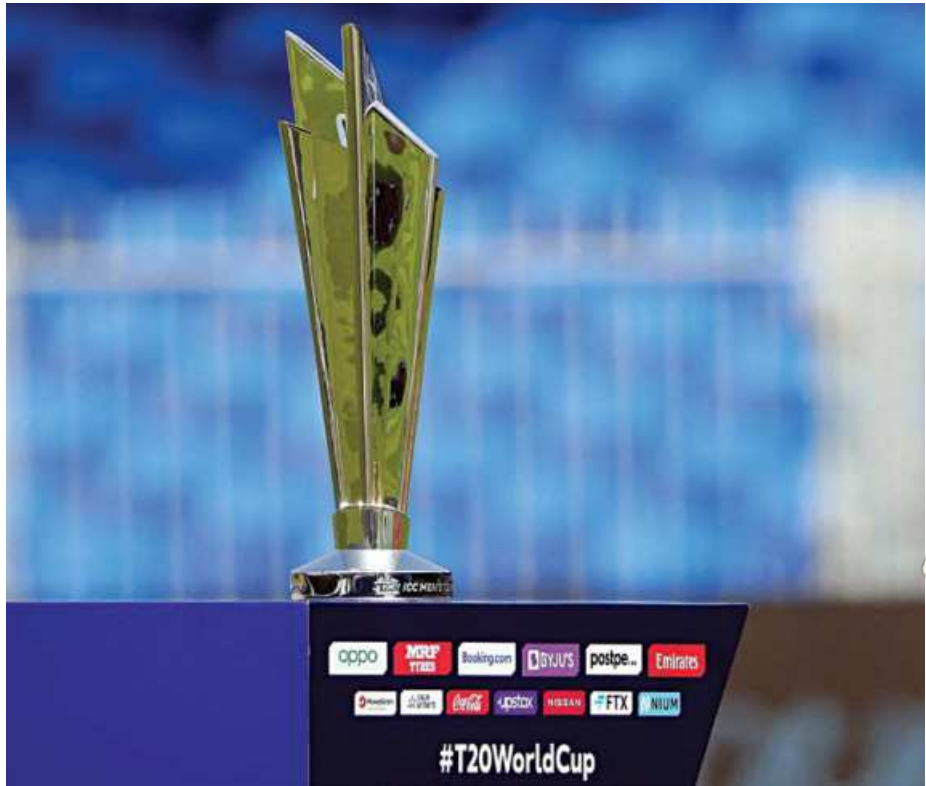
There is little to choose between Australia and New Zealand after their near-identical progress to the summit clash in Dubai.

Both made the semi-finals of the Twenty20 World Cup as the second team from their respective groups and then

came into their own to knock out the tournament's two most dominating teams.

Sunday's clash will be a rematch of the 2015 final of the 50-overs World Cup and Australia, the most successful ODI team, will hope to win the only major limited-overs global trophy that has eluded them so far.

For reigning world Test champions New Zealand, the incentive will be to triumph in another format, especially after their heart-breaking loss to England on boundary countback in the tied 2019 50-over World Cup final.



'Little to choose between two finalists'

AGENCIES

The feistiness of Australia is set to clash with the tactical shrewdness of a perennially understated New Zealand today. Apart from history, the current form of the Aussies place them as favourites. However, former India batter VVS Laxman reckons that despite the absence of Devon Conway, the Kiwis cannot be counted out.

"There is little to choose between the two finalists, with Australia having the slight edge following the freak injury to Devon Conway. But as history will testify, New Zealand is a side that can be taken lightly at one's own peril," Laxman wrote in his column for The Times of India on Saturday. Thus, the cricket fans can expect a fierce battle between Australian batting versus New Zealand bowling if they consider the stats so far.

The Aussies have a batting dot-ball percentage of 24 percent between overs 17 and 20 during this tournament, the best of any team and three percentages fewer than the Kiwis. New Zealand's

bowling economy rate of 6.40 is the best among the lot at this mega event, whereas Australia is ranked tenth with a bowling economy of an even 7. And considering how both the Aussies and the Black Caps won their respective semifinals against fancied opponents, one can expect another dramatic finish at the "Ring of Fire".



Finch cannot wait for 'great' contest

REUTERS

Australia captain Aaron Finch predicted a "great contest" against New Zealand in Sunday's final when the trans-Tasman rivals clash in their bid to win a maiden Twenty20 World Cup title. Finch said his team must stay focused throughout the match because he expects Kane Williamson's men to fight till the end in Dubai.

"Anytime you play New Zealand you know how great a contest it's gonna be, you know that they're so disciplined in all three facets of the game," Finch told reporters on Saturday.

"They're a team that you have to be on for all 40 overs if you're gonna get over the line. They're a great side. They're really well led by Kane and he's done it brilliantly. They seem to just hang around for long enough in any kind of contest and wear you down. That's what we've learned over the years about New Zealand. They fight and scrap in every situation."

"I think both teams are really well matched up with similar sort of structures in terms of the powerplay bowling," he said. "New Zealand have obviously been the dominant team in the World Cup in the powerplay with the ball. Both teams have got good spin options. It should be a great contest. It always is. So yeah, we can't wait."

Few would have tipped Australia as a potential World Cup finalist after their tumultuous buildup when they lost five consecutive T20 series. Finch said his team have been able to stick to their plans and play to their strengths.



Williamson expects clash of styles

REUTERS

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson believes Sunday's Twenty20 World Cup final against Australia will be a clash of styles at the Dubai International Stadium. Aaron Finch's Australia will rely on an assortment of match-winners to deliver their maiden World Cup title in this format.

But New Zealand usually prefer team effort to individual brilliance and have put their faith in an approach that has taken them to the finals in four of the last five global events.

"As a side, they (Australia) have got a lot of match-winners, and I think that's a large part of the strength in their team throughout," Williamson said.

"For us, we want to bring our focus to the cricket that we want to play and make sure that's the most important thing -- go out there, enjoy the occasion and take it on in our style."

Elaborating on their style, the 31-year-old added, "It's making those adjustments and certainly having the courage to do so and play smart cricket and buy into concepts that, for us as a team, are kind of what we try and wholeheartedly do."

Williamson said it would be "some achievement" for his team to be world champions in another format but would not like the prospect to be a distraction. "It's great to be here, a reflection of a lot of hard work, but tomorrow is a one-off match and, for us, it is a really exciting opportunity."

HIGHLIGHTS

******This is New Zealand's first appearance in the final of the men's T20 World Cup. Australia were runners-up in 2010. Either way, there will be a first-time winner crowned tonight.

******The teams made the final after spectacular chases in the semi-finals, coming from behind against opponents who had topped their respective groups, and who also were No.1 and No.2 in T20I rankings.

****** Every effort will be made to complete the match on the scheduled day with any necessary reduction in overs taking place. Only if the minimum number of overs necessary to constitute a match (10 overs to the side batting second) cannot be bowled on the scheduled day will the match be completed on the reserve day.

******If the final is tied, a Super Over is played. If the Super Over is a tie, then subsequent Super Overs shall be played until there is a winner. If following a tie, weather conditions prevent the Super Over from being completed, or if the match is abandoned or a no result, the teams shall be declared joint winners.

TODAY'S MATCH

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Looking back at the journey of the ICC T20 World Cup, not many would disagree that the two finalists -- New Zealand and Australia -- are the most deserving teams to lift the trophy, which for either side would be a first T20 World Cup triumph.

Both have so far played as units and without an overreliance on individual performances, meaning different players rose the occasion as needed, but there are those individuals who have the ability to change the course of the game.

The World Cup is perhaps the biggest platform when it comes to launching new stars and New Zealand have unearthed Daryl Mitchell at this mega-event.

The accidental opener, who was not even considered for his nation's World Cup squad at one point, burst onto the scene with a match-winning, unbeaten 47-ball 72 in chase of England's 167 in the semifinal.

With momentum on his side, all eyes will be on the 30-year-old right-hander in the final

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against Australia today and if he rises to the occasion, he may well stamp his authority as the next big thing in New Zealand cricket.

While Mitchell is expected to play a big role with the bat, who can overlook speedster Trent Boult and te impact his ability with the new ball for the Kiwis could have on an occasion as big as the World Cup final?

Apart from the semifinal against England,

when he went wicketless for 40 runs, Boult had been venomous for New Zealand in all Super 12 games. The left-arm seamer consistently provided breakthroughs for his side in the Powerplay and ended with 10 wickets from five games.

Experience has always been key on big occasions and the Kiwis will also be banking on Boult's vast knowledge of the opponent to disrupt the Aussie batting line-up. On the other hand, Australia will look to the powerhouse of their batting armory, David Warner, for yet another explosive start.

At a strike rate of 148.42, Warner scored 236 runs across six games, including two fifties, and is among the top four run-getters in the mega-event.

If New Zealand really want to make an impact with the bat, they have to go through Adam Zampa and find ways to score against the in-form leg-spinner.

Not only is he the second-highest wicket-taker in the tournament with 12 scalps, Zampa's economy rate of just under six runs per over can prove to be deadly for the Kiwis in the final.

FINAL FACTFILE

AUSTRALIA

Top scorer: David Warner – 236 runs.

Top wicket taker: Adam Zampa – 12 wickets.

NEW ZEALAND

Top scorer: Daryl Mitchell – 197 runs.

Top wicket taker: Trent Boult – 11 wickets.

T20S HEAD-TO-HEAD

Australia wins: 9, New Zealand wins: 5 (includes win on one-over eliminator after tied match)

First T20 International

FIRST meeting:

Not only the first ever T20 between the two neighbours but the first ever men's international to be played in the format in February 17, 2005, Auckland. Australia won by 44 runs.

Last T20 International meeting:

New Zealand won by seven wickets in March 7, 2021, Wellington.

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