

Kohli leads India to Champions Trophy final with win over Australia



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Virat Kohli rolled back the years with a composed 84, guiding India to a four-wicket victory over Australia in the Champions Trophy semi-final at the Dubai International Stadium. KL Rahul's unbeaten 42 ensured India successfully chased down the 265-run target with 11 balls to spare, setting up a final clash against either South Africa or New Zealand on Sunday.

Opting to bat first, Australia posted 264 before being bowled out in 49.3 overs. Captain Steve Smith led from the front with a crucial 73, while Alex Carey contributed 61. Despite partnerships, India's bowlers kept striking at regular intervals. Mohammed Shami (3-48) was the standout performer, while spinners Varun Chakravarthy and Ravindra Jadeja grabbed two wickets each.

Australia started well, with Travis Head scoring a brisk 39. Smith built key partnerships, including a 50-run stand with Marnus Labuschagne (29) and another with Carey. However, regular breakthroughs prevented them from capitalizing in the death overs.

India's chase got off to a shaky start, losing two quick wickets. However, Kohli and Shreyas Iyer (45) steadied the innings with a crucial 91-run partnership. Leg-spinner Adam Zampa broke the stand by dismissing Iyer, and Nathan Ellis bowled Axar Patel (27) to give Australia hope.

Kohli, who was dropped by Glenn Maxwell on 51, continued to dominate before Zampa finally dismissed him at 225-5. With Australia still in contention, Rahul and Hardik Pandya (28) absorbed the pressure, adding 34 crucial runs. Pandya smashed three sixes before falling to Ellis, but Rahul kept his composure and sealed the victory with a six.

India's win avenged their loss to Australia in the 2023 World Cup final and ensured their place in the Champions Trophy final in Dubai. With momentum on their side, they now set their sights on

lifting the trophy.