

ICC T20 World Cup 2022

Sunday, 16 October 2022

Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

Bellerive Oval

Ireland

Andrew Balbirnie

Pre Match Media Conference

Q. Andrew, obviously it's a very familiar venue for you here last time you battled here, very happy hunting ground. Do you have any sort of recollections of what the ground was like to play on that day, and do you think that sort of carries over to this tournament?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: Yeah. I remember it being probably one of my most memorable games in an Irish shirt. Getting runs was nice, but just from a team win point of view, it was a pretty high-scoring game. The wicket was really good from memory. I imagine it's going to be pretty similar, even though it's a very different time of the year here.

But yeah, it's always nice when you return to a ground that you've had previous success as a team and as a player. I'm really looking forward to getting out there tomorrow.

Q. Obviously it was a fantastic game that day. I think there was about 600 runs scored in total. That data is sort of indicative of where you are as a player. Back then you were sort of the young player on the team. Now in terms of your squad makeup you've got a very strong but young middle order. Not just in sort of captaincy terms but in terms of you as a person within that squad that's been there for a long time, how do you see your role in terms of mentoring those younger guys?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: I think they're pretty kind of tuned-in young guys. I was over for dinner with the two other guys, George and Paul, who were there that day, as well. It was kind of strange; I think back then we probably didn't think we'd be back here playing in a World Cup.

It's pretty special to be back here. Yeah, we're trying to help the young guys as best we can. We know these World Cups can be pretty daunting, but I think the group have played enough cricket now against top opposition in different climates to embrace that challenge, and I think that's potentially the only thing that's going to hold us back this week is that they don't get over-awed with it. A lot of them were there last year at the World Cup, as well,



so they've been there and experienced that sort of big ICC event.

But yeah, it'll be nice. There's a lot of friends and family starting to come into Hobart now over the last 24 hours. It's certainly nice to see some familiar faces around the town.

Q. On that, you sort of indicated it's sort of a grass-roots sort of campaign, even though the push for Ireland to really establish itself within the ICC as a member nation is sort of worldwide, but what does it mean to have that family support, not just in terms of coming to the games but wanting to see you guys succeed and play more Test cricket, not having to qualify for these World Cups in pool matches, that sort of thing? How does that translate to the squad do you think?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: Yeah, I think certainly going back to the qualifier in Oman in March, that win against Oman, that was such a relief to be able to get to a World Cup in Australia. It's probably the best place to tour in my opinion.

Not having bubbles has made a big difference to a lot of the guys, being able to get out and about for a coffee, for a walk, having wives and girlfriends over and family members, like I said. That just takes your attention away from cricket, and I think that makes a big difference to a lot of the group, whereas last year you were playing your match and going into a hotel and staying in your room, and I think that had a damaging effect, not just on us but a lot of cricketers around the world.

I think there's been a big difference in this World Cup. It's a lot more relaxed. There's a lot more better feeling about the group.

I think we're in a really good place as a squad. We haven't had the prep we maybe wanted, but I think every team is in the same boat when it comes to that. There's been a lot of rain in this part of the world.

Yeah, it's going to be good to get out there tomorrow and see where we are against these top teams.

Q. Just on that, we're seeing Ireland play a lot more games against greater opposition. I think New Zealand had a three-game tour earlier this year, and you're playing against these bigger nations, but often we see Ireland fall just short. What do you think fans



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should expect this World Cup, and sort of how have you gone about addressing that as a squad?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: I think there's been a big shift in focus in kind of performance result-based talk. I think last year we got caught up very much with making sure we got the results rather than a focus on the performance.

That shift in mindset has freed up a lot of our players, and we played a lot of good cricket this summer without winning, but we were pretty happy with how we played, and we know that if we keep playing that sort of cricket, more often than not we'll get the right results.

Certainly in a competition like this, you need to get wins, but I think our message has been loud and clear: We want to go out and play pretty good cricket and excite people, and if we get the results on the back of that, great, but as long as we're going in and putting in those performances, we'll be happy.

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