

## Series goes to Kiwis

REUTERS, Bridgetown

Trent Boult captured the final West Indies wicket in the third over with the second new ball to give New Zealand a tense 53-run win in the deciding third Test in Barbados on Monday and a 2-1 series victory.

New Zealand won the first Test in Jamaica, while West Indies won the second in Trinidad.

New Zealand's only previous series win in the West Indies was when they took a 1-0 victory in the two-match series in 2002.

The victory with 13.4 overs remaining in the final day's play also completed the third successive series win for Brendon McCullum's side after they beat West Indies 2-0 and India 1-0 at home in the southern hemisphere summer.

Boult had Jerome Taylor trapped in front for 12 to bowl the hosts out for 254, chasing 308 to win.

Facing the prospect of intermittent rain, McCullum had declared at overnight 331 for seven, a lead of 307, with Kane Williamson unbeaten on 161.

The West Indies were in trouble almost from the start of their second innings as medium-fast bowler Boult dismissed Kraigg Brathwaite (six) and Kirk Edwards (10) cheaply.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**NEW ZEALAND:** First innings 293

**WEST INDIES:** First innings 317

**NEW ZEALAND:** Second innings 331 for 7 declared (Williamson 161 not out, Neesham 51, Watling 29, McCullum 25; Roach 4-55, Holder 2-26, Taylor 1-54)

**WEST INDIES:** Second innings 254 (Holder 52, Bravo 40, Shillingford 30 not out, Ramdin 29, Chanderpaul 25; Southee 3-28, Boult 3-48, Craig 3-84)  
**Result:** New Zealand won by 53 runs and clinched the 3-Test series 2-1.

**Player-of-the-match:** Kane Williamson.

**Player-of-the-series:** Kane Williamson.

# The ballboy who might one day be king

QUIAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

In a season during which, fast breaks and transition football have overtaken possession football as the new dominant style, a look at the top scorers list in Brazil 2014 reveals plenty about the kind of player currently in vogue. There is Lionel Messi and Neymar, both players of exceptional skill and elegance for whom the ball seems stuck permanently to the foot. There is James Rodriguez, a player with a left foot that is at the same time both touchingly sublime and crushingly destructive. And then there is Thomas Mueller.

Mueller is an anomaly on the list, not because he is not a top player (he is), but because he is so far removed from the image of the modern super-footballer. He cannot dribble like Messi, he lacks all the elegance of Neymar, and has none of the physical attributes of Ronaldo. But, Mueller too has bagged four goals in the World Cup. And yet, he is not even an out-and-out striker. Taken in isolation, this stat might have seemed like an outlier had Mueller also not registered a

Golden Boot winning five-goal haul in his first tournament in South Africa 2010. This means that Mueller is now on nine World Cup goals in just nine World Cup games. For the sake of perspective, consider this -- that is ahead of Argentina legend Diego Maradona, a man who just four years ago saw Mueller at a pre-match press conference and thought that he was a ballboy.

The evolution of modern football has done away with the necessity for specialist footballers. Very few teams in the World Cup line up with what can be described as a traditional center-forward. Mario Gomez did not even make the World Cup, and Klaas-Jan Huntelaar is just the desperate go-to man for the Dutch. Interestingly, the only two that do start with traditional number 9s have struggled so far. Step forward Romelo Lukaku and Fred. Instead, the demand is for mobile forwards who can play almost like attacking midfielders. It makes sense, especially for bigger teams as their opponents continue to play deeper and deeper robbing them of the most vital of elements in football -- space.

Here is where Mueller comes in. The



THOMAS MUELLER

*In 2010 Diego Maradona mistook Thomas Mueller for a ballboy. Against USA last week, Mueller overtook the Argentina legend on the all-time World Cup goalscorer's list.*

German is a unique footballer in that he has the ability to find space like no other. He trots around, doing little arching runs, darting between centre and full

backs, dropping back into space when they move deep or stretching them when they want to come short. Most of his work is done off-camera, and even when he has the ball, he looks like a player who will not quite know what to do with it when he gets it. His gangly appearance, ankle-length socks and overall ungainliness paint him as a throwback footballer -- someone who would not look out of place in old, black and white reels. But so effective is Mueller at finding space that the Germans have a typically intimidating word to describe him -- the Raumdeuter. As with most German words, it is hard to find a direct English translation but the closest would be 'space interpreter' or 'space investigator'.

The Raumdeuter, far from being an ancient machine of destruction, is instead a footballer who proves that there is always space for players who can think ahead in this game. His goals are not always pretty, mostly scrambled affairs, or dribbled shots beyond the post -- but they almost always count. After the USA game Mueller himself joked that he had scored 'a good goal for once.' Post-

match, Jurgen Klinsmann labelled him 'a remarkable footballer' and Joachim Loew marvelled at his ability to 'constantly find space.'

It would be a disservice to Mueller to extol his virtues of manipulating space and forget that he can be a genuinely deadly two-footed finisher, is fairly quick off the mark and is not bad at heading the ball either. Plus, as Loew once said, he possesses that unteachable quality of 'cheek' -- the certain fearlessness when put on the biggest stage of them all. Watch him wink at the camera when it focuses on him during the anthems, and you will think that this is a Saturday afternoon park kick-about and not a World Cup encounter with millions watching.

At 24, and with fitness permitting, Mueller still looks good to go for two more World Cups. With nine goals already, the smart money should be on him to overtake the Ronaldo-Miroslav Klose held joint record of 15 World Cup goals. And even though the goals might not be pretty, it does not sound too bad for a player who not four years ago was mistaken for a ballboy.



Costa Rica goalkeeper Keylor Navas (R) makes an outstanding save on a penalty kick by Greece forward Fanis Gekas during the shootout in their round of 16 match at Pernambuco Arena in Recife on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP

## Navas keeps Ticos alive

GOAL.COM



Great goalkeepers from Central America don't exactly roll off the tongue, it's true, but Keylor Navas is an excellent exponent of his trade -- a man who has bided his time to make a name for himself in La Liga and who has kept out some of the finest strikers in the world as part of Costa Rica's run to the quarterfinals. England and Italy couldn't get past him while it took a spot-kick from Uruguay to deny him a perfect group-stage record.

Against Greece, a 91st-minute goal took the match to extra-time, then penalties -- and Navas came to the fore. With the score locked at 3-3, he threw himself high to his right to block Theofanis Gekas' kick. Umana slotted home the winner, and now Costa Rica are in dreamland, with a match against Netherlands for a semifinal slot.

It's a story of patience. The 27-year-old started his career with all-conquering Costa Rican club Saprissa, winning a host of national titles and also the CONCACAF Champions League, which saw him appear in the FIFA Club World Cup as well. Later, in 2009, he was named Best Goalkeeper in the Gold Cup. He earned a move to Albacete the following year, where he played in Spain's second and third tiers.

Levante's scouts were watching, though, and signed Navas in 2011, initially on loan and then on a permanent transfer. The Costa Rican was forced to wait in the wings and spent his first two seasons as back-up to Gustavo Munua, only stepping up to the No. 1 position after the Uruguayan left to join Fiorentina last summer and subsequently returned to his homeland with Nacional.

The wait was worthwhile. In 2013-14, Navas was in spectacular form for Levante and kept 15 clean sheets for the Valencia-based side in La Liga. Agile, athletic and boasting remarkable reflexes, he has caught the eye of a number of top teams this term, among them Atletico, who will likely need a new goalkeeper with Courtois set to return to Chelsea.

"In key moments, Keylor Navas helped us," his club boss Joaquin Caparros beamed recently. "To beat quality opponents you have to be intense, show maximum efficiency and have a good goalkeeper."

They had one, and so do Costa Rica. Before the World Cup Spanish tennis player Pablo Andujar smashed balls at the Costa Rican with his racquet from the edge of the box on a visit to the club he has supported since childhood. Few found the net and the Davis Cup player could only watch in admiration at how his 160 kilometre-per-hour drives were repelled by the shot-stopper.

"I play in a very competitive league and every Sunday I come up against some of the best players in the world, so I stopped being nervous about facing big-name players a long time ago," Navas told FIFA in an interview published recently. "I feel quite relaxed. For me it's a great challenge to play against the best."

With Navas in this form, Robin van Persie and Arjen Robben had better watch out. He, and his team, are the story of the tournament so far, and it's not over yet.

## Murray rolls on Mohammedan, Abahani share the spoils

AFP, London

Defending champion Andy Murray reached his seventh successive Wimbledon quarterfinal Monday with a straight sets demolition of Kevin Anderson under the Centre Court roof while torrential rain brought more chaos to his rivals.

Third-seeded Murray defeated the big-serving South African 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) with 11 aces and 49 winners and next faces Bulgarian 11th seed Grigor Dimitrov who reached his first Wimbledon quarterfinal with a 6-4, 7-6 (8/6), 6-2 win over Argentina's Leonardo Mayer.

The 23-year-old Dimitrov is the first Bulgarian man to make the Wimbledon last-eight but has a 3-1 losing record to Murray.

Just as on Saturday, rain brought a lengthy stoppage in the afternoon with more than 30 matches -- doubles and juniors -- cancelled until Tuesday.

All last-16 men's and women's matches are traditionally played on the second Monday but seven will now take place 24 hours later instead.

Stanislas Wawrinka was stunned that he had to play his third round tie, one of Saturday's victims, on Monday in a scheduling nightmare which will force him to play five matches in seven days if he is to win the title.

The third-seeded Australian Open champion defeated Uzbekistan's Denis Istomin 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 to reach the fourth round for the first time since 2009.

Top seed Novak Djokovic reached the last eight for the sixth successive year with a 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) win over French 14th seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga.

In women's section, Russia's Ekaterina Makarova sent former finalist Agnieszka Radwanska crashing to a surprise 6-3, 6-0 exit, while giant-killer Barbora Zahlavova Strycova led a triple Czech charge into the quarterfinals.

Radwanska's exit means three of the top four seeds have been eliminated from the women's draw following the defeats of Williams and Li Na.

New title favourite, 2004 champion Maria Sharapova will have to come back on Tuesday to play her last-16 tie against Germany's Angelique Kerber after heavy afternoon rain persuaded organisers that there would not be time to get the match completed.

## Murray rolls on Mohammedan, Abahani share the spoils

SPORTS REPORTER



Archivals Abahani and Mohammedan SC shared the spoils of a 1-1 draw in their Nitol Tata Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Ghanaian hitman Osei Morison put Abahani ahead in the 10th minute, which was cancelled out by Wahed Ahmed three minutes into the second half in front of a couple of hundred spectators -- a rare sight in a match between the two traditional rivals.

The draw left both sides with a sense of not pride, but ground lost in the title race as leaders Sheikh Jamal are now 11 points clear of Abahani and 14 points

ahead of Mohammedan. The league leaders need only five points from as many matches to win the league title.

While Sheikh Jamal look out of reach, both Mohammedan and Abahani will be playing the rest of their matches to grab the second position in the 10-team table where they finished third and fourth respectively last season.

There might have been a few reasons for spectators to not turn up at the big bowl, but there were all the ingredients to turn it into a fascinating contest. Abahani dominated the first half and took a deserved lead before Mohammedan fought back to level the margin, which kept their head-to-head count for the season on par. In six meetings between the two sides, both Abahani and Mohammedan have won twice and

played out two draws.

From the outset, Abahani appeared in attacking mood and put heavy pressure on the Mohammedan backline, which was exposed time and again. Abahani found the back of the net when Morison, being set up by a Wali Faisal chip, slammed home from close range in the 10th minute. Then Atiqur Rahman Meshu drove wide of the open net in the 26th minute to disappoint the Sky Blues.

After resumption, Mohammedan seized grip of the match as Yousuf Sifat, who replaced striker Zahid Hasan Emily, posed constant threats pairing with Wahed Ahmed. And it was Wahed who levelled the margin in the 48th minute, before disappointing his side by squandering two scoring chances on the hour mark and 10 minutes from time.

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