

Rohit stars as India beat Australia to reach T20 World Cup semi-finals

Rohit Sharma led from the front with a blistering 92 as India beat Australia by 24 runs in St. Lucia on Monday to secure a T20 World Cup semi-final against reigning champions England and leave their opponents on the verge of exiting the tournament.

The India captain's dashing innings – he faced just 41 balls, including seven fours and eight sixes – was the cornerstone of a total of 205-5 made after he lost the toss.

India, with Arshdeep Singh (3-37) and Kuldeep Yadav (2-24) in the wickets, then held Australia to 181-7 in reply.

“That's what I have to do at the top of the order, see what the bowlers are trying to do and play accordingly,” said Rohit, the player of the match.

“Bowlers are smart, so you have to open up all sides of the field.

“That was what was going through my mind,” added Rohit, who struck Mitchell Starc for four sixes in a third over costing 29 runs before being bowled by the left-arm quick when eyeing the first hundred of this tournament.

India have not won a major ICC competition since lifting the 2013 Champions Trophy, with 37-year-old opener Rohit urging his side to maintain the aggressive approach that has served them well when they face England in Guyana on Thursday.

– ‘Play freely’ –

“We want to play the same way... play freely,” said Rohit, who

appeared completely unflustered after opening partner and fellow star batsman Virat Kohli fell for a duck.

“It’ll be nice (to play England). Nothing changes for us, we want to focus on what we can do as a team, and take the game on.”

Australia arrived at this tournament bidding to become the first side to hold all three major ICC men’s trophies – World Test Championship, One-Day International World Cup and T20 World Cup – at the same time.

But this loss meant their fate was no longer in their own hands.

Afghanistan, who produced a stunning upset in beating Australia by 21 runs last time out, will qualify for the semi-finals if they defeat Bangladesh later Monday.

“It’s so disappointing,” said Australia captain Mitchell Marsh. “We know we still have a chance to make the semis but today, India got the better of us.

“They got off to a flyer, Rohit Sharma is very hard to stop when he’s in that mode. He deserves all the credit for that,” added Marsh, before jokingly saying: “Come on Bangladesh!”

Travis Head, whose superb century crushed Indian dreams of a 50-over World Cup final win on home soil last year, kept Australia in the hunt with a well-made 76 off 43 balls after they lost fellow opener David Warner early in the chase.

His second-wicket stand of 81 with Marsh looked to be turning the tide before the skipper was brilliantly caught one-handed on the boundary by a leaping Axar Patel off spinner Kuldeep for 37.

And when Head holed out off a superbly-disguised slower ball from paceman Jasprit Bumrah, Australia were all but beaten at 150-5 in the 17th over.

AFP