

ICC T20 World Cup 2022

Friday, 21 October 2022

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Sydney Cricket Ground

Australia

Aaron Finch

Pre Match Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Thanks very much, everyone, for joining us ahead of this Australia versus New Zealand clash tomorrow, which is the first game of Super 12s.

Q. Cameron green comes into the squad, does he play straight away?

AARON FINCH: No, I don't think so. He's just arrived this morning in from Perth. He's come in as cover.

We've taken the risk and not gone with the extra keeper, which obviously had a degree of risk to it, but we feel as though Cam gives us a little bit better balance to the squad.

Q. Just what is the thinking about not bringing in a reserve keeper?

AARON FINCH: Matty Wade is very resilient, touch wood. We went through some numbers, and I think it's .5 of a percent chance that something's happened in the past in T20 cricket to a keeper that's ruled him out on the day of the game.

We feel as though, if something was to happen pregame and it ruled him out for the tournament, like at training or something, then there would still be enough time. That's the reason. It's definitely a risk, no doubt about that, but it's probably one we're prepared to take more so than covering a fastball, a batter, and an all-rounder. We feel that's a really crucial skill set.

Q. Just wanted to ask if you had a team and whether you have or haven't, are you going to open the batting?

AARON FINCH: Yes, I will open the batting, but we don't have a team just yet.

Q. Does the weather play a part in that? There's been a lot of rain around in the forecast tomorrow.

AARON FINCH: Yeah, you always play through your preparations trying to go through as many scenarios as you can to make sure, if it does come up, you're already planned and prepared for it and nothing catches you off



guard.

If there is rain around and the game shortens, that can dictate what you do with your team, but we're really confident that all the stuff that we've done in the lead-up to this, that there's enough bases that we can cover with our squad.

Q. Are you relieved to have reached this point, Aaron, where the next game is the first game of the World Cup for you?

AARON FINCH: Yeah, absolutely. It's been a hectic couple of months. We've been on the road quite a bit, and not too many -- I think one back-to-back game in the same spot, which is Canberra. There's been a lot of travel and stuff, but the last few days has been a chance for us to freshen up, and then we had a really long training session yesterday.

It went a bit longer with some drug testers around that kept guys back for a while, but that's unavoidable. It's really exciting to get into it. I think that we've always had one eye towards this, and now that it's here, it's exciting. No doubt there will be a few nerves around tomorrow as well.

Q. Can I ask what the question marks are over the team still? It seemed like for the last week you've got a pretty settled 11. Is it whether you play an extra spinner or because you haven't seen the pitch?

AARON FINCH: We saw it very briefly yesterday, and it looked on the dry side. We'll weigh all of that stuff up. We felt as though with the balance of the squad, we've got the option of playing two front line spinners. We've got the option of playing an extra all-rounder in Cam, which won't happen because he's flying in this morning.

Ashton Agar is there, Maxy is a really good role as well. I think that it just comes down to what we think is the best matchup for New Zealand, but also focusing on ourself and give ourselves the best chance to be successful. We'll sit down after training and go through that.

Q. What about your depth of games? Obviously you guys have spoken about how maybe your warmup games or the series you've had lately weren't the highest intensity. But are you confident with where you're at in a game chasing runs? That seems to be where you've lost a few games the past couple of weeks.

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AARON FINCH: Yeah, there's been a few times. It probably goes across both white ball formats of the game that we tend to have been in really good positions and we let the games slip out of our grasp.

I've got huge confidence in No. 4, 5, 6, 7, to be able to do that role. We saw the importance of playing seven batters last World Cup and having Wadey, a seriously good batsman, at No. 7 to be able to do that job.

There's times where you're going to be in trouble, and we backed that lower order and middle order to get us out of trouble if need be or put a bit of icing on the cake if things go really well at the top of the order.

It just comes down to being as well prepared as we can, and I think that we are. There's not too many bases we haven't ticked off. I think overall there's an opportunity for us to be really confident going into this even though the last few games haven't been probably as clinical as we've seen.

I think going into a World Cup having a good amount of experience on a squad is crucial.

Q. I just wanted to ask you about facing left-armers like how you've gone against them this year.

AARON FINCH: You tell me. You would have done all the numbers on that.

Q. I might have. Obviously you know Trent is going to be there waiting for you. I think Kane Williamson said it on the presser before. It's obviously no secret.

AARON FINCH: I would be very surprised if he wasn't.

Q. As part of the technical stuff you worked on since last World Cup, has facing a left-armer been a big part of that?

AARON FINCH: A little bit. One thing you don't get access to a huge amount -- we've obviously got the inventory here who can throw and stick left-handed, but it's just about doing it more and more.

Trent is an unbelievable bowler. He has been for 10 or 12 years now. So when you open the batting, you've got to get out to someone eventually. He probably has my number, no doubt. I still feel as though I've still got a really solid game plan. I think there's some technical things that I can do to a left-armer that can help that.

I think at times I've probably been a little bit more negative towards left-armed bowlers. You almost bat trying not to get out as opposed to being really proactive. So there's all that to consider and take into tomorrow.

Q. You're pretty confident, once you're there tomorrow, and get through the first ball, you've gotten rid of that those technical thoughts? You're just thinking about batting?

AARON FINCH: Yeah, just batting, just watch the ball, is all you can control. I think, when you make some small technical changes under pressure, which is generally the first five to ten balls, your technique generally falls back to what you've done for, in my case, the best part of 30 years, and your footwork patterns remain pretty similar.

As soon as you start thinking about that as the ball is running in, you're dead. You've got no chance because your mind's clouded. You're not paying 100 percent attention to the ball. So, yeah, I'm confident that, when we walk out tomorrow, I'll be ready to go.

Q. Aaron, there are a few unknowns about T20 cricket in Australia, right? Not many big names have come and played in the league in the last few years. Just the natural chance of Australia, I guess the bigger boundaries, the pitches, do you see them playing a specific role in this tournament, or will it just be T20 cricket like it is everywhere else?

AARON FINCH: I think most teams are pretty flexible and pretty adaptable to playing a couple of different ways. There are some guys who are serious power hitters who don't take any boundary into consideration because they know, if they get it out of the middle, it's probably going to go for six anyway.

It's probably the guys through middle order who, when you're playing in places like England where the grounds are a bit smaller, where they're small and fast, that you can get away with a flier early in the innings.

There's still a couple of places you can do that here in Australia. There's going to be one short-side tomorrow, 62 meters, and 72 the other side. The gap, you can get away with a bit of a fly because it's so open and you get a bit of pace on the ball.

So there's still places where all game styles will be effective. I think that's what makes T20 a great game. There's so much strategy, but the fundamentals are still there.

Q. Australia go in as favourites, defending champions and home conditions and all that. Just the fact that even in Hobart and Geelong, Jason Holder said you can focus on test match lengths with the new ball and knock a few over in those first six overs. Does that make you even stronger considering you have your test attack in the seam attack anyway?

AARON FINCH: Yeah, I think with the new ball it can go one of two ways. You can be really disciplined and precise as we feel our attack with Josh Hazlewood, who takes the new ball, for example, that's his bread and butter. Then you've also got guys that rely on somewhat variation. Sometimes it's natural variation. Sometimes it's their action is slightly off and the ball comes out at different speeds, and that can be effective as well.

I think there's a lot of different ways you can play cricket in Australia, and that's the beauty of it. You get such varied conditions from the east to the west, even north in Brisbane to the south down in Melbourne or Hobart.

I think there's so many variables that come into it, that the team that wins the competition will be a really well rounded team and a team that can adapt quicker to changing conditions all the time.

Q. Will you have Mitchell Marsh available as a bowling option tomorrow?

AARON FINCH: Good question. He had a really good, solid bowl yesterday, and from all reports at this stage, he pulled out really well. So we're hoping to, yeah.

Q. I just had a question about the rain. Andrew McDonald said yesterday it is something you do discuss in the lead-up to matches if there's rain forecast. If you go into the game tomorrow night knowing that it will be shortened, is there anyone outside of your likely 11 who comes into consideration then? I mean, is there a strategy around certain players, if you've got a shortened match?

AARON FINCH: Probably it's just more shuffling the batting order, I would think. We've got some power all the way through our order, so we feel as though you can probably map out how an opposition's going to bowl or use their resources a little bit more so you can try and get the match on or the matchups in your favour as much as you can.

Like I said earlier, you do put so much time and effort into planning for all scenarios. Yeah, you have to be flexible. And the thing about rain affecting the game, how much affected, if it's two overs, doesn't make that much of a difference. If it's a five over game, that makes a huge amount of difference.

I think even now, which I didn't know until we played in India, you can have a game where you only need to use four bowlers compared to the five. That caught me off guard in that game, it was eight overs, and they said you only have to use four bowlers. I was a bit surprised.

Then it's a tradeoff. Do you play an extra batter knowing you probably won't use that resource that far down the

order? Or do you play an extra bowler and maybe not using them as well? So that's a good question.

We've gone through a lot of that stuff, and I think most times you would stick with the 11 that you feel leading into the game is best suited for the conditions and that opposition. So plenty to think about, though.

Behind the scenes, all them discussions have happened, and you try not to talk to the players a huge amount about what if this happens or what if that happens. We try and make it as open as we can in terms of everyone being really flexible in regards to their role throughout the order and what might change throughout a 20 over game.

So everyone's really accustomed to changing things up at the last minute.

Q. First of all, Aaron, should golf be banned before a major tournament?

AARON FINCH: That was a freak accident. I was playing in Josh's group, and I feel so bad for him because we all -- Maxy had played his shot, and then Josh hit. We didn't realize the club broke. We just thought he hit it poorly, and we looked down, and there was blood everywhere.

So that was a freak accident. His clubs must have gotten damaged while travelling or something like that. But it was pretty distressing for a little bit, especially with all the unknowns. When we got the news there was no tendon damage or anything, that was a big relief.

Disappointed he missed out on another opportunity to be part of the squad for the World Cup.

Q. Is he okay within himself? How was he?

AARON FINCH: He was obviously a little distressed with it. It was just like the unknown because there was so much blood and stuff there we wouldn't really see the wound. We could see it was deep, but not a huge amount.

Yeah, he was obviously pretty flat. World Cup is a pretty special event, and for him to now be missing out of our 15 is disappointing for Josh and especially for the rest of the group because he's such a great guy. He brings a lot of energy to our squad.

Throughout the last World Cup as well, he was an integral part of -- I mean, he didn't play, but the off-field team as well, which is as much -- as important as on field at times because it keeps the group together a lot.

Q. Just wanted to ask you about Kane Richardson. Probably a bit over a year ago he might have been

seen by some as Australia's most valuable T20 quick bowler. Do you expect to see him play? What sort of circumstances might you decide to play Kane?

AARON FINCH: We saw in Brisbane when he took the new ball he was having to move it around a little bit. He's got some really good skills with the new ball.

But I think over the last decade he comes into his own in the middle part of the innings when guys are looking to attack him. He's been really unfortunate at different times to pick up at the wrong time when he would have got a really good run at games. He came off a really brilliant 100 competition where he came in off an injury and performed unbelievably well.

For him, he's so versatile he can cover any part of the 20 overs, which is such a strong position to be in with our squad.

Q. It's been over a decade since New Zealand beat Australia in Australia in any form of the game. Do you feel like you have an edge over them?

AARON FINCH: I wouldn't say that. Their World Cup record over the last five or six World Cups has been unbelievable. They're a great side with a great mix of experience, youth as well. They're led unbelievably well. They've got world class players all throughout their 11 -- or throughout their 15.

You can never ever take any team lightly, and we're seeing how close all teams are in this competition, even through the qualifiers. The teams are so close, and the gaps -- well, the margins in T20 cricket are so fine that any person on their day can take the game away from the opposition.

You just have to be really mindful of that and hope you're on the right side of it each time.

Q. It's been less than a year since you guys won the last World Cup. What did you learn from that, and how much do you take from that about how to approach a long tournament like this?

AARON FINCH: Well, it's quite a quick tournament actually compared to last time because there was no travel or anything last time. So I think it was four days between games with no travel days, which makes a big difference.

This tournament we go from here in Sydney to Perth to Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide. So we're all over the place, which takes obviously one day out of your recovery and preparation and stuff.

I'm feeling really confident about our squad, where we're at at the moment. But T20 cricket, you need a bit of luck

as well, and what we learnt from the last World Cup was, if the team's got real good relief, that that goes a long way, and it rubs off on each other.

It's unmeasurable in terms of stats or anything like that, but the belief in the group was unbelievably high last year when nobody gave us any chance at all.

Within our change rooms, we had a huge confidence that we were good enough on our day to beat anyone. Yeah, we feel as though we've still got that belief.

Q. If that 0.5 percent chance were to be ruled out on the day, who would take the gloves?

AARON FINCH: Probably Davie Warner, I would think. He did a little bit of practise yesterday. Myself, maybe I could do it. Maybe captaining and keeping when you haven't done it before is a little bit tougher. Maybe Mitchell Starc can bowl a few up front, take the gloves through the middle, and then bowl again at the end. It's a good question.

Probably Davie, to be honest. And like I said, that's a risk that we're prepared to take at the moment.

Q. So did you have the gloves on a bit yesterday?

AARON FINCH: I certainly didn't. No, I didn't. My knees and everything are getting a little bit old for keeping, I reckon.

Q. The squad is fairly similar to last year. The big change is probably at the top with the coach. Is it a different atmosphere or preparation or how you've gone about preparing given you've got a new boss?

AARON FINCH: Yeah, we've probably been a little bit more flexible in the lead-up to the tournament in terms of making sure that guys have had enough exposure but also enough experience in certain positions should that come up in the tournament.

That's why Greeny, for example, opened the batting a couple of extra times throughout the West Indies series because we just felt as though, if something was to happen to myself or Davie at the top of the order, whether he could come in, whether Smithy could open the batting, Maxy's done it his last game against England, and he's done it a few times in various T20 comps and for Australia.

It's just trying to make sure we've got all bases covered so if there was to be an injury, that it's not catastrophic to the structure of the team and you're not trying to reshape the whole team around one position. It can just be a straight swap, or it might be two positions, but you're not throwing the baby out with the bath water to redo it.

That's been a real good part of it, and everyone's been really open about that, and all the players have been on the same journey as well. That makes it easier to do when you're honest with people.

But knowing in the back of our mind what we thought our 11 might look like in the lead-up to this game.

Q. You said last time no one really gave you guys a chance. You were the underdogs. This time there's a greater external pressure. Do you approach it differently? Do you feel that pressure? Do you block it out? Do you thrive off of it?

AARON FINCH: No, we don't -- well, I certainly haven't read anything or listened to anything about anything external because you can't control that. If you allow yourself to be wrapped up in it, then you're not focusing 100 percent on what's right in front of you, and that's really important for our team.

If you look back, if you look down at our list, we've got guys who are really instinctive and proactive in T20 cricket. So you never want to take that away by putting 1 percent of doubt in anybody's mind or taking the focus off anything.

We actually spoke the other day about what we wanted the environment to be if you take winning out of the equation because every team wants to win. That's a given. In professional sport, every team wants to win. So what does our environment look like if you take that off the table?

That's really important that we just play in the moment, enjoy the ride because it's a really tough competition and you're going to have to be at your best. Don't allow yourself to be dragged down or your focus to be shifted from what's right in front of you.

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