

ICC T20 World Cup 2022

Friday, 21 October 2022

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Sydney Cricket Ground

New Zealand

Kane Williamson

Pre Match Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for joining us for this prematch press conference ahead of tomorrow's game, the opening match of the Super 12s, which is Australia versus New Zealand.

You will see that Kane is joining in a remote capacity today given the weather and the rain affected training session. It hampered some of New Zealand's time out on the field today, and therefore Kane is logging in via zoom only.

Without further ado, I will open the floor to questions, firstly from the room here in Sydney.

Q. Hi, Kane. The last time that you guys won in Australia in any format was over ten years ago. Does that play in your mind heading into this tournament?

KANE WILLIAMSON: No, we haven't thought too much about that. Obviously a lot of those clashes have been against Australia, a very strong side. You come here to world events, and you play a variety of opposition at all different grounds.

Yeah, for us it's just sticking to basics, the style of cricket that's important to us and looking forward to the tournament ultimately.

Q. Also, in the last T20 Final, the Aussies just got over the top of you. Is there any part of you that wants to seek revenge tomorrow?

KANE WILLIAMSON: I mean, it was a great game and obviously unfortunate for us not to be on the right side. Yeah, Australia were outstanding in that game.

Tomorrow, yeah, it's the first game of the tournament. Every team wants to start and get a little bit of momentum early as is always important in these sorts of short events.

Nice to play against Australia first up, and it should be a good game.

Q. Can you just give us an update on the fitness of a few of the guys. Is everyone available apart from



Daryl for tomorrow's game?

KANE WILLIAMSON: Yes. So Daryl's still unavailable and tracking nicely and very enthusiastic. Then everybody else is fit or fit enough.

Q. And just one on your general preparation. You have those Tri-Series matches back home. You've been hit a bit by the weather since you got here in Australia. Do you feel ready to go for tomorrow's game?

KANE WILLIAMSON: Preparation is always varied regardless of what happens, even if it's perfectly planned. It was nice to get those games in back home, some really competitive cricket, and then nice to be over here in Australia and get into some preparation.

Yeah, it is a balance between doing more and trying to make sure guys are fresh, and I suppose you factor in some of the uncontrollables. We've had a bit of weather and all that, as we have today as well.

It's good. The guys are really looking forward and excited for the start of the comp.

Q. Just on the weather, does the possibility of rain tomorrow night, a shorter match, actually change any plans as far as your 11 goes? If so, what is your 11 to start off if you've got it? Secondly, does it change your plans at all?

KANE WILLIAMSON: Yeah, for those reasons -- and we haven't seen the pitch either. It was covered all this morning. Yeah, we won't confirm an 11 just yet because, yeah, if it's short, then it will be likely to change.

So we just have to wait and see tomorrow much closer to the match and have a look at the pitch.

Q. If I can just go back to that record against Australia in Australia. Is there something you can put that down to? I know you say it's a strong side. Is there anything particularly you can put it down to? Secondly, does it become a bit of a mental hurdle in any way?

KANE WILLIAMSON: I mean, it certainly doesn't stop us trying to do our best and win regardless of whatever records are behind us.

They're a good team. They know the conditions well.

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They're very clinical at home and in most places that they play, which is a reflection of where they stand in the game.

So there is that respect. For us, we want to keep committing to what's important to our game. We know that we have a number of match winners throughout, and the team's looking forward to the comp.

We've had a number of good clashes over the years and a number of good series as well, and I guess most recently probably the last World Cup.

So it's nice to be here again in another world event, and the team's looking forward to that.

Q. Kane, just wondering with a lot of the rain that is predicted for tomorrow and throughout, how much have you been talking about shortened game scenarios? Does that come into your planning, and how does it come into your planning?

KANE WILLIAMSON: Yeah. I mean, naturally you prepare for a 20 over and then try and adjust to what's in front of you. Also with the weather that's been around, we'll need to see the pitch too in terms of what that might have done to the preparation of the pitch.

No doubt they're an experienced crew, and they'll be putting a lot of time into it, but mother nature often has to play the part.

There are a few factors to consider, and I suppose it's hard to preempt too many things until you turn up and actually have a bit of an understanding of what we're looking at. Yeah, I think it might be improving, the weather, so we'll have to wait and see.

Q. Just seeing the first round of games in Hobart and Geelong and just considering the boundary sizes in Australia and the fact we're in the early season, do you see defending totals becoming a thing -- a bigger thing this time around than in say the previous T20 World Cups that you've been a part of?

KANE WILLIAMSON: Yeah, there's a few things to look at there, and I suppose even matchups with teams against other teams as well, which will come into the decision.

Yeah, I think we saw in the last one that chasing was a big part of that, and it was dew and all these other bits and pieces that came into day games, night games, these sorts of world events. There's certainly nothing exact or concrete that you go into a tournament with, but you do have to adjust to what's in front of you, as a player, to the conditions and to the opposition and all the other bits and pieces that you have to factor in.

Yeah, I don't think there will be a hard rule with it. It will be just playing what's in front of you and making those adjustments quickly.

Q. Just in those games and some of the warmup games you've seen fast bowlers with the new ball, test match lens which often we don't see in T20 cricket elsewhere, does that bring the likes of you and Steve Smith and Virat Kohli and those kinds of batters into play a lot more where you'll have a certain role to play in these conditions?

KANE WILLIAMSON: Yeah, if it's swinging and seaming, then naturally that's a bit of something for the bowlers to exploit a little bit more, and we might see that early stages in the Aussie summer. We saw this in the qualifying matches and the warmup games as well. There were some fresh surfaces.

Yeah, we'll have to see. I think regardless of the style of player that you are, you're looking to play a role for the team and do your bit.

We'll just have to see really. I don't really know. We haven't seen the pitch yet, so it's hard to tell.

Q. Trent Boult has a pretty good record against Aaron Finch in big games, big ICC games. Finch has also struggled a little bit against left-armers. Is that a particular matchup that you're going off tomorrow?

KANE WILLIAMSON: He'll be bowling with the new ball, Trent, and I suppose Finchy will be opening. So I guess there's a likelihood that they'll come across each other.

But, yeah, same thing for us. We're looking to do our homework as best we can, but ultimately just commit to our plans that we want to do as a team and go out and play with that freedom with which you come to these sorts of events. There are match winners throughout, and Finchy is absolutely one of those, and so is Trent.

There will be a number of great contests throughout this tournament. Anybody can beat anybody. It certainly makes way for a pretty exciting event.

Q. I'm just wondering, you all play each other so much in various cricket competitions around the world. Is there anything new in the world of T20 cricket, or can you expect some surprises from some players that you may not know as well as others?

KANE WILLIAMSON: I think what we have seen with the T20 game is it's evolved cricket in the other formats, and it's certainly challenged players to improve and explore different options to try and get better and be effective in this format of the game.

We'll have to see, but it's come a long way since the T20 format started and where it is today. You almost start off with extremes and everybody's in a rush, then it sort of settles a little bit. Then you start seeing some pretty inventive cricket, whether it's batsmen switch hitting or it's bowlers looking to come up with some funky plans.

Yeah, it's been a pretty incredible journey, this T20 format, where players are always having to evolve to the challenges they're facing.

Q. Just to that end then, what's been the biggest evolution in New Zealand cricket over the last two years in terms of the way you approach T20 cricket?

KANE WILLIAMSON: I suppose as a team, it's been a constant effort to grow, get better. As a culture on our side, that's been a big change over a long period of time that's not specific to T20s, but it filters through.

You get guys coming in and really trying to do their bit for the side and put themselves -- express themselves and play with that freedom, which I think a reasonable culture can assist with. You see some pretty good stuff.

I guess for us it's continuing to try and encourage that, anybody that comes into the team. I guess it's hard to say one or two points because over a longer period of time the team changes and the support staff changes, so it's always really addressing what's kind of in front of you and trying to make sure you're gradually improving as a team and make sure you're never sort of sitting still.

Q. You've been playing these sort of tournaments for a long time now. Just wondering how your preparations changed over the years. Do you hit more balls or less balls in the nets from when you first started? Or how do you sort of prepare for a big event like this now?

KANE WILLIAMSON: That always varies really in terms of the time you might have had and the certain conditions you're in and wanting to make sure you're making those adjustments as quickly as possible.

For me, I do like to train and like to try and improve and evolve my game. That's something that's sort of within me a little bit, and that drives a few people up the wall, but it's something I enjoy.

But, yeah, you try and call upon your experience a little bit, as with other members in the team. Martin Guptill has played seven of these, so he's certainly been around a long time. I mean, it does just change a little bit, touch on some of the areas that are important to your game, and look to go and play with some freedom.

Q. We saw in the nets today that you had Steve O'Keefe there helping out a couple of guys in the

nets. I was just wondering what the thinking was behind getting Steve in and what he brings to the table.

KANE WILLIAMSON: Yeah, I think it was a mutual thing. I wasn't totally on top of it. Our coach, I think, knows Steve, and he was keen to come along. We have a number of spinners in our group that were keen to have a chat and knows these conditions as well as anybody.

So I think it was nice for them to have a few conversations with a very experienced spinner in this format, so a nice opportunity for him.

Q. I just have one question, your last game against Pakistan in the Tri-Series, and you ended up on the wrong side of the match. Speaking of Australia, then they also lost in the home conditions against England. So how are you looking ahead at things like will there be a moral advantage for New Zealand looking at Australia's recently lost in their home? How are you looking at things in different perspectives and different conditions because they're coming off assignment and you recently lost a series on home field.

KANE WILLIAMSON: All teams have played a lot of cricket recently, and I think everybody's won a few and lost a few. I think, when you come to these sorts of major events, the past is beneficial in some ways, but also you kind of start fresh. You sort of have a start and an end point to these events, so the focus changes.

You try and put your trust in what you do as a team and the match winners that you have and commit to what you're trying to do moving forward.

Yeah, it's a fickle game, and guys go out and try and certainly put their best foot forward. I'm sure we'll see that again tomorrow.

Q. It seems rare that you would have the ability to pick both of Adam Milne and Lockie Ferguson. Just through various reasons, they haven't been available much for T20 cricket. What goes into deciding who of those two you'll pick, and is there a chance that both of them play in the same match at all throughout this tournament?

KANE WILLIAMSON: I mean, it is great that both are fit and ready to go. Obviously both bring something slightly different.

Once again, we're going to have to look at conditions throughout this tournament. There's a chance obviously, they're both in the squad. Yeah, but at this stage, we haven't seen the pitch even for tomorrow's match, and we're going to have to get a bit of a feel for the conditions that we're faced with throughout the tournament.

Like you say, an exciting prospect with them both ready to go. It's been a little bit of a process to get to this stage, and it's nice to have them both on the squad.

Q. I just wanted to ask about how you're feeling about your form personally. Obviously injury has hampered your availability a little bit of late, but it looked like in that Tri-Series final, you really started to tee off. How much of a boost of confidence is that for you personally going into this tournament?

KANE WILLIAMSON: Yeah, it was nice to spend some time in the middle. It would have been nice to get on the right side of the result as a team. It was a great series to be a part of.

For me, it's just continuing to try to improve and add value where I can and try and make as big a contribution as I can to the team and my role.

So whatever that looks like. I guess we see in the T20 format it lends itself to sort of big hitting and all these other bits and pieces, but ultimately I think it's trying to assess what's in front of you.

I think we saw in the UAE for the last World Cup that the conditions weren't quite what we all expected and it required something a little bit different. We'll have to see what this tournament has in store for us as well.

THE MODERATOR: That wraps us up for time. Thank you very much for joining here and also on zoom.

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