



England v India
T20 World Cup semi-final, Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai
Tomorrow, 1.30pm
TV: Sky Sports

tomorrow afternoon. Not so long ago, an England team would probably have approached such a big game in subcontinental conditions with trepidation. Indeed just over a year ago, in Brendon McCullum's first assignment as white-ball coach, they were beaten heavily by India in seven out of eight T20s and ODIs.

But since arriving in Sri Lanka in mid-January, this team have racked up 11 wins in 13 matches and have an even more impressive record at extricating themselves from difficult situations. They have adjusted nimbly to a variety of opponents and pitch conditions, and keep coming out on top.

What has also cemented belief in this group is the fact that almost all of them have experience of playing in the Indian Premier League (IPL), a tournament that exposes its participants to high pressure and accustoms them to huge, partisan crowds. Of England's most likely XI, which would include Jamie Overton returning for Rehan Ahmed, only Liam Dawson has not played in the IPL.

"This is what the last six weeks have been building for. We're hugely confident," Curran said. "India are a quality side but we've played a lot of cricket here and we're not fearing anything."

"Flying to Mumbai from Sri Lanka, you think about your dreams as a kid and it'd probably be taking on India in India."

"It's such an amazing experience. It'll probably start with the national anthems. It will be so loud. We've played so much cricket in India, you get used to it and can block it out."

"We're very prepared for what the crowd's going to be like. If the crowd are silent, England are probably going to be doing well. There's going to be no secrets in terms of what each team will throw at each other — it's just on the night who handles the occasion and adapts to the conditions the quickest. There's no hiding in cricket these days."

"Non-subcontinent teams have adapted really well to the conditions thrown at them [but] we all know how to play on these grounds and what to expect. The IPL, no question, has helped a lot."

"India are a very strong side but with our plans, and the way we're going to be nice and positive, hopefully it's enough to beat them."

"The clear message from Baz [McCullum] and Brookie [Harry Brook, the captain] has been to embrace this opportunity. If we can all come good, we'll be an extremely dangerous side to beat. We're hugely confident. I feel like I'm one of those guys who will be really excited and bringing out all I can for everyone."

Curran was the player of the tournament when England last won the T20 World Cup, in Australia in 2022, and has a deserved reputation as a big-match player.

Before that tournament, England prepared with a seven-match T20 series in Pakistan, and the build-up games this time in Sri Lanka have been equally valuable in helping everyone settle into their specific roles. It has been a stark contrast to how the red-ball team approached the recent Ashes tour, and another reminder — if one was needed — that there is no substitute for game time leading into a big event.

Jofra Archer, Jos Buttler and Will Jacks have all had spells with Mumbai Indians and know the Wankhede Stadium well. Curran, 27, has played at the stadium many times with England and for visiting IPL sides. Indian grounds are typically small and this one, which holds 33,000, is no exception. With its red soil, it tends to offer a little turn, but bowlers need to be on top of their game if they are to escape punishment.

"We've got a lot of people who love playing here," Curran added. "I've played Mumbai Indians many times in the IPL. It's a very challenging ground to be a bowler and I expect a really high-scoring game. There's not many unknowns for us. We've got two days of training to get used to the surroundings and the dimensions of the ground."

Curran was speaking shortly before England began their afternoon training session, during which Brook seemed to adjust to the dimensions of the ground just fine as he deposited one hit on to the roof of the Sachin Tendulkar Stand, a mighty blow.

This is the third successive T20 World Cup at which England and India have met at the semi-final stage and although India came out on top in Guyana in 2024, England are taking great heart from their ten-wicket demolition of the same opposition in front of a big crowd of Indian fans in Adelaide four years ago.

"Everyone's been asking, when are England going to play the perfect game?" Curran added. "That was our perfect game."

Africa's captain hit an unbeaten 86 from 44 balls to steer his side to a seven-wicket win when they met in the group stage

Curran: England have nothing to fear against India

Simon Wilde



Mumbai

Sam Curran says England are "not fearing anything" about their T20 World Cup semi-final against India, the team ranked No 1 in the world, at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai

Tottenham make formal complaint

Peter Rutzler

Tottenham Hotspur have written to the referees' chief Howard Webb to raise concerns about inconsistent officiating, notably during their defeats by Arsenal and Fulham.

Tottenham lost those matches 4-1 and 2-1 respectively, but similar incidents resulted in contrasting decisions that went against them in each game. During the defeat by Arsenal, the forward Randal Kolo Muani had a goal ruled out for pushing Gabriel in the back.

On Sunday, Fulham's opening goal, scored by Harry Wilson, was allowed to stand despite the Fulham striker Raúl Jiménez appearing to push the Spurs defender Radu Dragusin in the build-up. In both cases, VAR did not intervene, and a statement from the Premier

League Match Centre — which gives clarifications from the VAR hub at Stockley Park — said it "deemed the contact by Jiménez on Dragusin did not meet the threshold for a foul".

It is understood that Tottenham are confused by the inconsistency, and highlighted other incidents in their correspondence to Webb, the Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL) chief refereeing officer. In December, during their 2-1 defeat by Liverpool, Hugo Ekitike scored, despite having put two hands on the back of Cristian Romero while competing for the ball in the air.

Igor Tudor, the Tottenham head coach, vented his fury about the referee Thomas Bramall's decision at Craven Cottage. "Of course it's a foul, 99 out of 100 people will say it's a foul," Tudor said. "Sometimes the criteria don't have consistency. Last week what happened in our game against Arsenal, same thing, also one situation before, we conceded a goal, they didn't get a foul after they gave [the goal]. Incredible."

Tottenham have now gone ten league games without a win and sit just four points above the relegation zone.

PGMOL and Tottenham have not commented.

Waine strikes to earn Port Vale shot at Sunderland

Only 72 hours before the start of the FA Cup's fifth round, the New Zealand striker Ben Waine scored the extra-time goal against Bristol City that ensured Port Vale will be the lowest-ranked team left in the competition when they face Sunderland on Sunday (Ian Whittell writes).

He raced onto a pass from Andre Gray, an FA Cup finalist with Watford in 2019, and rounded goalkeeper Joe Lumley before converting the 112th-minute winner from a tight angle.

The 1-0 victory in the delayed fourth-round tie took League One's bottom club through to the last 16 for the first time in 30 years and left disgruntled City fans chanting "this is embarrassing" on a miserable night for the Championship club.

Port Vale had the best three chances of the first half and all of them fell to Waine, who saw his best effort blocked by Lumley. Bristol City were better in the second half with half-chances for Sinclair Armstrong and Max Bird. After Waine struck in extra time, Mark Sykes miskicked a simple chance to equalise in the last minute.

CONTINUED FROM BACK ARTETA defends set-piece tactics

a harder line on the grabbing and wrestling that has become common between players in the penalty area while waiting for deliveries from corners and free kicks.

"I would like to play with three extra players in my half to get some beautiful football and always play against a free man," Arteta said. "[If] you want to watch that football, you have to go to a different country, because in the Premier League, for the last two or three seasons, this is not the case."

"It's going to be a different game unless we change the rules because the evolution of the game is that. Four years ago it was a completely different game."

Arteta claimed his rivals work just as hard on scoring from set pieces,

Arteta suggested that fans would need to go abroad to watch "beautiful" football

which have increasingly been a key weapon for Arsenal in the past three seasons. Arteta's team have scored 24 goals from corners, including both in a 2-1 win against Chelsea on Sunday, and 32 from set pieces in all competitions this season so far.

Chelsea equalised through a corner at the Emirates Stadium — Piero Hincapié headed Reece James's delivery into his own goal — and have scored 19 goals from set pieces this season themselves.

Pep Guardiola said that his Manchester City side, who face Nottingham Forest tonight, have been forced to spend a bigger chunk of their

time in training on set pieces, although he does not get involved in the coaching of free kicks or corners himself.

"I don't have much time [to do it]," Guardiola said.

"When I was a young boy, we said the people in England celebrate corners and free kicks like a goal. So nothing has changed in that way."

