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India coach Rahul Dravid warned his side will “not take Afghanistan lightly” in their second-round opener of the T20 World Cup in Barbados on Thursday.

India were unbeaten in the initial pool phase as they advanced into a Super Eights featuring two groups of four.

Afghanistan, however, have also justified their billing as potential semi-finalists.

They had already qualified for the Super Eights before an emphatic 104-run defeat by a rampant West Indies in St Lucia on Monday in a clash of previously unbeaten teams, with Nicholas Pooran smashing 98 for the tournament co-hosts.

But Afghanistan did inflict an 84-run hammering upon New Zealand earlier in the competition.

And with India having needed two Super Overs to see off Afghanistan in a T20 match in Bengaluru in January, Dravid is well aware of the challenge awaiting his players at the Kensington Oval.

“We know Afghanistan is a very dangerous team in this format of the game,” former India batsman Dravid, 51 told a pre-match press conference on Wednesday. “They have shown that by their performances in this World Cup.

“They might not have a lot of international experience in the other formats of the game, but a lot of their players do play in a lot of T20 leagues, more than in fact some of our players do.

“So, certainly in this format they are not a team to be taken lightly. They are deservedly in the Super Eights.”

Much of Afghanistan’s success has been built on superb spin bowling, with Rashid Khan – who took four wickets for 17 runs against New Zealand in Guyana – leading the way.

– ‘Sought-after bowlers’ –

But that same match also saw left-arm quick Fazalhaq Farooqi take 4-17, with New Zealand dismissed for just 75.

“They have a good bowling attack all round,” said Dravid. “Even their two pacers are quite experienced. Farooqi and Naveen-ul-Haq have both played a lot of cricket, they both swing the ball as well.

“I think their bowlers are some of the most sought-after bowlers in this format across the world, Reports: AFP.

“We understand that is going to pose a challenge to us and we are going to have to play well to counter that.”

Meanwhile Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott insisted Pooran’s furious assault could yet benefit his side against India.

“Pooran played a great knock,” said the former England batsman. “But other sides are going to have players of that calibre, who on their day can win matches like Pooran did. So, I think it’s a good thing that it’s happened.

“We’ve learned lessons and we’re going to put that right starting tomorrow (Thursday).”

Trott added the advent of T20 franchise cricket, spearheaded by the Indian Premier League, had led to improved relations between players that were “obviously very different from when I played”.

But the 43-year-old said the knowledge gained “works both

ways”.

“We had nine, 10 players at the IPL. They will be able to share their knowledge of Indian players, and they’ll be able to do the same with our players,” explained Trott. “That’s the current state of world cricket.

“I think it’s in a good position, and it’s very healthy. And we’re in the middle of a World Cup and we’re in Barbados, so the world’s pretty good.”