

Jayasuriya punishes WI

AFP, Georgetown



Sanath Jayasuriya dealt a potentially fatal blow to the West Indies' semi-final hopes with a blazing century to set up Sri Lanka's 113-run win in the World Cup Super Eight match here on Sunday.

The left-handed opener gave a magnificent display of power-hitting to crack a 101-ball 115 for his 25th century as Sri Lanka posted a challenging 303-5 to leave the hosts to score their highest total batting second.

The West Indies wilted under pressure as they were bowled out for 190 to suffer their third successive defeat in the second round, with Shivnarine Chanderpaul top-scoring with an impressive 76 which contained five sixes.

They now have just two points from four matches, thanks to their win over fellow-qualifiers Ireland in a group game. No hosts have ever won the World Cup and the West Indies look unlikely to change the trend.

The West Indies' slim hopes of making it to the last-four now largely depend on other teams' results. They will meet South Africa, England and Bangladesh in their last three games.

The West Indies, whose highest total batting second was 300-3 against South Africa at Centurion in 2004, faced a tall order after losing three wickets for a paltry 42 runs.

A change in the batting order failed to produce the desired results as the West Indies lost Dwayne Bravo (21), skipper Brian Lara (two) and Chris Gayle (10) in the opening 11 overs.

Lara was undone by a smart piece of stumping by Kumar

Sangakkara, standing up to left-arm seamer Chaminda Vaas. The Sri Lankan wicketkeeper brought off another fine stumping, the victim this time being Ramnaresh Sarwan (44).

Sarwan and fellow-Guyanese Chanderpaul defied the Sri Lankan attack, but the asking-rate kept climbing after their team had managed just 100 in the first 30 overs. The West Indies were yet again

let down by batting as they lost their last six wickets for 56 runs, with left-arm spinner Jayasuriya finishing with 3-38.

Pacemen Lasith Malinga and Vaas, and off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran each took two wickets.

Sri Lanka's total owed much of its substance to Jayasuriya, who surpassed Pakistan's Inzamamul Haq (11,739) to become the second-highest scorer in one-dayers with 11,816. He is behind only India's Sachin Tendulkar (14,847).

Sri Lanka were struggling at 35-2 after being put in to bat, but were rallied by man-of-the-match Jayasuriya who put on 183 for the third wicket with Jayawardene (82).

Jayawardene returned to form just when his side needed runs to boost their chances of qualifying for the semifinals. He had failed in his last two matches, but played a vital innings under pressure.

Jayasuriya, deprived of the strike in the opening 15 overs, began the fireworks when he hooked left-arm seamer Ian Bradshaw for a four and then lofted him over mid-on for another boundary.

His best came in the next over as he used his feet remarkably well to punish seamer Dwayne Smith, smashing three fours and a straight six. His first 14 runs had come off 33 balls, but the next 27 off just nine.

The West Indies had virtually lost their early advantage after Jayasuriya's amazing blitz. They grabbed two early wickets before being dominated by the Sri Lankan opener.

Jayawardene took time to settle down, but grew in confidence as the innings progressed. He rotated the strike intelligently, giving Jayasuriya enough chances to step up the run-rate.



Sri Lanka opener Sanath Jayasuriya plays a one-legged pull shot during his century against West Indies in their Super Eight encounter at the Guyana National Stadium in Georgetown on Sunday.

Lara still hopeful

AFP, Georgetown

West Indies skipper Brian Lara has said he remains optimistic of making it to the World Cup semifinals despite his team's third successive defeat in the Super Eight.

The hosts have just two points from four games following their crushing 113-run defeat against Sri Lanka here on Sunday. They had already lost to defending champions Australia and New Zealand in their first two matches.

Their two points came after their win over fellow-qualifiers Ireland in a group match. They will now take on England, South Africa and Bangladesh in their remaining three matches.

"We've a lot of time to regroup and make sure we win the remaining matches. Let's hope it's not too late. Let's make sure we have a chance. We have got to stay upbeat as we are representing the Caribbean," said Lara.

The West Indies play South Africa in Grenada on April 10, followed by matches in Barbados against Bangladesh (April 19) and England (April 21).

"I am an optimist. We'll be hoping that some teams beat others, but it still boils down to us beating South Africa, Bangladesh and England to give us a glimmer of

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Mahela owes it to Sanath

AFP, Bridgetown



Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene paid tribute to opener Sanath Jayasuriya for helping him return to his big-scoring ways in the World Cup victory over the West Indies.

After failing in the last two matches, Jayawardene scored a solid 82 in a Super Eight match against the West Indies here on Sunday and shared a 183-run stand with Jayasuriya.

"Obviously, Sanath took a lot of pressure off me. He gave me the freedom to play risk-free, straight as much as possible and just occupy the crease," said the Sri Lankan skipper.

Jayasuriya smashed 115 runs off 101 balls for his 25th century to help Sri Lanka post a challenging 303 for five before a capacity crowd at the National Stadium hoping for a home victory.

The West Indies crumbled under the pressure as they were bowled out for 190 in their third straight Super Eight defeat, and now face elimination.

Jayawardene said Jayasuriya had been something special.

"I have seen quite a lot from Sanath, but I would rank this as one

of the best. He has done it not just against small teams, in low-key tournaments, but in big tournaments, under pressure. That's what makes him so special."

The Sri Lankan skipper admitted he would have fielded first had he won the toss after a rain-delayed start.

"I lost a difficult toss. That is the difficult part of this tournament. You can't play for the toss. Obviously, if I had won the toss, I would have fielded in those conditions."

He dismissed suggestions of any planning behind West Indian captain Brian Lara's dismissal, a bizarre stump off paceman Chaminda Vaas.

"It was not planned," he said of Lara's dismissal for two. "I don't think that was the only wicket. Brian is in form and he is one of the guys. The only thing we concentrated on was not to give them a big start."

"When we saw Brian batting in front of his crease, we felt we needed to get Kumar (Sangakkara) up. Kumar has worked really hard. If you see him work on his game, it is amazing. I mean, that guy is a workaholic."

Jayawardene said his bowlers kept a tight length and never allowed the hosts an explosive start.

"We managed to get those early wickets and put them under pressure. Obviously Ramnaresh

(Sarwan) and Shiv (Chanderpaul) had to bat through to consolidate, but I thought our bowlers did pretty well during that period."

Jayawardene said he was not worried about off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran losing some runs against the West Indies.

"Murali bowled from a tougher end to a left-hander with shorter boundaries. The wind was also assisting the batsmen, so obviously they would be taking chances. Murali was very happy because one of those shots could have easily got a top-edge and gone up."

The skipper said he was not looking ahead to a final.

"I am not looking too far ahead. If I dream about (lifting the World Cup) it's brilliant but hopefully, not too soon. We just have to concentrate on one game at a time, and that's what I have been telling the guys."

"It's a big tournament, but if you think too far ahead, you won't concentrate on the first post."

Sri Lanka, who lost their first Super Eight match to South Africa by a close margin of one wicket, now have four points and next play England at Antigua on Wednesday.

Their remaining matches are against New Zealand on April 12, Australia on April 16 and Ireland on April 18 -- all in Grenada.

Bellamy boost for Liverpool

AFP, Eindhoven

Liverpool received a boost ahead of Tuesday's Champions League quarterfinal tie against PSV Eindhoven with striker Craig Bellamy given the all clear to travel with the squad.

Bellamy missed Liverpool's win over Arsenal at the weekend, having picked up ankle and rib injuries playing for Wales last week.

"I got a really hefty knock from the San Marino 'keeper last week in Cardiff," said Bellamy.

"It still hurts now when I breathe but I really hope I will be fit to play against PSV. This European run is so important to me. I really want to be involved in what is the best level I have played at during my career."

Liverpool will monitor Bellamy

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He won't forget this one

AFP, Georgetown



Sanath Jayasuriya may be playing in his last World Cup, but has proved he still has it in him to demoralise

any attack with his breath-taking strokes.

The 37-year-old Sri Lanka opener was on song in his team's second Super Eight match against the West Indies here on Sunday, hammering a 101-ball 115 for his 25th century with four sixes and 10 fours.

The knock revived memories of the 1996 World Cup in the sub-continent when Jayasuriya redefined batting in the opening overs with his consistent over-the-top hitting.

He was one of the stars of Sri Lanka's World Cup-winning squad 11 years ago.

The left-hander looked subdued in the beginning against Brian Lara's side because his team had lost two early wickets and he didn't get much

of the strike in the initial overs.

He made 14 off 33 balls, but his next 27 came in just nine. The Jayasuriya show had begun as runs came with amazing rapidity from his bat.

"I want to finish the World Cup on a high note. I haven't planned beyond this tournament," said the man-of-the-match.

"This is one of the best knocks I've played. It came in the World Cup and in a crucial game. We lost to South Africa the other day and we didn't want to lose again. Although I have 25 centuries, I'll never forget this one.

"Somebody had to take the responsibility in the middle, so I thought after I had batted for ten overs, that I should take the responsibility and bat for a longer period," said Jayasuriya.

The longer he batted, the more helpless the West Indies bowlers and fielders looked. When he was bowled by seamer Daren Powell in the 39th over, he had already put his team on course for a big total.

Sri Lanka scored 303-5 before bowling the hosts out for 190 for

their first win in the second round. They now have four points from three games, thanks to their win over fellow qualifiers Bangladesh in a group match.

It was Jayasuriya who also set up his team's emphatic 198-run victory over Bangladesh with an explosive 87-ball 109 in Trinidad last month.

But he admitted it was not easy batting in the initial stages here.

"It was not an easy wicket early on. The ball was not coming on to the bat and it was seaming around a little bit. We didn't want to lose any wickets so I think Mahela did a very good job from the other end," said Jayasuriya.

He put on 183 for the third wicket with skipper Mahela Jayawardene, who reformed with a solid 82. Jayasuriya then returned as a left-arm spinner to test the West Indies, finishing with three wickets.

Jayasuriya has been in tremendous nick in recent times, having already made more than 1,000 runs with five centuries last year. His current form augurs well for Sri Lanka, who now play Australia, New Zealand, England and Ireland.



Disappointed West Indies fans watch their team capitulate to Sri Lanka in their Super Eight encounter at the Guyana National Stadium in Georgetown on Sunday.

AFP, Milan



Bayern Munich are determined to give AC Milan a taste of their own medicine when the teams meet in the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal here on Tuesday.

The German giants are still feeling the pain from their defeat to AC Milan in the first knockout round in last season's competition.

A 1-1 draw in Munich was followed by a crushing 4-1 victory for the Italian side as Milan produced an awesome display of attacking power at the San Siro to win their last 16 clash.

"The thought of that defeat still hurts," said Bayern's 37-year-old keeper Oliver Kahn who will sit out Tuesday's tie due to a one-match ban for arguing with a doping official in the previous round against Real Madrid.

"We really want to make up for it and I feel we have a better chance this time, especially with the second leg at our place."

Michael Rensing, who has long been touted as the natural successor to the emblematic Kahn, will deputise for the Bayern captain against the six-time European champions.

Coincidentally, Rensing's only other previous outing in the Champions League came in last season's 1-1 draw in Germany.

"I know it ended in a draw, but I have fond memories of that night," said the 22-year-old.

European champions on four occasions, Bayern will also be without midfielder Mark Van Bommel who was given a one-match suspension for making an obscene gesture to Real Madrid fans in the last 16.

Despite losing two key players, Bayern morale is high after Saturday's 2-0 win over Bundesliga

leaders Schalke 04 which left them six points off the summit and still in with a chance of retaining their title.

The club have been galvanised by the return to the bench of Ottmar Hitzfeld, with whom Bayern won the Champions League in 2001.

Hitzfeld came back as coach in February after Felix Magath was sacked.

AC Milan's hopes of challenging for the Serie A title this season have been hampered by an eight-point match-fixing penalty, and they currently lie way off the pace in the race for the Scudetto.

The best they can hope for in the league is a top-four finish and a place in next season's Champions League, but their main target is European domination.

"Our primary target has always been the Champions League," said AC Milan's 31-year-old Croatian defender Dario Simic.

"We have been playing well, and

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