

## New Zealand gears up for tough final against India in Dubai



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RKI Network

DUBAI: New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner expects a hard-fought ICC Champions Trophy final against India on Sunday, with Dubai's slower pitch set to play a key role in the contest.

India, unbeaten in the tournament, have played all their matches at the Dubai International

Stadium, while New Zealand advanced after a strong semi-final win over South Africa in Lahore.

The Black Caps, however, struggled in their last group match against India, losing by 44 runs at the

same venue.

“Finals cricket is different, but we’ve played well to get here,” Santner said upon arriving in Dubai.

“India knows the conditions well, but our last game here will help us prepare.”

Dubai’s surfaces contrast with Pakistan’s high-scoring tracks, where New Zealand posted a tournament-record 362-6 in the semi-final. Santner acknowledged the shift in conditions, expecting a “scrappy” game with slower bowling-friendly conditions.

Despite the demanding travel schedule between Pakistan and the UAE, Santner insists his squad has adapted well. “It’s part of the challenge, and the guys understand it’s the reality of modern cricket,” he said.

New Zealand’s batting strength has been key, with Rachin Ravindra hitting his second century of the tournament in the semi-final and captain Kane Williamson adding a crucial 102.

“Our tri-series in Pakistan helped players find form, and now we have good momentum heading into the final,” Santner added. “The team is excited and ready for the challenge.”

New Zealand, aiming for their first Champions Trophy title, will have to overcome an in-form Indian side to lift the trophy.