



Sri Lanka's surprise loss to South Africa in their previous game means that they will have to bank on other results to have any hope of reaching the sezztvmfinals of the World Cup, but even before that they will first need Lasith Malinga (L) and the rest of the team to fire against the power-packed, albeit so far underwhelming West Indies today. FILE PHOTO: REUTERS/AFP

Sri Lanka hoping for semifinal miracle

FACTS

Sri Lanka and West Indies will be playing their 57th ODI against each other. The last meeting between the two sides took place at Bulawayo, Zimbabwe when the Lankans clinched a one-run win in 2016.

The Lankas have won seven of the last nine matches between the two sides.

Sri Lanka opener Kusal Perera is the highest run-scorer between batsmen of the two sides with 174 runs in 5 matches.

Lasith Malinga is the highest wicket-taker between the two sides amongst the current crop of players. He has 16 wickets

in nine matches. Windies captain Jason Holder has 9 wickets to his name.

Sri Lanka ran away as winners the last three times the sides met in a World Cup match. In 1996, the West Indies Cricket Board decided not to send their team to Sri Lanka due to security reasons and it resulted in the hosts getting 2 free points.

If Chris Gayle scores 53, he will become the Windies' leading ODI run-getter, overtaking Brian Lara's haul of 10,348 runs. If he scores 82, he will become the leading run-getter for the Windies in World Cups, also overtaking Lara.

ICC

The defeat to South Africa might have put an improbable qualification beyond their control, but Sri Lanka will be aiming to give it their best shot against a vibrant West Indies outfit which has nothing to lose in the World Cup.

Sri Lanka's 20-run win over England on 21 June had well and truly opened up the competition for the semifinal spots at the World Cup. However, a painful loss to South Africa, in the very next game, has made their own qualifying chances extremely bleak. They need to win their final two matches, and hope for favourable outcomes in England and Pakistan's next fixtures.

In their nine-wicket loss at this very venue on 28 June, their inconsistent batting came to the fore yet again. Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne would be aiming to improve that aspect against a challenging West Indian bowling attack.

The Jason Holder-led side, on the other hand, has

reached the fag-end of a sorrowful campaign that has seen them win just one out of seven games. Though they have been impressive in parts, the side has failed to close out key moments in tight games. Things went downhill after a breezy seven-wicket win over Pakistan in their opening game, and they now sit just above Afghanistan in the points table, having lost out on the semifinal race.

Their batting unit has misfired more often than not, putting the onus on Lasith Malinga to deliver with the ball in clutch situations. With nine wickets in five games, seven of which came in Sri Lanka's two wins, the veteran pacer has done his bit. With Nuwan Pradeep's premature exit, Sri Lanka will be relying heavily on their bowling spearhead once again.

On the other hand, in the dying embers of his international career, Gayle will look to sign off from his fifth, and final, World Cup on a high. Leading the run-charts for West Indies in the tournament, the 39-year-old has shown signs of vintage form in the recent past. With no pressure of qualifying, a liberated Gayle could end up doing the damage at the top of the order.

Playing host in their first game of the tournament, the Riverside Ground in Chester-le-Street produced a sluggish surface in Sri Lanka's nine-wicket loss to South Africa. Durham is expected to have clear skies on Monday, with extremely low chances of rain.



MR EFFICIENT



After missing out on his maiden World Cup ton against Afghanistan -- when he was dismissed in the nineties -- English opener Jonny Bairstow finally managed to register his first hundred in the ongoing flagship event against India yesterday. It was a do-or-die encounter for hosts England in their battle to secure a semifinal place and the right-handed opener gave them a flying start. Bairstow was dismissed on 111 off 109 balls, which included ten fours and six sixes. That knock helped England post a huge total of 337 for seven in fifty overs.

WI looking to build for future after honest meeting

ICC

West Indies have done some soul-searching since their elimination from the World Cup and head coach Floyd Reifer insists the clash against Sri Lanka today is their first step on the path to a brighter future.

The West Indies were knocked out of semifinal contention by India on Thursday and then had a team meeting in the Old Trafford changing rooms that lasted over an hour.

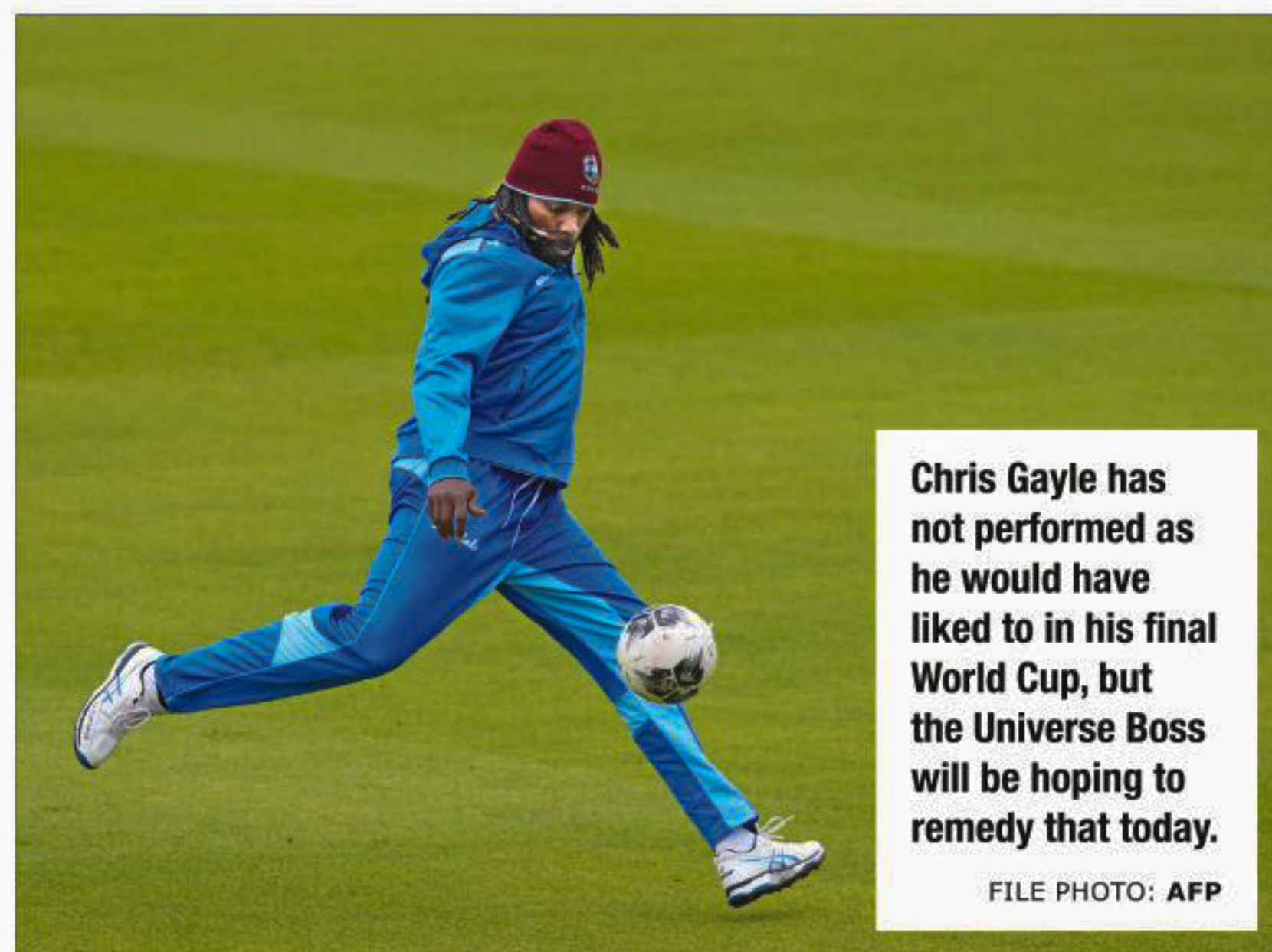
An opening win over Pakistan has been followed by nothing but defeats and washouts to leave them searching for answers. But with Sri Lanka up next in Durham on Monday, Reifer insists there is plenty to play for.

"Yes, we are out of the World Cup, but there is still a lot of cricket to play after the World Cup. It's important for us to, you know, find the winning ways and find the winning formula going forward, so it is important for us to play this game as hard as possible," he said.

"We want to create that winning culture. It has to start from somewhere. So we're going to approach every game in a professional manner. The guys are still up for it. We're good to go."

"We had a long conversation in the dressing room, so we did a lot of soul-searching. It is important for us and important for the fans in the Caribbean as well, for us to put up the performances, even at the back end of the World Cup."

The West Indies have come very close to further victories at this year's World Cup. They had Australia in all sorts of trouble in their second game and came within a metre of beating



Chris Gayle has not performed as he would have liked to in his final World Cup, but the Universe Boss will be hoping to remedy that today.

FILE PHOTO: AFP

New Zealand. But a failure to get over the line has cost them dear. Reifer added: "I think we didn't seize the key moments in games. You look back at our tournament, we played well against Pakistan. We had Australia on the ropes. New Zealand as well, you know. I thought we need to seize the key moments in the game. At crucial times we, you know, we dropped a few crucial chances as well."

"And then collectively, you know, we didn't bat properly. So it's just small things that we didn't do, the 1 percenters that didn't we do well. So these are the sort of things we discussed as a team."

"The players are not comfortable with their performances, responsibility, those sort of conversations we had in

that team meeting. So going forward, I'm looking forward to seeing how the guys play in the next two games."

But Reifer insists the future is in good hands. "The future of our cricket is good. You know, we have a lot of young guys here. Hope, Pooran, Hetmyer, Oshane Thomas. We have young John Campbell. So our future is good. I'm confident in these youngsters that going forward we can bring West Indies cricket back to where it belongs at the top."

"Yes, it is unfortunate we didn't get to the final four in this competition, but going forward I'm happy from what I have seen. Sheldon Cottrell had a very good World Cup. So we have a lot of young guys that we can mould and build a strong unit going forward."

Batting has cost us, says Karunaratne

REUTERS, Chester-le-Street

Sri Lanka have been let down by their batting line-up at the World Cup and must perform as a unit if they are to have a shot at qualifying for the semifinals, skipper Dimuth Karunaratne said Sunday.

"I think the batting is the main collapse," Karunaratne told reporters.

"We played five matches, we couldn't get a hundred, only a couple of fifties in our team. That is the only major thing."

"If you want to compete with the good sides, you have to have a good batting line-up and you have to put runs on the board. So I think in this World Cup, the major (problem) is the batting line-up."

"They have capabilities to score runs. They were scoring but as a unit we couldn't perform really well in these matches. Everyone has to put their hands up, put their heads down and put some runs on the board if you want to really win the matches."

Sri Lanka's fate rests on how England and Bangladesh, above them in the standings, fare in their remaining games. "We can't control the other games," Karunaratne added. "I think we have a good chance but we have to win these two games and wait for... what will happen in the other games."

INFO ZONE

HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP

WEST INDIES		SRI LANKA
4	WON	2
2	LOSS	4
0	TIE	0
0	NR	0

HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS

WEST INDIES		SRI LANKA
28	WON	25
25	LOSS	28
0	TIE	0
3	NR	3

LAST MEETING

Nov 23 2016 at Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo
Sri Lanka won by 1 run



WEST INDIES		SRI LANKA
SHELDON COTTRELL		LASITH MALINGA
28	WKTS	331
5/46	BBM	6/38
5.89	ECO	5.34
31.5	SR	32.5
1	4W	11
1	5W	8