

ICC T20 World Cup 2022

Friday, 21 October 2022

Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

Bellerive Oval

Ireland

Andrew Balbirnie

Post Match Media Conference

Ireland 150/1, West Indies 146/5

Q. Andrew, just sum up, first of all, your assessment of that game.

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: Yeah, obviously a lot better than it was this time 12 months ago. Just a real all-around complete performance. I think we set the tone with the ball, managed to restrict them to a probably below-average score on a really good wicket and got the start we needed with the bat to kind of dent the total.

Yeah, there was a lot of emotion because we've had kind of a long 12 months of trying to find out how we want to play this game, and it's worked sometimes and hasn't worked other times.

But to kind of pull out two performances like we have against Scotland and West Indies when it really counts, certainly as, kind of a senior player and a captain, I'm very proud of the way everyone has gone about it.

Q. No doubt that was your best performance in a T20 International?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: I think so. I think it was pretty complete. All our bowlers were really good today. I thought we fielded brilliantly. Lorcan and Stirling finishing it off the way they did with such ease and composure. Lorcan, as well, he's obviously in this room, so I'll give him a couple of compliments. The way he's batted at three since he's come in and has given us such simplicity but also such flair, as well, the way he plays. And Stirling can just basically tap it around, once we got it to blow on a ball. Just, yeah, a real complete performance in such a big game is very satisfying.

We don't really know where we're going to be next, but we know we're going to be in the Super 12s, and that's huge for this group.

Q. I was critical of some of your bowling plans during the week, but obviously you got it right today. Gareth obviously excelled.

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: He was brilliant. He's really



shone in the last few months I think with bowling in T20, particularly on good wickets against good teams, a lot can be happening. I'm very fortunate to have Paul and Mark Adair and Lorcan, who are really smart cricketers who can always give me different opinions and different bowlers to maybe bowl.

Sometimes it won't come off, and I fully know the game pretty well; more often than not, it won't, but when it does, we've got to capitalise and we did that today.

Yeah, Gareth will naturally take the plaudits because of the way he bowled, but all our bowlers today were on point.

Q. You looked devastated when you got out, obviously, you hadn't a bad replacement. He looked so confident from the start, didn't he?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: Yeah, I was just gutted because it gave them a little sniff on a wicket that didn't offer much. But yeah, I was fully confident once we got it to that stage that we'd get over the line with the batters we have. So much power, so much composure, talent in that middle order now, and to get over the line is great.

We're starting to get batters in form now, getting down to the business end of the competition, and that's where you want to be, and that's when you sort of want to hit your straps.

Q. It's 20 odd since Paul got a Fifty, but obviously you were never in doubt it would come good?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: No, I don't think I've ever doubted Paul. He is such a classy player, person, key member of this team, and will be for a long time, has been for a long time. He's just a huge big-game player, and today was a perfect example of someone to step up in a chase, and he was the man to do it.

Q. Lorcan just picked it up obviously, as well, so confident from the start of his innings?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: Yeah, he's a fabulous player, fabulous person. He looked well, as well. Just a really classy knock, exactly what was required, and yeah, good to kind of have him in form going into the competition next week.

Q. This happened a few points in some series in the summer, thinking of India, here, South Africa to a



certain extent maybe. You start slowly; obviously the prep here wasn't ideal, but you're building into it nicely. You could say that's a common thread with this team?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: Yeah, it was kind of a disappointing prep. We had some really good stuff lined up. We were very fortunate the Randwick Petersham Cricket Club gave us such amazing facilities. The weather was really against us down there, which was unfortunate, but we were still able to train indoors, and guys were training with a purpose. They weren't just training for the sake of it.

We had clear plans. I think particularly the batters know their roles and what they have to do when they play so they can be specific when it comes to nets, and then again in Melbourne, we were a bit hampered by the weather but got what we needed to get out of it.

I just think from the disappointment of that first game, it wasn't a huge disappointment because we know we can play good cricket, and I think to play good cricket in the two last games knowing you have to win to stay in the competition shows a bit about the character of the team but also the skill.

Q. You only gave Mark and Josh one over each in the powerplay. Was that in response to what we spoke about Monday, trying to improve that middle period?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: Yeah, a bit of that. The game is changing in the sense that sort of out of the powerplay to 14, 15 is a really important time to take wickets and attack. Because the wickets are good, a lot of teams are setting up to go big at the end, so you need to attack.

Simi came on in the powerplay and got a wicket. That was a key wicket. We're very lucky with the variation we have. George hasn't bowled much in this competition but could easily bowl. Curtis didn't have his best with the ball today, but he had a brilliant day the other day, and we're dovetailing quite nicely.

Yeah, I think all of them are flexible enough to know they could be used at any stage during the 20 overs.

Q. I think in your own innings on Wednesday you were trying to access the off side a lot more. You got a couple of boundaries away, but it got you out. Today you kind of went back to a strength of walking across and accessing that fine leg region. Was that a conversation you had, just go back to your biggest strength perhaps?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: I wouldn't say that it's something that I kind of focused on. I had a good hit with Gary Wilson yesterday and just stuck to what I'm good at;

stuck to the fundamentals. I'm not going to power teams out of the game with my strength and that, but I know that I've got strengths that can counter any bowling.

I wanted to get out of the blocks quick. I thought it was a slightly better wicket today than it was the last couple of games, so it gave me an opportunity to do that.

But I think just from my point of view, we wanted to get a solid start without any wickets or any panic, so we were able to do that.

Q. With the sort of chase you had, kind of an in between total, sometimes teams kind of meander, but you really went for it hard. Was that a conscious effort?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: Not really. Myself and Paul kind of spoke when we were about 20 or 30 for none, and we said to each other we hadn't really tried anything out of the ordinary and we managed to get there quite easily.

We knew if we just sort of settled and played strong shots, we'd get our value, and we did that. I'm not sure what the partnership was. It was maybe 60 or 70. But we got ourselves that total without any risk.

Like I said, these wickets, particularly in Hobart, are very good. You get your value shots, short, square the boundary, so we managed to capitalise when the ball was dropped short, both off side and leg side, and yeah, we stuck to that pretty well today.

Q. In terms of sort of the last summer you had, I know you kind of lost seven matches in a row, but you seem to be trying to play a more dynamic brand of cricket, so was it a case of ignoring the results and trusting the process and trying to get you to the stage where you are now?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: Yeah, it's been a big thing for us is not to worry too much about the results but just focus on our performance, because we were quite fortunate; in the summer we got to play against some of the best teams in the world. Playing our kind of old-school way wouldn't have been successful, but trying to play an exciting kind of brand of cricket, we can compete with them.

We ran South Africa and India pretty close, New Zealand in a one-day series. I know it's a different series, but certainly playing that way I think brings out the best in us.

We get a chance to play even better teams over the next two weeks. Hopefully we can continue to back ourselves. Even when our backs are against the wall like the other day, we came out fighting and played a certain way, and we won a game, and that's the way we want this team to play, win or lose.

Q. With the ball it seemed like there was kind of a conscious effort to make them hit to the longer side of the ground, especially with Gareth. Was that very much in your plans?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: Yeah, we kind of looked at the matchups, and Gareth is obviously bowling really well. His kind of leg spin with his pace match up pretty well against some of their lads.

All the bowlers are in a pretty good place at the moment. They work really hard with Ryan Eagleson, talking about the matchups of oppositions and teams we're about to play and stuff like that.

They're always thinking. I've always been the sort of captain to kind of let them decide as much as possible because it's on them at the end of the day. If they want to have a chat or think I have something to add, I'll do that, but I like to give them that space and back them to just set the fields for how they want to bowl.

Q. You mentioned the last 12 months, but if I could also ask you to look back at the last couple of tournaments, obviously you guys haven't always had the results you wanted. How much does this mean to you, and how important is it to go and play against some of those bigger teams?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: Yeah, I think -- I'm not sure, we haven't been into this round of the competition since 2009, yeah. So it is a big thing. The World Cups are changing. The 50-over game is changing. We haven't had much opportunities in those World Cups of late.

But I think certainly to be in this next phase against the best teams in the world in front of hopefully big crowds -- that crowd tonight were pretty amazing, albeit it it was most of our parents and wives and girlfriends just roaring their heads off. It was a pretty special day to be an Irish cricketer, and hopefully we can have many more of them over the next couple weeks.

Q. Is the fan base going to stay with you traveling?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: I hope so. My parents are retired, so I don't know why they wouldn't. But I think so. I think it's such a special place to tour.

Cricket is so popular here. I'm not sure of our schedule, but I'm sure we're going to be playing in some pretty amazing stadiums. These opportunities don't come around every year, so I know if I were in their position I'd be staying on for as long as possible.

Q. I know you've already answered something on Paul Stirling, but can I just ask you to expand on that. His World Cup record wasn't great before

today, but he really sort of stepped up. What do you see in him as a player, and how do you think it motivated him to perform on such a big stage?

ANDREW BALBIRNIE: I think he's such a -- he's definitely a senior member of this squad now with myself. We've played cricket together since we were nine. We know each other and our games inside out. We're very close off the pitch.

We knew how much this meant. We knew that we had the squad to definitely get through to the next stage, and last year there was that disappointment, but I'm not sure if we were playing the kind of cricket that warranted getting through to the next stage, whereas now I think we're in a lot better place as a team.

I think his knock was outstanding today. Obviously went quite hard in the powerplay and then just knocked it around for the rest of the innings and allowed Lorcan to play his game. Yeah, just a really classy chase.

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