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A Thread about the best test batsmen 1/25
#India #Aus #NZ #Stats #Cricket

A #statistical breakdown

Kane Williamson: 7115 runs @ 54.31, 24x100s
Virat Kohli: 7318 runs @ 53.41, 27x100s
Steve Smith: 7368 runs @ 61.91, 27x100s

Smith here has the best average by a fair way.

But the joy of cricket is in its intricacies so let's dive a little deeper. At home the 3 batsmen are absolute run machines.

Kane Williamson: 3788 runs @ 65.31 13x100s
Virat Kohli: 3558 runs @ 68.42 13x100s
Steve Smith: 3485 runs @ 68.33 14x100s

Here their statistics are very similar.

However it is worth noting how hard it is to bat in each of these countries. These figures reflect the average runs of each players team mates in the last 10 years.

Australia: 44.27 runs/wicket
New Zealand: 42.28
India: 44.17

These numbers would suggest that it is slightly harder for New Zealanders to bat in New Zealand. However, the quality of batsmen from New Zealand is definitely lower than the other two countries in the last decade, despite recent improvements.

The class of a batsman is often determined by their record away from home. So how do the stats add up in this regard?
Kane Williamson: 2680 runs @ 42.53 with 9x100s

Virat Kohli: 3760 runs @ 44.23 with 14x100s
Steve Smith: 3609 runs @ 60.15 with 13x100s

Here we can see that Steve Smith is clearly the superior batsmen, averaging nearly the same away as he does for the rest of his career. Kohli has more hundreds than Smith but he has taken 48 tests to score 14 hundreds compared to Smith who has taken 35 tests to score his 13.

However, these stats do not totally reflect the complete statistics of one of these batsmen. Since 2016 Williamson has only toured two countries. Sri Lanka and Australia and it's fair to say that he didn't have the best of times, averaging a measely 11.57 away from home in 2019.

However, every great player is allowed an off season. In 2020 Kohli averaged 19.33 in New Zealand and Australia between 3 tests and Smith only averaged 23.66 in 2018 between 3 tests against south Africa.

Kane Williamson is the youngest of the three players at 30 and all three players should just be entering the prime run making years of their careers. At their best away from all three have managed to dominate at different periods in their careers.

If we change the statistics to only reflect the runs made since 2014, removing the younger years of each of the batsmen away from home the numbers change for both Kane Williamson and Steve Smith.

Kane Williamson: 18 tests, 1578 runs @ 54.41 6x100s
Virat Kohli: 37 tests, 2898 runs @ 44.58 11x100s
Steve Smith: 25 tests, 2834 runs @ 65.90 11x100s

Once again we can see that Steve Smith has clearly the best statistics of the three, but Kane Williamsons statistics improve drastically, reflecting the fact that he started his international career at the age of 20, at least a year younger than when Smith or Kohli were.

In this period, all three players have had at least three years where they have truly dominated away from home. Williamson averaged 82.6 in the West Indies in 2014, 65.88 in England and Australia in 2015, and 61.37 in Zimbabwe, South Africa and India in 2016.

Each of these years (with the exception of West Indies) was against quality opposition. Virat Kohli averaged 62.75 in the West Indies in 2016, 53.66 in Sri Lanka in 2017 and 51.72 in a big year against England, South Africa and Australia in 2018.

Steven Smith averaged 71.90 against the West Indies and England in 2015, 63.62 against New Zealand and Sri Lanka in 2016 and 110.57 against England in 2019, a series that severely increases his average away from home.

When comparing how each batsman fares in each others home countries. Williamson averages 42.84 in Australia, however, he has two series where he averages below 20, and one series where he averages 85.6. In India he averages 35.46, far below his average elsewhere.

Kohli averages 54.08 in Australia with prolific series in ’12 and ’14 but no hundreds in his last two tours in ’19 and ’20. In New Zealand he averages 36.00 with a prolific series (ave. 71.33) in 2014 but a poor series (ave. 9.5) in 2020.

Steve Smith again excels in India and New Zealand averaging 60.00 in India and an enormous 131.00 in New Zealand. However he has not played in India since 2017 and has not played in New Zealand since 2016.

A final category of comparison is the effect that these players have on wins overseas. The amount of matches listed here is the amount of matches they have won overseas in their careers.

Kane Williamson: 9 matches, 940 runs @ 67.14, 4x100s
Virat Kohli: 15 matches, 1089 runs @ 41.88 with 3x100s
Steve Smith: 13 matches, 2064 runs @ 108.63 with 9x100s

Smith has made a big difference in the games that Australia win away from home with his average being far superior to his career average away from home (60.15). Williamson excels in games that New Zealand win averaging far higher than his career average away from home (42.53)

Kohli however, actually averages less in wins away from home than he does for his career away from home (44.23). With all of this taken into account there are a few take aways.

Firstly; on his current statistics, no matter how you cut it. Steve Smith is the best player of the three. Although it will be interesting to see how Smith does in his tour of India in later 2022.

Secondly; New Zealand need to play more cricket. Kane Williamson has been dominating at home recently, but in order to get a true grasp of how good he is, he needs to play more tests away from home.

FInally; Williamson and Kohli are very close when it comes to their statistics, but Williamson has definitely been the better player in the recent history of the game. Kohli needs to perform well in his tour of England later this year to put a stamp on his class away from home.