



West Indies pacer Sheldon Cottrell removed Hashim Amla and Aidan Markram and left South Africa reeling again at 27 for two before the match was washed out, giving the Proteas their first point of the World Cup and perhaps denying the West Indies a crucial one.

Kohli rallies behind Smith

REUTERS, London

Virat Kohli won a match with the bat and hearts with his sportsmanship after silencing Indian fans who booed Australia's Steve Smith in Sunday's World Cup contest at the Oval.

Smith and team mate David Warner have faced hostile crowds since returning from year-long bans for their roles in a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa early last year.

A section of the predominantly Indian crowd at the Oval booed Smith when the Australian was stationed at third man and Kohli noticed. The India captain raised his hand to draw the crowd's attention, gestured for them to clap the Australian instead, and shook his head before resuming batting.

The International Cricket Council shared the video on its Twitter handle calling it "absolute class".

"I think what's happened has happened long back. The guy is back, he's trying to play well for his side... it's not good to see someone down like that, to be honest," Kohli told reporters. "We've had issues in the past. We've had a few arguments on the field. But you don't want to see a guy feeling that heat every time he goes out to play."

"What's happened has happened. Everyone has known that. He's come back. He's worked hard. He's playing well for his side now."

Kohli said he apologised to Smith for the behaviour of the India fans.

"There's so many Indian fans here, I just didn't want them to set a bad example, because he didn't do anything to be booed in my opinion," added Kohli.

"He was just standing there, and I felt bad because if I was in a position where something had happened with me and I had apologised, I accepted it and I came back and still I would get booed, I wouldn't like it."

"So I just felt for him, and I told him, 'I'm sorry on behalf of the crowd', because I've seen that happen in a few earlier games as well and in my opinion that's not acceptable."

WI-SA tie called off

AFP, Southampton

The World Cup match between South Africa and the West Indies yesterday was abandoned after per-sistent heavy rain in Southampton, with both sides earning a point each.

Earlier, West Indies paceman Sheldon Cottrell reduced Faf du Plessis's team to 29 for two before rain stopped play.

South Africa lost the toss and were put in to bat under threatening skies.

They were quickly in trouble, with Hashim Amla edging Cottrell to Chris Gayle at slip for just six.

That brought Aiden Markram to the wicket but he had only made five when he tickled a Cottrell delivery down the legside and wicketkeeper Shai Hope completed the catch to leave South Africa in deep trouble at 28 for two in the seventh over.

In the following over rain stopped play and the covers came on.

West Indies are fifth in the World Cup table with three points after three matches, while South Africa are second from bottom after four games.

This was the second match to be called off due to rain following the Pakistan-Sri Lanka fixture, which was abandoned without a ball being bowled on the 7th.

'Australia will learn from this defeat'

THE EXPERT OPINION

|| FROM STEVE WAUGH ||

India against Australia was always going to be a highly charged encounter between two teams that have met on numerous occasions over the past 12 months.

This rivalry has revealed no clear dominance by either but India's victory in the pressure cooker of a World Cup clash will provide them enormous confidence as they move forward in this tournament.

It was an important toss to win for India as the Oval pitch had previously been used and was clearly one that slowed down as the match went on.

India's batting display was both measured and calculated with their plan clear and well executed. Their plan is to lay a foundation by not losing wickets and they stuck to it.

When they get off to solid opening partnership, as they did against Australia, they then have the luxury of seeing Virat Kohli orchestrate the remainder of the innings. But it's the innings of Hardik Pandya that will send shivers down opposition spines.

This guy might just be the equivalent of Lance Klusener in the 1999 World Cup. He has the ability to begin his innings like most finish with clean hitting that no opposing captain can protect.

If that's not enough, the cunning and sheer brilliance of MS Dhoni rarely fails to deliver and again he timed his assault on Australia to post a 350 plus target.

Australia will be disappointed that they missed some crucial chances in the field and their bowling was at times loose and not as disciplined as expected.

Chasing such an imposing total requires a solid platform before launching an all-out assault in the last 15 overs. You have to stay in touch when you're chasing such a big score. Australia were never quite on track to create history with David Warner and to a lesser extent Steve Smith struggling for their usual rhythm and control at the crease.

To win against the odds everything must fall into place and the turning point came early in the innings with the run out of Aaron Finch who looked in imperious touch and looked set for a big hundred. Both he and Alex Carey showed superb shot selection to suggest they will be crucial to Australia's chances in this campaign.

The cameo of Glenn Maxwell will increase calls for his elevation up the batting order as he is a match-winner that can turn a game in a few overs.

Leadership reveals itself in many forms but I think Virat Kohli's gesture in calming down the rough reception given to Steve Smith from the Indian spectators was a class act that calmed a volatile situation.

India will walk away from this match full of confidence as most of their key players did exactly what needed to be done under extreme pressure and their game plan was executed perfectly. Australia won't be too disappointed as they have time to dissect this loss, fine tune their process, tinker with batting orders and bowling options and manoeuvre things around before the semi-finals come around.

This World Cup is wide open right now with up to six teams believing they have a chance to lift the Cup at Lord's.

Captains call for action over 'unfair' bails

AFP, London

India captain Virat Kohli and Australia skipper Aaron Finch joined forces to condemn the "unfair" bail controversy that threatens to ruin the ongoing World Cup.

Australia opener David Warner avoided being bowled early in his side's unsuccessful run-chase at The Oval on Sunday when he deflected Jasprit Bumrah's delivery onto the wicket via his boot.

Not for the first time in this tournament, the ball struck the stumps but failed to dislodge the bails, meaning Warner earned an unexpected reprieve. It was the fifth incident in the tournament of the 'zing' bails, which contain lights that flash when the ball hits the wicket, failing to come off when hit.

In the West Indies' game against Australia on Thursday, Chris Gayle was saved when the bails stayed on despite his stump being clipped by a 91 mph (146 kph) Mitchell Starc delivery.

Other high-profile instances included South Africa's Quinton de Kock being reprieved against England in the tournament's opening game and Sri Lanka's Dimuth Karunaratne surviving against New Zealand.

The ICC has defended using the 'zing' bails, claiming they are lighter than the standard wooden ones normally used at all levels of cricket.

But Warner, who was on one at the time of his escape, went on to score 56, and the issue is becoming a huge talking point, with former England captains Michael Vaughan and Nasser Hussain calling on the ICC to do something about an issue which threatens to turn a freak occurrence into a routine event.

Although India won the match by 36 runs, Warner's escape could have been a turning point and Kohli made it clear the situation was unacceptable.

"Definitely. This is not something you expect at international level," he told reporters. "The technology is great. It's very precise when you make something happen with the stumps. But you literally have to smash the stumps really hard to knock them out. That's me as a batsman saying that."

"These are fast bowlers, these are not medium-pace bowlers. We checked and the stump was not knocked in very hard so I don't know what's going on. Is the stump too thick or too rigid?"

"No team will like to see that, if you bowl a good ball and you don't get a guy out. I haven't seen that happen so many times in the past."

Finch's team were beneficiaries of the latest bail incident, but that did not stop the Australia captain from also voicing his concerns.

Asked if it was wrong the bails could decide a major match, Finch said: "Yeah, I think so. We were on the right end of it today, but I think going forward it is a bit unfair at times."

"You would hate to see something like that happen in a World Cup semi-final or final."



Australia's David Warner looks back after a ball from India's Jasprit Bumrah ricocheted off his bat and onto the stumps at speed in Sunday's game. However, the bails were unremoved for the fifth time this tournament.

BEST QUOTE

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South Africa opener Quinton de Kock, who remained unbeaten on a 21-ball 17 before rain interrupted the proceedings, was initially given out when the left-hander was on one. However, the decision was reversed after a successful DRS in the second over of the game. A Kemar Roach out-swinger which tempted the batsman into playing a shot, had carried to the keeper, who took a brilliant diving catch. He was then given out after a vigorous appeal from the Windies but only to have the decision repealed after reviews showed that the ball came off his arm, allowing de Kock to survive.

Hosts sweat on Buttler's fitness

REUTERS, London

England wicketkeeper Jos Buttler is doing well with his hip injury but remains a doubt for Friday's match against West Indies.

"He is responding well to treatment and will be reassessed later this week," the ECB said in a statement. "We anticipate he will train with the squad on Wednesday ahead of the match against West Indies."

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I am looking at things positively. I think everyone is okay mentally. We are all emotional and we want to get everything overnight. Players are like that too -- they want to play well in every match.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Bangladesh captain