



**Will New Zealand pacer Trent Boult again spit venom against Australia in the final today?** PHOTO: REUTERS

## Which leftie will do right?

AFP, Melbourne

For the second time at this World Cup, Australia's Mitchell Starc and New Zealand's Trent Boult will be asked to deliver a killer blow that could determine their team's fate in today's final.

The two lethal left-arm fast bowlers will go head-to-head at the Melbourne Cricket Ground as the tournament's leading wicket-takers who lit up the group clash between the co-hosts exactly a month ago.

Boult grabbed 5-27 to bundle Australia out for 151 in Auckland before Starc hit back with 6-28 to leave the Black Caps nine down and only managing to go past the modest target due to a Kane Williamson six.

New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum said it would be hard to forget the performance of both Boult and Starc in what was "a tremendous advertisement for the game".

"Mitchell and Boult put outstanding spells in that game and both were able to get the ball to swing quite substantially," said McCullum. "They posed a lot of questions with wicket-taking deliveries."

The two 25-year-olds have played a major role in taking the trans-Tasman rivals to the final, with Boult's 21 wickets in eight games just one more than Starc. But the Australian has played a match less following a washed out game against Bangladesh in Brisbane. Boult has now taken more wickets

in eight World Cup games than he did in his first 16 one-day internationals where he had only 18 scalps.

Starc, taller than Boult, generates a lot of pace and bounce but his wicket-taking delivery is the one that he brings in to the right-hander, usually a deadly weapon for left-arm fast bowlers.

He is Australia's most prolific one-day bowler in recent times with 81 wickets in 40 matches that include three five-wicket hauls in his first 17 internationals.

Starc, who has extracted plenty from responsive Australian pitches, has been equally successful on slow, flat wickets. In three recent matches in the United Arab Emirates, he claimed nine scalps against Pakistan.



**Can Mitchell Starc clip the Kiwi wings in the blood and thunder World Cup final at the MCG today?** PHOTO: AFP

## A macho McCullum

AFP, Melbourne

When Brendon McCullum took over as captain of New Zealand in December 2012, the team was engulfed by dressing-room strife.

Now, just over two years later, the Black Caps are in their first World Cup final and the muscular, multi-skilled McCullum is being feted as a national hero.

The 33-year-old opener has sport in his blood.

In his schooldays, he was selected ahead of future All Blacks superstar Dan Carter in a regional rugby team but learned to love cricket hanging

around the grounds of New Zealand while his father Stuart carved out a first-class career with Otago from the 1970s to 1990s.

Older brother Nathan is also a New Zealand Test and ODI player, although he is likely to be watching Sunday's final against Australia from the MCG sidelines as he has yet to be selected for a game at the World Cup.

Facing the Australians in front of around 90,000 people at the MCG will not daunt the skipper, who needed all his battling qualities when he assumed the leadership of the team in 2012.

He replaced Ross Taylor as captain but immediately had to deny any

involvement in ousting his teammate from a leadership role.

McCullum was a controversial choice as his country's 28th captain with his tough, tattooed exterior in marked contrast to the wholesome boy-next-door Taylor who, in protest at being dumped as skipper, immediately withdrew from the ensuing tour of South Africa.

McCullum was seen as the preferred choice of newly-installed coach Mike Hesson, who never publicly endorsed Taylor and referred to him as being a board appointment.

In an editorial at the time, the New Zealand Herald described New Zealand Cricket as a rudderless ship and said "Taylor has become the latest poster-child for the high-performance dysfunction in our national summer game".

The controversy didn't affect McCullum's career too much. To date he has made 5,870 runs in 92 Tests with a highest score of 302 against India in February last year, the only Test triple century score by a New Zealander.

At the ongoing World Cup, he hit an 18-ball 50 against England, the fourth time he has reached an ODI half-century in 20 balls or fewer.

As well as a flamboyant, pinch-hitting role at the top of the Black Caps order, McCullum has a flair for the personal touch.

On his right shoulder, he has children's birthdates tattooed in Roman numerals.



## A Hughes feeling!

AFP, Melbourne

Amidst all the banter, there was evidence of deep mutual respect between Australia captain Michael Clarke and New Zealand counterpart Brendon McCullum as they chatted away during a photo opportunity with the World Cup trophy surrounded by the noise of whirring cameras at the MCG yesterday.

Asked what they had said, Clarke replied: "I think I'll keep that between Brendon and I, but the main message from both of us was we wish each other all the best."

Clarke added he was grateful for the support shown by McCullum and the New Zealand team following the passing of Australia batsman Phillip Hughes, aged just 25, who died after being struck on the back of a head by a bouncer in a domestic match in November.

"I have a great relationship with Brendon," said Clarke. "I'll always be grateful for the way he and his team respected the tragedy."

## 'Kya hua mauke ka'

AGENCIES, Mumbai

A popular advertisement aired during the World Cup, which shows a Pakistani fan's endless wait to beat India at the tournament, came back to bite the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), a day after India's 95-run loss to Australia in the semifinal.

The calm at the BCCI office was shattered by the constant ringing of the landlines on Friday as fans from Pakistan and Bangladesh -- the team India defeated in the quarterfinals -- called as many as 200 times to poke fun at India's exit.

As soon as the staff at the BCCI headquarters would pick up, the callers would sing: "Mauka mauka! Kya hua mauke ka? (What happened to the opportunity)?"

The callers were alluding to a Star Sports advertisement campaign in which the protagonist, a Pakistani fan, is shown waiting for his team to break the jinx of never having beaten India at the World

Cup. He is shown growing older with each unsuccessful attempt, but clings to his box of celebratory crackers, hoping for a turnaround.

After India beat Pakistan at the Adelaide Oval in their World Cup opener, the protagonist starts supporting other teams India play in the hope he would be able to celebrate. The background score in the advertisements was a qawwali containing the words 'mauka mauka'.

The calls started around 4 pm on Friday. After a point, the BCCI decided to disconnect the lines. "We got the telephone company to trace the origin of these calls. A large number of them were from Bangladesh, while the rest were from Pakistan," the BCCI staff member added.

Calls to the BCCI landline are usually regarding inquiries about dates of games or availability of match tickets. "This is the first time we have received calls from outside the country to mock the Indian team's performance," the staffer said.



## WORLD CUP COCKTAIL

Jignesh Sanghrajka -- the Indian cricket lover deemed too poor to get a visa to claim his prize of a ticket to the World Cup final -- has landed in Melbourne for the big event.

Only problem? His team didn't get there after their poor performance against Australia.

Sanghrajka won an Emirates competition, but was not granted an Australian visa because he didn't have enough money.

After a media campaign (and the backing of his travel mate), government killjoys relented.

He was in the air during India's loss to Australia. He also told the station he would be cheering for Australia in the final which, considering his treatment, is a miracle or sound PR.

### McCullum writes to India

India's glorious journey in the World Cup came to an end, but the tournament itself is far from over. The Black Caps may have noticed that they've gained more than a billion new fans, as Indians around the world cheer the Kiwis. After all, they are the neutral's favourites.

In the pre-final press conference, Brendon McCullum said that he's confident that the Indian fans will be rooting for the Kiwis.

"I reckon we might have the home crowd tomorrow actually. I think it's probably no secret that most of the other teams around the world would probably fair New Zealand to win against Australia. So hopefully we'll get a good smattering of support tomorrow, and I'm sure the Indian guys will certainly be rooting for us."

But the Kiwi captain is leaving nothing to chance. The hard-hitting batsman took the time out to write a heart warming letter, asking for the support of the world's most passionate cricket fans for this historic final.

### Lizzie marvels to sing NZ anthem

Kiwi classical-turned-pop singer Lizzie Marvely will get to merge both of her loves after being chosen to sing the New Zealand national anthem at today's Cricket World Cup final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Marvely, who has sung the anthem at more than 20 rugby and league games, said she was the captain of her King's College 1st XI cricket team during her time at the Auckland school.

"This is pretty huge. I think the only bigger live crowd that I have performed to would be the Warriors Grand Final in 2011 [Sydney], but this is very exciting and as a former 1st XI captain at high school, it's even more exciting," she said.



The 25-year-old, who was born in Rotorua and now lives in Auckland, started playing Kiwi cricket at age 7.

She said the final would be her first time singing at a cricket match, which compounded her nervousness even more.

"It's one of those events that the honour is ever-present, it never really diminishes and the nerves are pretty up there as well but it's very exciting. I'm very grateful to have the opportunity."

One of those hoping to join her across the Ditch is her father, who she said was overjoyed to discover she was off to Melbourne.

Marvely, who put out her third album, Collisions, last year, said she found out only on Friday that she had been chosen for the illustrious gig, and expected to fly to Melbourne on Saturday morning.

### Cricket 'Super Fans' armour up

Cricket Super fans, the 'Beige Brigade' are making emergency deliveries of Black Cap gear to under-dressed Kiwi supporters in Melbourne, ahead of the Cricket World Cup final.

Co-founder Paul Ford packed a suitcase full of shirts, hats and stubbies for supporters who had headed across the Tasman without first picking up their orders.

Beige Brigade members would drop off the gear to fans around the Aussie city and also dish it out from their hotel base.

"We haven't seen a demand like it for 16 years, when the Black Caps wore beige against Australia at Eden Park [in 2005]," Ford said. "We are not exactly Hallensteins but we have been selling heaps of stuff."

"At Auckland Airport I felt like a shirt trafficker."

Ford said some fans had managed to organise flights and tickets to Melbourne after Tuesday's semifinal win against South Africa but 'didn't have time' to pick up their Beige Brigade orders.

"We were happy to oblige in Melbourne and there will be a lot of appallingly dressed people at the MCG on Sunday."

Ford reckoned the Black Caps can pull off a shock result because there will be less pressure on the team than their Tasman rivals.

"There is a real spirit and humility about the players which people have really taken to. They are doing things the Kiwi way." -COMPILED

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