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Ireland captain William Porterfield (R) and his teammates indulge in a game of Gaelic Football during training at the Bellerive Oval yesterday, ahead of today's game against Zimbabwe today.

IRELAND V ZIMBABWE Plenty to play for

AFP, Hobart

Ireland and Zimbabwe face each other in a Pool B clash at Bellerive Oval in Hobart on Saturday in a match that could have a key bearing on both sides' chances of reaching the quarterfinals of the World Cup.

The Irish are just ahead of Zimbabwe in the standings with four points from three matches compared to the Africans' two from four.

Zimbabwe have two handicaps going into the match against Ireland, arguably the most impressive of all the four non-Test or Associate sides at this World Cup.

They will be without captain Elton Chigumbura after the 28-year-old all-rounder suffered a thigh injury when he tripped and fell while chasing a ball in Sunday's 20-run loss to Pakistan at the Gabba in Brisbane.

The nature of that defeat was also something of a body-blow to Zimbabwe, whose only win at the tournament so far was a hard-fought success over the part-timers from the UAE.

Zimbabwe held Pakistan to a modest 235 for seven but, despite several batsmen getting starts, they came up short in their chase.

"We needed a partnership but unfortunately 50 and 30-run partnerships won't get you over the line," said Zimbabwe wicketkeeper Brendan Taylor.

"It is extremely difficult to comprehend this loss. We were cruising nicely but again we found ways to get out at crucial periods --



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some soft dismissals as well."

The Irish too will come into this match on the back of a defeat, a 201-run thrashing by South Africa where the Proteas pair of Hashim Amla and Faf du Plessis both scored hundreds in a massive total of 411 for four.

It was Ireland's first loss in Pool B after wins over the West Indies and the UAE. But given South Africa made 408 for five against the West Indies in their preceding match, this defeat may be easier for Ireland to brush aside as 'one of those things' than Zimbabwe's loss to Pakistan will be for the Africans.

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5 facts

Brendan Taylor needs one run to become the fourth player to score 5,000 ODI runs for Zimbabwe. This will be his 165th innings

Andy Flower reached the landmark in 162 innings

George Dockrell has taken seven wickets in three ODI innings against Zimbabwe, at an average of 16.4 and strike rate of 16.4, maintaining an economy rate of 3.8

Dockrell (81 per cent) has the highest offside run percentage in the tournament, minimum 50 balls faced

Kevin O'Brien has conceded boundaries from 25 per cent of his deliveries in this tournament (34 in 138), the highest percentage of anyone delivering at least 10 balls

Porterfield promises comeback Win a must for Zim

AFP, Hobart

Ireland captain William Porterfield has insisted there will be no lingering mental scars from their heavy defeat by South Africa when they face Zimbabwe in their next World Cup match on Saturday.

The Irish head into this weekend's Pool B encounter in Hobart on the back of a 201-run thrashing by South Africa, where Hashim Amla (159) and Faf du Plessis (109) were the main contributors to a huge Proteas total of 411 for four.

Nevertheless, that match was still only Ireland's first defeat of the pool stage following wins over both the

West Indies and the UAE.

They now have four points from three games, compared to Zimbabwe's two from four heading into this weekend's match at Hobart's Bellerive Oval. "The mood is very good," Porterfield said on Friday. "That's the biggest thing for myself, that things haven't changed."

"You can see if moods tend to drop or not, and that hasn't been the case. After that (South Africa) game I thought we did that pretty quickly and the lads' focus was turned straight on to this game, which is great."

Ireland have now beaten at least one Test nation in three successive World Cups and their opening four-wicket

win over the West Indies at this edition was no shock upset.

Porterfield said his side now expected to win matches, rather than hoped to be competitive.

"I think that's how we approach our every day mindset and you're only going to get that mindset from having prepared the right way and know that you're on top of your own game and you're feeling 100 per cent confident and back everything that you've done," he explained.

Porterfield said the stakes weren't as high for Ireland.

"We're halfway through our group campaign. I don't think it's crunch time for ourselves."

AFP, Hobart

Zimbabwe's Brendan Taylor has said winning against Ireland is "non-negotiable" for his side if they are to qualify for the World Cup quarterfinals.

The Africans play the Irish, a non-Test side, in Hobart on Saturday in what is an important Pool B clash for both sides.

Ireland are currently fifth in the seven-strong pool, with two wins from three games giving them a total of four points.

By contrast Zimbabwe are sixth, with just one win -- and a hard-fought one at that over the amateurs from the UAE -- in four games and a total of two points.

Asked about the importance of this weekend's match, Taylor said Friday: "That's non-

negotiable for us.

"We want to turn up tomorrow and want to win. We want to win convincingly and we feel we're good enough to do that."

Zimbabwe's most recent defeat, a 20-run reverse against Pakistan, was especially disappointing as they did a lot of the hard work in restricting their opponents to 235 for seven only to be bowled out for 215 themselves.

But wicketkeeper/batsman Taylor said Zimbabwe's mood remained positive.

"It's surprisingly upbeat. We know we need to win this game. There are no grey areas there."

"But they (Ireland) are a good side. We're very much aware of that."

"The more demoralising one (loss) was Pakistan, not getting over the line at 230."

Buttler confident of Eng recovery

AFP, Adelaide

Jos Buttler expects England to resurrect their World Cup campaign, saying playing under pressure may just be what the struggling team needs ahead of the last two must-win games.

Eoin Morgan's side, who have just one win in four Pool A matches, must defeat Bangladesh in Adelaide on Monday and minnows Afghanistan in Sydney on March 13 if they are to have a chance of staying afloat in the tournament.

Even that may not be enough if Bangladesh, who have five points to England's two, upset co-hosts New Zealand in Hamilton on March 13 to squeak through to the quarterfinals.

But Buttler said England were confident they could turn their fortunes around.

"We are confident about ourselves and back the quality we have," said the England wicket-keeper, who is also vice-captain to Morgan.

"We have not played as well as we should have, or would have liked to, but if we get near our best in these two games you would think we're strong enough to come out on top."

"We have got to win two games of cricket and maybe it's good to have that pressure on ourselves. Hopefully, that will bring out the performance that we need."

"In simple terms, we have got to play better than we have so far to get through to

the quarterfinals."

England have played the same combination in all four games, but Buttler suggested that changes could be in the offing due to the desperate situation the team finds itself in.

Hard-hitting batsman Alex Hales, who pundits said should have been in the XI from the start and who has played in Australia's domestic Twenty20 Big Bash League, is expected to replace Gary Ballance.

Buttler said the players sidelined so far were waiting to get a chance and hoped the competition for places would benefit England.

"The guys who are not in the side are desperate to put their hand up to say they should be playing, and the guys who are in the side and have not performed as well as they would have liked, want to get some form," he said.

"That makes for healthy competition for the team."

Buttler backed Hales to come good -- if he was selected.

"He is an explosive player and will be a fantastic player for England in the future," said Buttler.

"I think he enjoys the big occasion. There was that fantastic hundred he got against Sri Lanka in the World Twenty20 last year against what turned out to be the champions."

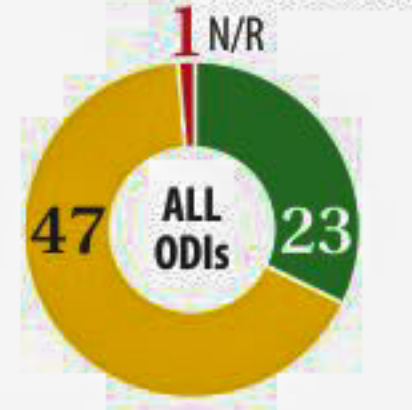
"If he gets his chance I am sure that having sat on the sidelines for a while he will be desperate to do well."

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INFO ZONE

PAKISTAN vs SOUTH AFRICA



LAST MEETING
 30th Nov 2013 at Centurion. South Africa won by 4 wickets (with 68 balls remaining).

IN WORLD CUPS
 South Africa have won all 3 games against Pakistan in World Cups.

IRELAND vs ZIMBABWE



LAST MEETING
 30th Sep 2010 at Harare Sports Club. Ireland won by 20 runs.

IN WORLD CUPS
 Only Meeting in WC: 15th March 2007 at Kingstone. Match ended in a Tie.

KEY PLAYERS

Player	Stats	Player	Stats
AHMED SHEHZAD	BAT AVG: 34.85 INNS: 62 STRIKE RATE: 71.94 RUNS: 2126 50s: 11 100s: 6 HS: 124 LAST MATCH: 93	HASHIM AMLA	BAT AVG: 56.72 INNS: 108 STRIKE RATE: 89.85 RUNS: 5616 50s: 28 100s: 20 HS: 159 LAST MATCH: 159
ANDY BALBIRNIE	BAT AVG: 21.16 INNS: 13 STRIKE RATE: 57.46 RUNS: 254 50s: 1 100s: 0 HS: 58 LAST MATCH: 58	BRENDAN TAYLOR	BAT AVG: 33.55 INNS: 164 STRIKE RATE: 72.88 RUNS: 4999 50s: 32 100s: 6 HS: 145* LAST MATCH: 50

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Pakistan and South African fans will both be cheering for a crucial win today. (Top-right) An India fan shows his India-themed contact lens during the India v West Indies game yesterday.



Freddie Wilde: A father wouldn't let his daughter out of the house if she was wearing a skirt as short as Andre Russell's bowling.

Ammar Ashraf: Hopefully NZ will top Pool A and Pakistan will finish at four. QF Pak v NZ and we (Pakistan) will knock them out.