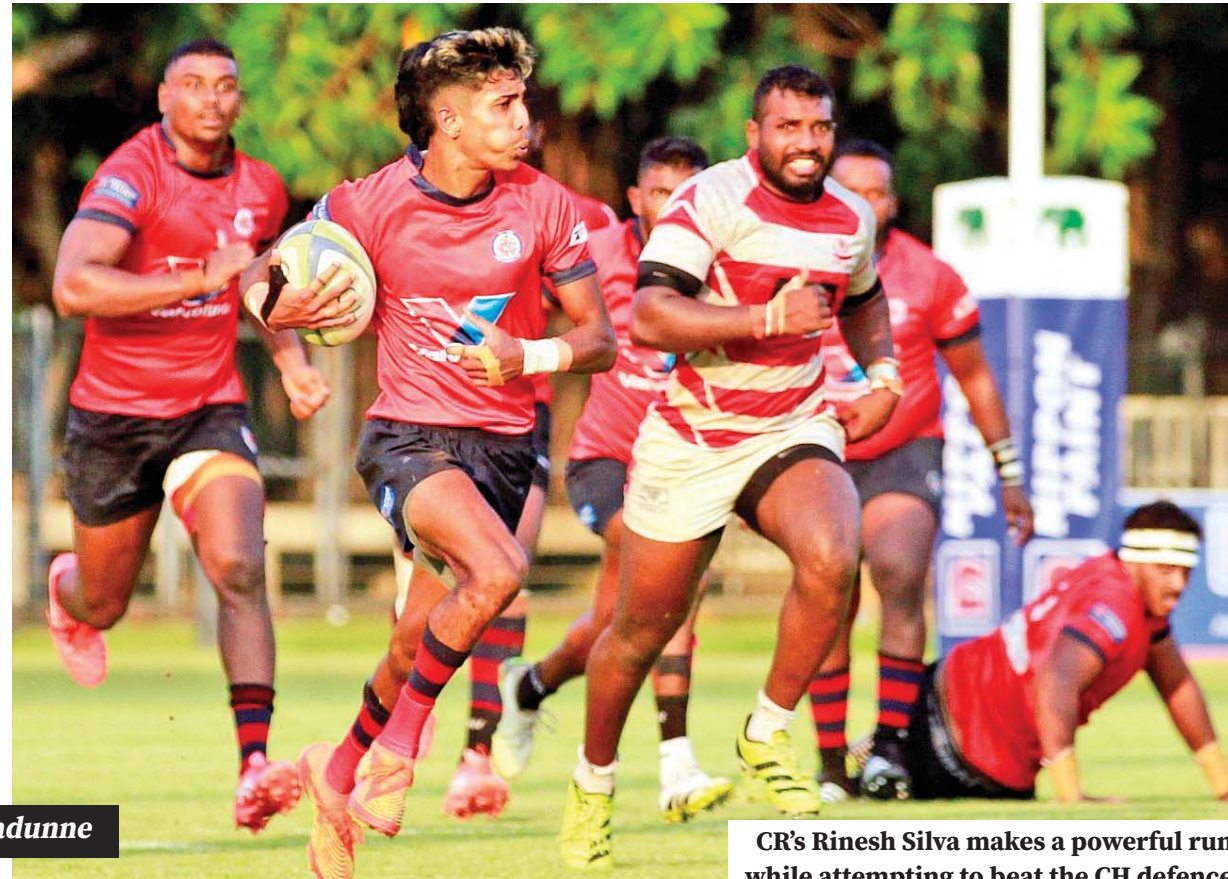




CR's Kavindu de Costa (right) moves in to bring down CH player Janith Lakshan in their last week's match at the Race Course ground in Colombo as CH player Rohitha Rajapaksa races in to support. CR won 32-12

Pix: Dushmantha Mayadunne



CR's Rinesh Silva makes a powerful run while attempting to beat the CH defence

Now or never for CR against Kandy hitch

BY CALLISTUS DAVY

Rugby has never been the toast of CR and FC for the past 26 years, more precisely since the Red Shirts or Longden Place club won the inter club League title in 1998.

But today as the hours tick by, the one-time club of the elitists could either bring the curtain down on yet another chapter of a season gone unfulfilled or celebrate a run fit for a Champion.

They hold the advantage of a four-point lead moving out against the title defender Kandy SC, an outfit that has made them one of the most successful sports teams in the country and the envy of many.

Apart from one blemish when they lost to CR in a first round match, Kandy SC and their rivals today have been playing the best rugby from among the eight teams that started the season although they fell below expectations at some stages as the League proceeded.

It can only be hoped that Sunday's decider will at least not disappoint the few rugby fans that could be joined by more given its importance as a League finale appropriately contested by the best two protagonists.

Both teams are short of nothing as they possess equally balanced forward Packs while their backlines are capable of penetrating the defences should the action boil down to fast open rugby.

Behind the scenes, analysts contend that failure on the part of CR to post victory today could leave the Red Shirts groping in the dark for the next 25 years with their cabinet still short of a most coveted prize that has been going Kandy SC's way on more than 20 occasions.

Others contend that a win for Kandy SC will mean nothing for the promotion of rugby or its desire to rake in more followers.

Just four points separate both teams and Kandy SC to retain the title need to win while at the same time preventing CR from securing a bonus point or win with a bonus point scoring four tries and win beyond a seven point margin. But CR could still win the title even with a defeat provided they rake in a bonus point scoring four tries or lose within a seven point margin and prevent Kandy SC from securing a bonus point.

For the record CR last won the League title with Champika Nishantha as captain in 1998 and came very near to winning it on another occasion in 2010 with their current coach Dushanth Lewke as captain.

Interestingly on that occasion the decider was at Lognden Place and CR lost to Kandy SC 12-14 with just half a bonus point making the difference between the two sides.



CR's Chathura Seneviratne unleashes a hand-off on CH defender Avantha Lee



CR goal-kicker Chathura Seneviratne is poised for a penalty shot as his team-mate Dilshan Kelaniyagoda looks on



CH's prop forward Dushmantha Piyadharshana goes down as he appears to be shoulder-tackled by a CR defender



Facial expressions during tense moments of the match



The youngest fan at the CR-CH game had the privilege of a hosited view of the action



A rugby fan laughs at a joke



Nothing like cool comfortable headgear for a CH supporter before kick-off



A rugby fan talks to an unidentified player recovering from injury who seems to be missing being part of the action



A young rugby fan walks in to take her seat at the Race Course ground in Colombo