

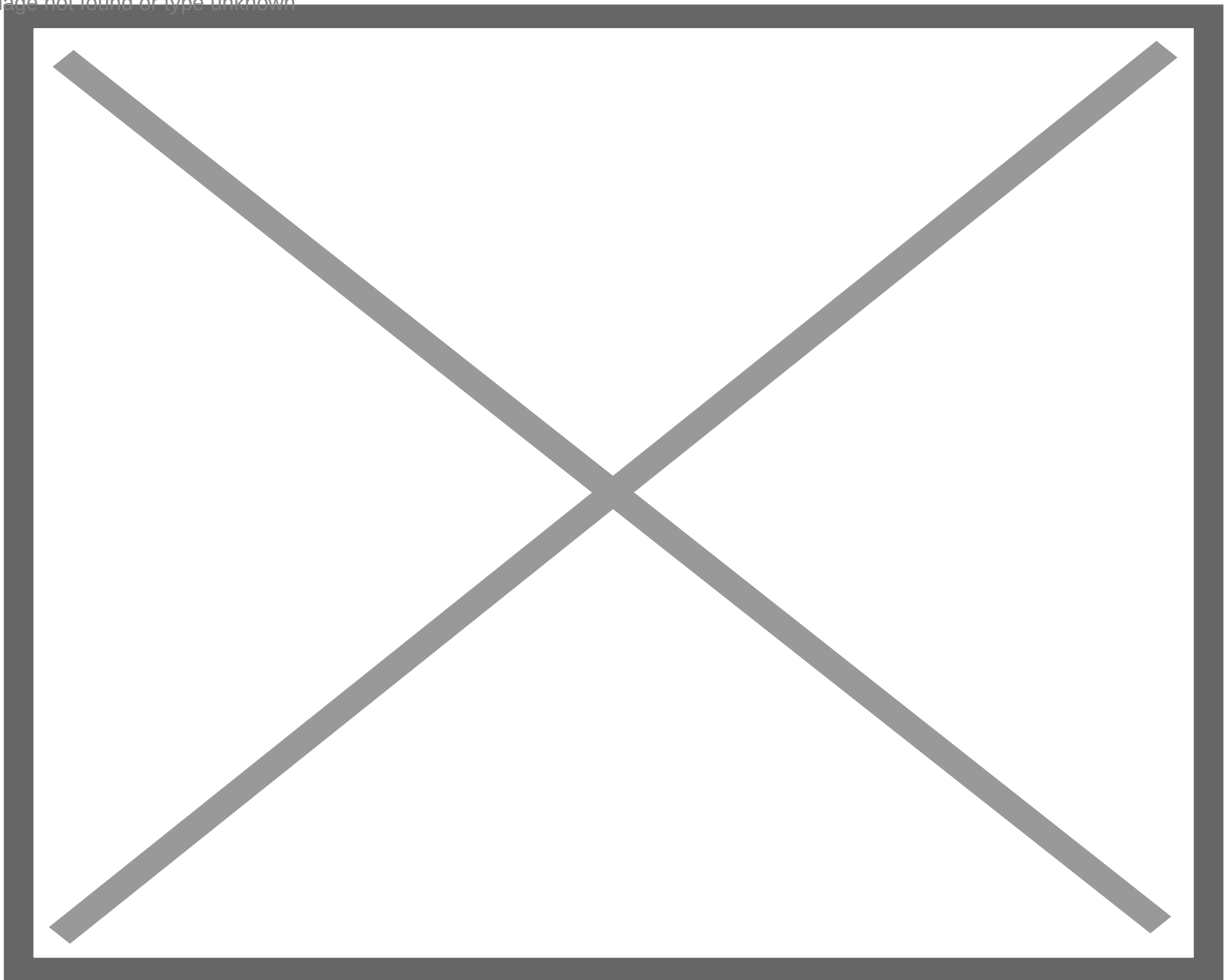
Mottley Leads Barbados Farewell to Sir Garfield Sobers as Plaskett Attends State Funeral

Prime Minister Mia Mottley led Barbados' farewell to cricket legend and National Hero Sir Garfield Sobers at Kensington Oval, where Rihanna joined regional leaders and Delegate Stacey Plaskett attended at Mottley's invitation for the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Caribbean / **Published On July 30, 2026 08:06 AM /**

Staff Consortium **July 30, 2026**

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Scenes from Sir Garfield Sobers' state funeral in Barbados, where Prime Minister Mia Mottley led tributes, Rihanna joined mourners and Delegate Stacey Plaskett attended at Mottley's invitation.

Barbados gave a state farewell Wednesday to Sir Garfield Sobers at Kensington Oval, the ground most closely associated with his rise from a gifted young Barbadian athlete to the man widely

regarded as cricket's greatest all-rounder.

Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley delivered the nation's tribute, while Barbadian National Hero Robyn Rihanna Fenty joined regional leaders, government officials and generations of West Indies cricket greats. Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett attended at Mottley's invitation, providing a U.S. Virgin Islands presence at the funeral.

Barbadians lined the streets as a gun carriage carried Sobers' flag-draped coffin through Bridgetown and Fontabelle to Kensington Oval. Following the service, the procession continued to Coral Ridge Memorial Gardens, where President Jeffrey Bostic, Mottley, Rihanna and other dignitaries laid wreaths at his grave.

While in Barbados, Plaskett also held private meetings with the minister responsible for tourism and international transport and other senior leaders to discuss tourism, transportation, economic development and opportunities for greater regional cooperation.

"Leadership is about building relationships before you need them," Plaskett said. "Every conversation we had today has the potential to create opportunities for the Virgin Islands tomorrow. Whether we're talking about tourism, transportation, economic development, or regional cooperation, our Territory benefits when we are engaged, respected, and working alongside our Caribbean neighbors."

"Everywhere I went, I was reminded of something I have always believed: the Virgin Islands has extraordinary potential," Plaskett said. "Our neighbors recognize our strengths and see the important role we can play in shaping the future of our region. I return home even more convinced that by strengthening these relationships and putting them to work for our people, we can create new opportunities and deliver the future Virgin Islanders deserve."

Sobers died July 17 at age 89, just 11 days before his 90th birthday. Born Garfield St. Aubrun Sobers in St. Michael, Barbados, he made his first-class debut at 16 and entered Test cricket for the West Indies at 17.

He played 93 Test matches between 1954 and 1974, scoring 8,032 runs at an average of 57.78 and taking 235 wickets. His ability to dominate as a batter, bowl both pace and multiple forms of spin, and excel in the field established him as one of the most versatile players in cricket history.

At age 21, Sobers scored an unbeaten 365 against Pakistan, setting a record for the highest individual Test score that stood for 36 years before Brian Lara surpassed it in 1994. In 1968, while playing for Nottinghamshire, he became the first batter in first-class cricket to hit six sixes in one over.

Sobers also captained the West Indies, was knighted for his contributions to cricket in 1975 and was named a National Hero of Barbados in 1998. His standing in the sport is further reflected in the ICC's annual Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy, awarded to the world's leading male cricketer.

Mottley used the national tribute to place Sobers' career within the broader story of Barbados, describing his achievements as a source of confidence for a small country emerging from colonial rule and approaching independence.

She said his success demonstrated that Barbados' size and history did not have to restrict its ambitions, while his conduct showed that exceptional achievement could exist alongside humility, fairness and a connection to ordinary people.

“We thank you for teaching us that greatness could wear humility, that excellence could still belong to ordinary people,” Mottley said.

She described Sobers’ final departure from Kensington Oval as Barbados’ last opportunity to give him the standing ovation that had followed many of his greatest performances.

Rihanna’s attendance also carried particular national significance. She and Sobers had been Barbados’ two living National Heroes before his death. Rihanna arrived at Kensington Oval alongside Mottley and later joined the prime minister and other officials in laying a wreath at Sobers’ grave.

The funeral brought together several generations of West Indies cricket, including former captains and players Brian Lara, Sir Clive Lloyd, Sir Vivian Richards, Sir Andy Roberts and Richie Richardson. Cricket West Indies President Kishore Shallow and Chief Executive Officer Chris Dehring were also among those attending.

Lara, whose 375 against England broke Sobers’ long-standing Test record, remembered him as a mentor and personal influence. Sir Clive called for Sobers’ skills and teachings to be preserved through opportunities for younger cricketers.

Regional representation included St. Lucia Prime Minister and CARICOM Chairman Philip J. Pierre, along with other current and former Caribbean leaders and government officials. A message from King Charles III was also presented, while a gathering at Lord’s Cricket Ground in London watched the Barbados service and remembered Sobers’ performances there.

The farewell at Kensington Oval reflected the breadth of Sobers’ legacy: a Barbadian National Hero, West Indies captain and international sporting figure whose records established his greatness, but whose place in Caribbean history also rests on what his success represented for Barbados and the wider region.