

## India and New Zealand set for high-stakes Champions Trophy final



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Dubai is set to witness an electrifying Champions Trophy final on Sunday as India and New Zealand clash in their first major white-ball final in 25 years. India, chasing a record third title, enters as the favorite after an unbeaten run in the UAE, with dominant performances led by Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and a formidable bowling attack featuring Mohammed Shami and all-rounder Hardik Pandya.

India's campaign has been defined by clinical execution, including a 44-run group-stage victory over New Zealand. Their ability to handle spin-friendly conditions and execute masterful run chases against Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Australia gives them an edge. However, head coach Gautam Gambhir remains focused, emphasizing the team's hunger and commitment to delivering another ICC title following last year's T20 World Cup win.

New Zealand, known for their resilience, is ready to challenge India's dominance. Skipper Kane Williamson believes his side can replicate past successes, recalling their 2000 Champions Trophy final victory and 2021 World Test Championship triumph over India. Their confidence is bolstered by a record 362-6 total against South Africa in the semi-finals, with Rachin Ravindra and Williamson in prime form. Their spin unit, led by Mitchell Santner and Michael Bracewell, could prove crucial against India's batting depth.

While India holds the advantage with familiarity of Dubai conditions, New Zealand's adaptability and fighting spirit ensure a thrilling contest. The toss may play a crucial role, with past matches favoring teams batting second. Shubman Gill emphasized India's balanced approach, stating the team remains hungry for the title but without the desperation that once clouded high-pressure games.

With history, form, and high stakes at play, cricket fans can expect a fiercely contested battle for the prestigious Champions Trophy.