



Big-hitting West Indies opener Chris Gayle (L) and champion India batsman Virat Kohli will have a battle within the battle when the two teams meet at the WACA ground in Perth today.

PHOTOS:
AFP

INDIA V WEST INDIES

WI must win this already

AFP, Perth

Defending champions India will look to continue their recent success against Chris Gayle when they clash with the West Indies in the World Cup at the WACA ground in Perth on Friday.

The explosive left-hander has not passed 50 in his last 10 one-day innings against India and not hit a century against them since 2006, but Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men know that does not guarantee another cheap wicket.

Just last week, Gayle hammered a record World Cup score of 215 off 147 balls against Zimbabwe in Canberra, demolishing the bowling attack like only he or South Africa's AB de Villiers can do.

De Villiers gave Gayle a taste of his own medicine a few days later in Sydney, smashing a glorious unbeaten 162 off 66 balls that drew warm applause even from the awestruck Jamaican.

Dhoni conceded it was tough to have a bowling plan or set fields for batsmen like Gayle and de Villiers.

India can draw comfort from the unpredictable game

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5 facts

This will be the eighth World Cup meeting between India and West Indies, with the latter needing to win this game in order for the record to be even between them; India won 4, West Indies won 3

The two teams have met just once before in Perth with that game ending tied as both teams were bowled out for 126 back in 1991; it is the only game between India and West Indies that has ended as a tie

Just two Indian players have an average over 50, Virat Kohli (52.17) and captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (51.41). They are two of just seven players from any nation to play 10+ innings to achieve the feat

Chris Gayle has hit 17 sixes in this tournament already; he needs to hit two more to overtake Matthew Hayden (18 in 2007) for most sixes in a World Cup

Holder wants to 'Bring on big-hitters' forget that 70

AFP, Perth

West Indies captain Jason Holder on Friday returns to Perth's WACA ground, the place where he made his one-day international debut in 2013 and the scene of one of his team's greatest humiliations.

The West Indies were bowled out by Australia for just 70 on February 1, 2013 -- their third lowest total of all time -- in a game where 'extras' were their top scorer with 17.

Holder made just seven runs on his nightmare debut but at least had the consolation of taking the only Australian wicket to fall as the home side knocked off the runs in under 10 overs.

"It means a lot to me to play here again," said Holder on the eve of Friday's World Cup clash against defending champions India.

"I made my debut here and it was a dream come true. To be able to play for West Indies against Australia in my first game, I was touched.

"Being back here now I would like to improve on my performance from last time, and having said that, I'll do everything in my power to enhance our chances of winning."

Only four players from that disaster in 2013 remain in the current squad -- Holder, Chris Gayle, Darren Sammy and Kemar Roach -- but Friday's mission may be just as thankless.

Of more pressing concern for Holder is the West Indies' stuttering progress towards a quarterfinal place at the World Cup after two wins and two defeats, the last of which was a record-equaling 257-run loss to South Africa in Sydney where the Proteas piled up 408 for five.

Holder himself was in the eye of that Sydney storm, his 10 overs costing 104 runs.

AFP, Perth

India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin is all set for the challenge of facing some of the biggest hitters in the game when his side play the West Indies in a World Cup clash in Perth on Friday.

Defending champions India are top of Pool B, with three wins from as many games, but the third-placed West Indies are also in the hunt for a quarterfinal place with two wins from four matches.

The West Indies piled up 372 for two in their win over Zimbabwe, with dynamic left-handed opener Chris Gayle making 215, the highest individual World Cup score, and Marlon Samuels an unbeaten 133.

Gayle has long been regarded as one of the most powerful shot-makers in the game, but Ashwin said Thursday that aggressive batting was now commonplace in all one-day international cricket.

"It's not just Chris Gayle, it's any other batsman in world cricket. Anybody who attacks wants to put you off," said Ashwin at Perth's WACA ground.

"I go strongly for getting the wicket of any batsman that I think is dangerous because I like it. I like to throw myself in the middle and try to see how much I can make an impact in that particular game."

"Be it Chris Gayle, AB de Villiers anybody, I look to get them out in the middle."

And Ashwin said he would not be changing his approach should he find himself bowling to Gayle.

"There are no particular plans. I mean, it's pretty simple...It's pretty much about boundaries and wickets, and you can restrict the hitting to one side and see if you can get a wicket or two."

Amidst all the blazing hitting of this World Cup, Ashwin has so far taken eight wickets at an impressively low average of 13.37 apiece.

"I'm pleased. It is quite heartening to get wickets," said the 28-year-old.

"It gives you a lot of confidence. But in terms of preparation for the game, it's going to be the same. Because we prepare for every other team like we prepare for the big teams. It's not going to be very different. We're pretty confident about executing tomorrow."

Former India leg-spinner Anil Kumble recently said he saw something of his own determination in Ashwin's bowling, much to his slow-bowling successor's delight.

"I've always maintained that Kumble is one of my big heroes because every time he's been put in the corner he's come out really successfully," Ashwin said.

"That is one aspect I really admire about him. There have been times people have asked me who is your role model and I actually told them Kumble is one of my role models."

"To actually hear that from him is a big honour. At the same time, they are big boots to fill."

The Export Leader



of the West Indies, where highs and lows mingle so frequently that is leaves even the most passionate Caribbean supporter exasperated.

In their first three matches of the ongoing World Cup, the West Indies posted 304-7 in losing to Ireland, 310-6 against Pakistan and 372-2 versus Zimbabwe in a grand show of their batting prowess.

But they crashed to 151 in their next game trying to chase South Africa's 408-5 with leg-spinner Imran Tahir returning with five wickets.

In contrast, India have played consistently to record three consecutive wins, including a 76-run defeat of old foes Pakistan and a stunning 130-run win over the mighty South Africans.

A nine-wicket hammering of minnows United Arab Emirates at the WACA ground last week provided Dhoni's team a chance to adjust to the hot weather in Perth and the challenges the hard pitch poses.

With six full points in the bag and matches in hand against the West Indies, Ireland and Zimbabwe, India will eye the top spot in Pool B to ensure they don't face either of the co-hosts, Australia and New Zealand, in the quarterfinals.

But the West Indies, who have two wins from four games and both Ireland and Pakistan breathing down their necks, must defeat India and the UAE in their last two matches to confirm a knock-out berth.

The West Indies have brought in attacking batsman Johnson Charles to replace the injured Darren Bravo.

Sammy brushed aside injury worries for Gayle, who missed a few training sessions apparently resting a sore back.

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KYLE COETZER

That Scotland ended up on the losing side yet again does not take away anything from Kyle Coetzer's innings. His chanceless 156 will remain a tale that the Scots can include in their folklore and incessantly narrate it for the years to come; for it deserves that kind of a response. Not for a minute did Coetzer seem overawed by the opposition. His straight hits down the ground frustrated Mashrafe Bin Mortaza; so much so; that he decided against bowling his last two overs. His sweeps off Shakib Al Hasan, forced the allrounder to break into a helpless smile. The Scots may well be on their way back home, but here's a player who has proved his calibre at the big stage.

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WORLD CUP COCKTAIL

Shane Watson says he has nobody to blame but himself for the poor run that resulted in his dumping from Australia's one-day team for the first time in seven years.

Watson accepts he has had "plenty of opportunities" and knows his World Cup fate is now out of his control, but is confident he can make an impact if given another chance.

"We'll see how it goes. I know I haven't scored enough runs," Watson said on Thursday. "But in the end all I can do is do everything I can to make sure I'm ready to go if any opportunity arises. I know I haven't scored enough runs, so I've only got myself to blame."

Kohli reprimanded

In the wake of the recent controversy involving India team vice-captain Virat Kohli, who had hurled abuses at a journalist ahead of his team's fourth Pool B game against West Indies on Tuesday, the BCCI have released a statement stating that Kohli should refrain from such behaviour in future and asked the concerned parties to move on.

"The player in question has been told to maintain the dignity of the Indian team at all times, and avoid any such behaviour in the future. The BCCI would like to request the concerned parties to move on, and focus on the Indian cricket team's campaign in the ongoing ICC CWC 2015," stated the BCCI release.

'Everyone ready to fire'

Senior New Zealand bowler Tim Southee is adamant the four players not required so far in the World Cup will be ready to contribute if, and when, required.

New Zealand have stuck with the same XI for their four group A games at the cup so far, and are unbeaten and top of group A, and there is a chance that selection policy might continue through as long as they remain in the cup.

It's been tough for seamers Kyle Mills and Mitchell McClenaghan, off spinner Nathan McCullum and backup batsman Tom Latham but Southee had high praise for the way in which they've handled the situation.

"They've been brilliant," Southee said today.

"They're training the house down, bowling exceptionally well in the nets and offering a lot as the 'dirties'. Their heads are still up and they're wanting what's best for the team."

Viv releases 'Smokin Joe' song

Cricket great Viv Richards has released a single with the drummer of Australian band INXS Jon Farriss, with 'Smokin' Joe' featuring his deep tones that have been likened to Barry White.

Farriss met the West Indian, considered one of the greatest batsmen of all time, at a party in 2012 and said he instantly recognised his love of music.

"Viv was such a charismatic and affable guy," he said in a statement Thursday.

"We hit it off straight away and it wasn't hard to recognise his love of music."

"Given these parallels and my desire to hear him on a track, I approached him to see if he was interested in doing something musically and thankfully he said yes."

The tune was "a fun soul-infused song" which British television personality and cricket fan Piers Morgan tweeted reminded him of Grammy-winning American singer White.

Lehmann, a caring father

Australia coach Darren Lehmann made a journey of more than 3,000 kilometres to present his son, Jake, with his South Australia first-class cap.

The morning after Australia had thrashed Afghanistan by 275 runs in the World Cup in Perth, Lehmann made the long journey to Adelaide.

"It was a very memorable moment," former Australia batsman Lehmann told cricket.com.au.

"He's done all the hard work and he deserves the opportunity so now it's up to him to do the rest," added Lehmann of his 22-year-old son.

"I'm very proud and excited for him. He's got a career ahead and now it's up to him to make the most of it." --COMPILED