

# India go for history in showdown in Dubai

## Sharma's clinical side heavy favourites to secure record third Champions Trophy

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**Reuters**

India are heavy favourites to claim a record third Champions Trophy in Dubai today but Rohit Sharma's men face a New Zealand side with plenty of firepower in the first major white-ball cricket final between the teams in a quarter of a century.

India, who refused to play in host nation Pakistan, have been clinical to win all four of their matches in the United Arab Emirates, including a 44-run group-stage victory over the Black Caps last weekend.

The 2002 and 2013 champions excelled on pitches offering turn, while the batting group led by Virat Kohli produced masterful run chases in victories over Bangladesh, Pakistan and Australia.

India are on the verge of back-to-back International Cricket Council trophies following last year's Twenty20 World Cup triumph but coach Gautam Gambhir is focused only on today.

"We know we're a good one-day side. The most important thing is the way we've played throughout this competition," he said. "The hunger, the commitment and the eagerness to try to do something special for the country is always there."

With Mohammed Shami filling in superbly for injured pacer Jasprit Bumrah, and all-rounder Hardik Pandya offering valuable batting depth, Rohit was delighted with the form of key players going into the title decider.

"All of these guys have made an impact whenever they've got an opportunity and that gives us a lot of confidence."

Despite their flawless displays in Dubai, India will not take anything for granted against New Zealand, who beat them by four wickets in the final of the 2000 event when it was named the ICC KnockOut Trophy.

New Zealand master batter Kane Williamson said his side had every chance of derailing India in a major final once again.

"Obviously it was a long time ago and a great victory for our country," said Williamson, whose side also stunned India in the World Test Championship title clash four years ago.

"Here, now, lots of things are different ... but it is an exciting opportunity for us. It was a great atmosphere in the last game and I'm sure it'll be a good one again."

New Zealand head into the match having thumped South Africa in the semi-final after registering the highest Champions Trophy total of 362 for six, with Rachin Ravindra and Williamson scoring centuries.

Their spin unit of captain Mitchell Santner, Michael Bracewell, Glenn Phillips and Ravindra could cause problems for India.

The Black Caps hope to have Matt Henry fully fit after the pace bowler injured his shoulder against South Africa.