



England leg-spinner Adil Rashid ensured Australia would not accelerate in the middle overs by removing Australia batsmen Marcus Stoinis, Pat Cummins and the in-form Alex Carey. Earlier, Chris Woakes enjoyed a dream outing on his home ground, removing David Warner in the third over and adding the wickets of Peter Handscomb and Mitchell Starc while giving away just 20 runs from his eight overs in the World Cup semifinal yesterday.



PHOTO: REUTERS

MR EFFICIENT

When the oil is life, LIFE IS A DELIGHT

KING'S Sunflower Oil

Australia skipper Aaron Finch had just been trapped in front in the second over when Steven Smith walked in. Soon after, Smith saw Australia struggling at 14 for three. He then stitched a 103-run fourth-wicket stand with Alex Carey to stabilise the innings and might have finished well below their total of 223 had it not been for Smith, who had seven different partners on the day. A run out saw him depart for 85 off 119 balls.

Boult enjoyed the 'mayhem'

AGENCIES, Manchester

Trent Boult embraced the 'mayhem' as New Zealand's opening bowlers produced a stunning spell to book their place in the World Cup final.

Set 240 to win, India's top order was sent reeling as Matt Henry, with three wickets, and Boult with one left the world's number two side flailing at 24 for four.

Ravindra Jadeja and MS Dhoni's partnership put the game back in the balance but it was Boult and Henry's new ball brilliance that proved decisive.

"It was mayhem out there with the new ball, it was a dream start for us and great fun to be a part of," said Boult, who has taken 17 wickets in 10 matches.

"We knew our best balls are good enough for anyone, so it was nice to get the ball moving around and really put the pressure on them.

"They absorbed the pressure nicely and anything can happen with Dhoni and Jadeja at the crease, so it's just nice to come out on the right side.

"We're just excited about playing in a World Cup final at Lord's - it doesn't get bigger than that and whoever we play, we'll just enjoy it.

"I think we are good enough to beat anyone. Every side is stacked with good players but we can't wait to be out there on the big dance."

Henry's figures of three for 37 were not a career-best but were certainly career defining, with the top order scalps of Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul and Dinesh Karthik earning him man of the match honours.

"Semifinals are a special opportunity. We knew it would be tough for them if we took early wickets and that gave us the platform we needed," said Henry.

"We wanted to get on top and put them under pressure. India have a world-class batting line-up and to break that opening partnership was huge.

"They bat a long way down and the work wasn't done after the first ten overs. We knew they would establish a partnership and we had to control the run rate.

"We've been faced with so many challenges through this tournament, we just had to focus on our brand of cricket and trust the match winners we have in our dressing room.

"Whatever happened in the past didn't really matter."

'Speechless' Woakes hails incredible England

AFP, Birmingham

Chris Woakes saluted England's "incredible" eight-wicket demolition of Australia as the hosts swaggered into their first World Cup final since 1992.

Woakes won the man-of-the-match award at Edgbaston after taking 3-20 in a lethal eight-over spell that included the key wicket of opener David Warner.

Thanks to Woakes and fellow pacemen Jofra Archer, Australia collapsed to 14-3 and never really recovered as they were dismissed for 223.

England took just 32.1 overs to reach their victory target and book their final date with New Zealand at Lord's on Sunday.

Woakes admitted it was a perfect day for England, who have never won the 50-over World Cup.

"I'm pretty speechless. It was an incredible performance from the whole team, started well with the bowling and then the batting was outstanding," Woakes told Sky Sports.

"The way we have produced the goods shows how good we are and we're really pleased.

"I don't think it was a bad wicket, He [Jason Roy] is a freak... so good to watch. It's what we need as a team. He and Jonny [Bairstow] bat so well together.

Jofra Archer on Jason Roy, whose 65-ball 85 powered England to an easy win

There were some nerves around this morning, a few anxious people in the dressing room but that's natural," Woakes said.

"I just got my length wrong for the first ball. A world-class player in David Warner is going to put that away. But I got my length right after that and felt good."

England have lost all three of their previous World Cup finals, against Pakistan in 1992, Australia in 1987 and the West Indies in 1979.

Asked how it felt to help take England to within touching distance of their first World Cup crown, Woakes said his team had tried their best to block out the potentially historic nature of their campaign.

"We have tried not to think about getting to the final, it hasn't sunk in yet," he said.

He added: "We were tipped as favourites so it was important to get to the semi-final in the first place and then to win this in this fashion against this Australia side on the best ground in the world is amazing."

Smith battles the Edgbaston cauldron

SAKEB SUBHAN from Birmingham

Deafening boos rang out when Steve Smith went out to bat, when he reached a fighting 50 and when he was run out through a brilliant direct hit from wicketkeeper Jos Buttler. The reaction in Edgbaston felt cruel and unappreciative towards a great batsman playing the lone hand for his side in the pressure-cooker atmosphere. For a foreigner to English grounds, however, it was a window into the country's cricket-watching culture and more relevant, the gladiatorial atmosphere that grips a ground when England face Australia.

For those who followed Bangladesh through the World Cup, the crowds were mostly of the subcontinental variety - loud and joyfully chaotic. Back home, Mirpur has proven time and again the kind of factor the crowd can be in providing the Tigers a vocal home advantage. That was the norm over the World Cup during Bangladesh's matches - they took a small slice of Mirpur with them throughout the tournament and they were cheered with gusto.

England's home support - especially in Edgbaston - is of a different sort. It is almost as if the thousands in attendance had a meeting before coming to the ground and determined how to break the Aussie resolve. While you can tell, based on the amount of noise emanating from the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, whether Bangladesh are having a good day or not, there was relative quiet between events yesterday even when Australia were on the ropes after losing three wickets inside the first seven overs. But when Alex Carey, having put on 103 runs with Smith for the fourth wicket, hit Adil Rashid towards deep midwicket, at first a murmur went up and then, when substitute fielder James Vince pounced the catch, a chorus of 'Yeah!!' as if uttered by a single, multi-voiced organism went up. The same happened when Buttler's throw found a way through a tangle of fielders and scampering batsmen and found the non-strikers' stumps.

At the centre of this formidable cauldron was Smith, who along with David Warner has been the target

of abuse for their role in the ball-tampering scandal in March 2018. That is an old habit of English and Australian crowds when they face the 'old enemy'; Stuart Broad was hounded all over Australia in the 2013-14 Ashes because he refused to walk after edging the ball during the 2013 Ashes in England. It would of course be lost on the crowds that former England captain Michael Atherton was caught ball-tampering in the 1990s or that Australian batsmen have elevated not walking to an art form, because what matters most is laying hands on anything with which to wallop the enemy.

That, however, also meant that Smith knew how to deal with it. And, after going out to bat in the second over and then watching his side cut down to 14 for three in the seventh over with fellow villain Warner also back in the hut, Smith produced a masterclass in soaking up pressure from the excellent England seamers and the baying Edgbaston masses.

As the seamers - Jofra Archer, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood and Liam Plunkett - kept changing their pace to keep the Australians guessing, Smith kept walking towards the off stump and nudling singles in his inimitable, unorthodox fashion. At stake was Australia's all-win record in World Cup semifinals and a valuable mental advantage handed over to England before the Ashes. It will perhaps never be known whether focused attack from nearly 25,000 English fans spurred him on, but it could not have hurt in steeling the resolve that is a staple of Australian cricketers.

But soon, when England began their chase of 224, the crowd did a full-throated rendition of the patriotic song Jerusalem to ensure that their participation in the match kept going beyond the fence and lifted their team.



Jason Roy argues with umpires following a misunderstanding over his dismissal. PHOTO: REUTERS



Group defeats no bother for Kane

AFP, Manchester

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson insisted the fact his side lost to potential World Cup final opponents Australia and England earlier in the tournament would have no bearing on Sunday's showpiece match at Lord's.

The Black Caps upset the odds to beat group table-toppers India by 18 runs in a dramatic semifinal at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

And after what New Zealand media quickly dubbed 'The Manchester Miracle', the understated Williamson insisted the 2015 runners-up had every chance of going one better and winning their first World Cup title.

Williamson is confident despite an 86-run defeat by Australia - the team that beat New Zealand in the final four years ago - and a 119-run loss to England in the initial 10-team group stage.

"Every game throughout the round-robin was worth a couple of points so they were all important," Williamson said. "Obviously a semifinal is worth a few more than two points. But, you know, we'll go into another match and try to implement similar things that are important to our side, that gives us the best chance of success.

"There are so many strong teams in the tournament, another semifinal tomorrow (Thursday) that can go either way, two very good sides.

"But we turn up on the day and anybody can beat anybody. It's important that feet are on the ground and we look forward to that challenge."

Asked what this win would mean for cricket in New Zealand, where rugby union's world champion All Blacks dominate the sporting scene, Williamson said: "I don't think it will change the number one sport. I'm sure people back home are pretty excited and, you know, another great opportunity to play in a World Cup final.

"Only every four years do you get the opportunity to play in a World Cup, let alone make a final," added Williamson.