

England thump Australia

● **England reach Cricket World Cup final after emphatic win over Australia**

● **Tournament hosts comfortably chase down Australia's total to win by eight wickets at Edgbaston**

AFP | Birmingham

England booked their place in the World Cup final against New Zealand with a dominant eight-wicket win over reigning champions Australia at Edgbaston yesterday.

Jason Roy hit a blistering 85 as England reached a victory target of 224 with a mammoth 107 balls to spare after restricting Australia.

Openers Roy and Jonny Bairstow (34) put on 124 for the first wicket, their fourth consecutive century stand.

England, losing finalists in 1979, 1987 and 1992, will now face New Zealand, who have also yet to win the World Cup after finishing runners-up to Australia four years ago, in Sunday's final at Lord's following the Black Caps' surprise semi-final win over India.

"I'm pretty speechless," said man-of-the-match Chris Woakes. "It was an incredible



Matt Henry of New Zealand celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of KL Rahul of India

performance from the whole team. It started with the bowling performance and then the way they knocked that off was outstanding.

"There were some nerves around this morning but that's

natural going into a semi-final. The way we produced the goods just showed how good we are and where we are at as a team."

Roy, who missed three matches earlier in the tournament with a torn hamstring, was in particu-

larly good form, hitting left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon for sixes.

Australia were in desperate need of early wickets after suffering a top-order collapse on the way to being dismissed for



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223, with the record five-time champions thankful for Steve Smith's battling 85.

All three of England's defeats this tournament -- including a 64-run group-stage loss to Australia -- have come batting second but Roy and Bairstow showed few signs of nerves in Birmingham.

Australia captain Aaron Finch turned to Steve Smith's occasional leg-spin in a desperate bid to break the partnership.

Smith booted Smith was booed by a large crowd, a reflection of the former Australia captain's role in a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa that saw him banned for 12 months.

But the jeers turned to cheers as Roy hit three huge straight sixes in as many balls.

Bairstow fell lbw to Starc, who in the process set a new record for most wickets at a single

World Cup of 27.

Roy was in sight of a hundred when he was given out caught behind down the legside by wicketkeeper Alex Carey off fast bowler Pat Cummins.

The batsman was visibly angry and had to be ushered away from the crease by square leg umpire Marais Erasmus. England had earlier squandered their lone review.

Test skipper Joe Root (49 not out) and England captain Eoin Morgan (45 not out) finished the job as the crowd chanted "cricket's coming home".

Defeat meant Australia suffered their first loss in eight World Cup semi-finals.

Earlier, Woakes and Adil Rashid each took three wickets apiece.

Woakes struck twice early on at his Warwickshire home ground as Australia slumped to 14-3 after winning the toss.

Australia's prolific opening pair of David Warner and Finch, as well as Peter Handscomb, were all back in the pavilion by the seventh over.

Warner, who like Smith walked out to boos because of his role in the ball-tampering scandal, returned to even louder cat-calls after being dismissed for nine.

Smith and Alex Carey steadied the innings with a fourth-wicket stand of 103 but wickets tumbled at regular intervals and Australia were unable to set England a testing target.

Kohli says fans should be 'measured' after World Cup woe

AFP | Manchester

India captain Virat Kohli has urged frustrated fans in his cricket-crazy nation not to get emotional after their shock World Cup semi-final defeat to New Zealand on Wednesday.

Kohli's side went down to by 18 runs at Old Trafford after the last four tie was played over two days due rain in Manchester.

Chasing 240 for victory, India lost four of their top batsmen for 24 runs in the first 10 overs and were eventually bowled out for 221.

The unexpected loss left a largely Indian-dominated crowd at Old Trafford disappointed, while a billion fans back home tried to come to terms with the heartbreaking end of the team's bid for a third World Cup crown.

Indian cricket fans are known for angry outbursts after crushing defeats, but Kohli said losing is part and parcel of sport and should not trigger an extreme reaction from either supporters or players.

"I have always been of the favour of a measured reaction and yes disappointment is there in a loss but don't take it to extreme," Kohli told reporters.

"Because many players will not be able to process it. Everything has to be balanced, like we want it to be on the field.

"It is easy to criticise from the outside when somebody loses and you are put on top when are winning. But when it happens on a big scale then it is a national responsibility that how you react to the sport you watch."

Pre-tournament favourites India had topped the group table



Virat Kohli tosses up his bat in frustration

to book the semi-final clash with fourth-placed underdogs New Zealand.

But Kane Williamson's side posted 239-8 after batting first on a tricky pitch and then defended the total with some excellent fast bowling.

Kohli insisted the defeat, which came after India won seven of nine group games, will eventually be dissected to work out what went wrong.

"I don't think that I would like to break things down immediately," said Kohli.

"But in time we will have to sit down and analyse things that we could have done right in this game.

"We are not shying away from accepting that we did not stand up to the challenge and we were not good enough under pressure. Accept the failure as it shows on the scoreboard."

India mourns World Cup shocker

AFP | New Delhi

Cricket-mad Indians tried to come to terms with their shock World Cup exit, with the Times of India telling readers "The Sun will still rise tomorrow" and Ravindra Jadeja emerging as a new national hero.

Jadeja and veteran Mahendra Singh Dhoni, renowned as one of the game's great finishers, rekindled the hopes of the cricket-crazy nation with a fighting seventh-wicket century partnership but it wasn't enough as India, chasing 240 to win, fell 18 runs short.

"For a while it looked like he (Dhoni) would turn back the clock and script another great escape, but that was not to be," wrote the Indian Express under the headline "The un-finisher".

Batting legend Sachin Tendulkar said the target was straightforward but India had been too reliant on the top three in the batting order -- Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul and captain Virat Kohli -- who each only scored one run.

"I am disappointed because we should have chased 240 without any doubt. It wasn't a big total," Tendulkar told India Today.

"But I feel that we can't be all the time relying on Rohit to give a good start or Virat to come and make sure that a solid foundation is built," he said.

Group defeats no bother to Williamson ahead of final

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, who only reached the last four on net run-rate, upset the odds to beat group table-toppers India by 18 runs in a dramatic semi-final 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 semi-final 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 that can go either way, two very good sides.



New Zealand's Kane Williamson takes a catch to dismiss India's Hardik Pandya