

Williamson to lead New Zealand in England Test series

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson to make Test return against England next month

● **New Zealand name 20-player squad for England Tests**

AFP | Wellington

New Zealand named a fit-again Kane Williamson as captain of their enlarged squad for the Test series in England, where he will hope the triumphs of a year earlier can be repeated.

An elbow injury sidelined captain Williamson from both of his country's recent home series draws against Bangladesh and South Africa.

The world class batsman has not played for New Zealand since November but returned to the crease last week for his Indian Premier League side, Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Williamson is relishing the chance to lead a 20-strong squad in England which features four players uncapped in the longest form.

The three-Test series falls a year after New Zealand beat the



Kane Williamson reacts during a training session (file photo)

English on home soil for the first time in more than 20 years.

Immediately after last year's series, the New Zealanders remained in England to beat India in the one-off inaugural Test World Championship final in Southampton.

"Playing Test cricket in England is always something quite special and we know the challenge is fierce," Williamson said.

"It's one of those places where conditions are unique. It's great

to play them in their back yard. "Our Test team's been fairly strong in terms of its consistency as a group for a while, so (the prospect of new players) is certainly something to be excited about."

Backup wicketkeeper Cam Fletcher has not played in any format for New Zealand while three players -- allrounder Michael Bracewell and seamers Blair Tickner and Jacob Duffy -- have played in shortened for-

”
Playing Test cricket in England is always something quite special and we know the challenge is fierce. It's one of those places where conditions are unique. It's great to play them in their back yard

KANE WILLIAMSON

mats only.

There is a recall for top-order batsman Hamish Rutherford, who has not played a Test for seven years.

Ajaz Patel also returns, having been ignored during the home summer on seamer-friendly pitches.

The left-arm spinner's last Test was in the loss to India in Wankhede five months ago, when he became the third player to take 10 wickets in an innings.

Williamson is among five players involved in the IPL who are unlikely to be involved in

YOU KNOW WHAT
Spinner Ajaz Patel, who is one of only three players to have taken 10 wickets in a test innings, will return for the three-test tour to England

two warmup matches -- at Hove (May 20-23) and Chelmsford (May 26-29).

The squad will be reduced to 15 ahead of the first Test against England, starting at Lord's on June 2.

Of the 15 players from the World Test Championship final squad, 13 are returning to England.

The exceptions are batsman Ross Taylor and wicketkeeper BJ Watling, who have both retired.

‘Devastated’ Rangers target Europa League final after death of kitman



Giovanni van Bronckhorst gives instructions during a training session (file photo)

AFP | London

Giovanni van Bronckhorst said yesterday he trusted in the character of his Rangers players as they seek to overturn a Europa League semi-final deficit against RB Leipzig while mourning the death of their kitman.

The death of the popular and long-serving Jimmy Bell at the age of 69 was announced by the Scottish club on Tuesday as the players were preparing for the second leg of their tie at Ibrox.

"Yesterday wasn't about keeping the spirits high," said the Rangers boss, whose side lost the first leg in Germany 1-0.

"We were all shocked by the news that Jimmy passed away, it was a hard day for all of us.

Leicester aim to write 'another chapter' against Roma in Euro semi

AFP | London

Leicester boss Brendan Rodgers says the club are attempting to write "another chapter" in their story as they prepare to face Roma with a place in the Europa Conference League final at stake.

The Foxes, who shocked the football world by winning the Premier League in 2016 under Claudio Ranieri, last season won the FA Cup for the first time in their history.

They travel to Italy on Thursday locked at 1-1 after last week's semi-final first leg against Jose Mourinho's men.

Rodgers, whose team dropped into the Conference League after failing to progress from the Europa League group stage, said yesterday he had been trying to create a "winning mentality" at the club, who have struggled in the Premier League this season.

"For some players they have to adapt to that," he said. "It takes time and these are experiences you want the players to learn from. It's something they are hungry for and we are all hungry to succeed.

"This is another chapter of the story. Our main objective is to keep the story of this club going, like we did in the FA Cup. We wanted to be the winners for the first time and we wanted that to be an objective in this competition as well."

Long-serving goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel vowed not to settle for second best with Leicester on the brink of their first European final.



Brendan Rodgers looks on during a training session (file photo)

”
This is another chapter of the story. Our main objective is to keep the story of this club going, like we did in the FA Cup. We wanted to be the winners for the first time and we wanted that to be an objective in this competition as well

BRENDAN RODGERS

He said: "It's a European trophy. Every one is important, every competition you can win is important. I don't play football to finish fourth, fifth or sixth. You do it for the occasions regardless of competitions."

BETTER YOU KNOW
Leicester dropped into the Conference League after failing to progress from the Europa League group stage

"It's about winning trophies. That's what fans and players look back on, those moments when you get to lift trophies.

"The infrastructure of the club is in place to be successful. If we were to reach the final, that's sustained success over a period of time in terms of finals reached and trophies won."

Raducanu hopeful of Rome appearance despite back trouble

● **Raducanu saw 5 per cent chance of beating Kalinina in Madrid Open**

AFP | Madrid

Emma Raducanu revealed she has been dealing with back pain and "some niggles" throughout the week in Madrid but is not too concerned any injury will keep her out of next week's tournament in Rome.

The British world number 11 suffered a tight 6-2, 2-6, 6-4 defeat to Ukrainian Anhelina Kalinina on Tuesday and said her back was restricting her from moving wide on the court in the opening set.

Raducanu received some treatment for her back and managed to move better as she levelled the match and forced a decider and says she leaves Madrid feeling positive about her game and progress on clay.

"I would have given myself a five percent chance of winning that match, and for it to almost happen, I think that was a positive thing," said the US Open champion.

"I was kind of struggling a bit with my back, to be honest. Throughout the week I have been carrying some niggles, and it's kind of just taking its toll, all of the matches at this kind of level.

"I think that's a good thing that I feel like I'm going through this and my body is building with each match I play."



Britain's Emma Raducanu serves against Anhelina Kalinina, of Ukraine

”
I was kind of struggling a bit with my back, to be honest. Throughout the week I have been carrying some niggles, and it's kind of just taking its toll, all of the matches at this kind of level

EMMA RADUCANU

Raducanu played her first ever tour-level tournament on clay just last month in Stuttgart and her Madrid was just her second outing on the surface.

The talented teenager came agonisingly close to reaching the quarter-finals at the Caja Magica and gave credit to Kalinina, who has now knocked

out Grand Slam champions in each of her three matches so far this tournament.

"I'm feeling pretty positive. A lot of the time with me it's just overload and then three days', two, three days' complete rest and I'm okay to start training again," added Raducanu.

"Hopefully the plan right now is to still go to Rome."

Kalinina, ranked 37 in the world, is through to the first WTA 1000 quarter-final of her career. The 25-year-old Ukrainian was full of praise for Raducanu, who saved 7 of 12 break points against her.

"I think she's super talented, she's amazing, she moves excellent, she has good hands, good feeling," Kalinina said of Raducanu.

"She's covering all the court and she's playing good angles. She has all the shots, that's why it's so tough to play her."