



VICTORY LAP GOES ON: The World Cup-winning Team Australia attend a public event in Melbourne yesterday, a day after their seven-wicket triumph in a lop-sided final against New Zealand at the MCG.

PHOTO:
AFP

These Kiwis are GOAT

AFP, Wellington

The New Zealand team has been dubbed a "goat" but in an endearing way as the country celebrated their appearance in the World Cup final rather than mourned the loss on Monday.

"This New Zealand cricket team is our GOAT, the Greatest of All Time," wrote the Herald on Sunday's Andrew Alderson.

"One hell of a ride," added The Press on the front page of its souvenir edition, while the New Zealand Herald admitted: "We were done by a better team."

New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum's World Cup philosophy of "no regrets" struck a chord with an enthralled public.

Former Black Caps fast bowler Jonathan Millmow said seven weeks "of rollicking entertainment" had been replaced by a below par effort on the day when it counted most.

"There will be post mortems, but they should be short and respectful of a side and a campaign that has been pretty much inch perfect until the entire cricket world's eyes set upon them," he wrote in The Dominion-Post.

Despair at the ease with which Australia wrapped up the final by seven wickets was quickly replaced on Radio New Zealand with talk of how the New Zealand team exceeded expectations and could only get better.

"Under McCullum and (coach Mike) Hesson, halcyon days lie ahead," said the national broadcaster.

Bars and restaurants had put on extra staff with many released early as crowds dwindled once it became evident the result would not go New Zealand's way.

Even ardent fans who had crossed the Tasman Sea to watch the final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground found it hard to sit through New Zealand in their death throes.

A little hangover for Clarke's Oz

AFP, Melbourne

Australia lauded its World Cup winning team Monday for a "fairytale" victory on home soil over New Zealand, with praise heaped on retiring one-day captain Michael Clarke after a dream farewell.

Clarke hit 74 as Australia cruised home by seven wickets in a one-sided final in front of a record crowd of 93,013 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday.

The win, culminating a gruelling tournament, was front page news across the country with The Australian newspaper saying: "Pitch perfect Australia lives the dream to claim fifth World Cup."

"Done it without raising a sweat or anybody's pulse," the broadsheet's cricket writer Peter Lalor said.

"Michael Clarke's side made easy work of New Zealand at the MCG, much as they had with India in the semifinal and Pakistan in the quarter."

Thousands of fans turned out to greet the hungover team in

Melbourne's Federation Square on Monday with the biggest cheers reserved for Clarke.

"A little hangover. I think I speak for everybody in that sense," he said when asked how he was feeling.

The Sydney Daily Telegraph focused its coverage on the outgoing Clarke, who announced his retirement from the one-day international format on the eve of the final.

"Pup's fairytale farewell as Aussies crowned world champions," it said on its front page, referring to Clarke by his nickname.

"Lifting the trophy provided Clarke the fairytale ending that seemed so unlikely in November, when his chronic hamstrings again betrayed him and the ambition of captaining a World Cup winning team appeared far-fetched," it added.

The captain, wearing a black armband, dedicated the win to Phillip Hughes, the teammate who died after being hit on the head by a bouncer last year, which the Telegraph said was a fitting tribute.

"Of course no silverware could erase the painful memories of Phillip Hughes' tragic and traumatising death," cricket writer Richard Hinds said.

"Yet, at the twilight of a confronting, even brutal summer, this was rich reward for Australia's experience, endurance and composure."

Australia batsman Hughes died on November 27 last year, two days after being hit on the head by a Sean Abbott bouncer in a first-class match in Sydney.

With Clarke choosing to now focus on Test cricket, The Age in Melbourne said the team was in transition but was in good hands, with Steve Smith expected to be named his successor.

"In Michael Clarke and Steven Smith, two generations of Australian cricket steered their team through the final leg of their long trek to a fifth World Cup," wrote Malcolm Knox, the Fairfax Media cricket writer.

"The outgoing captain and the incoming; the elder who has battled

his health all summer to get in, and the younger who has been almost impossible to get out.

"With Clarke's retirement from the one-day game, Australia is already in transition," he added.

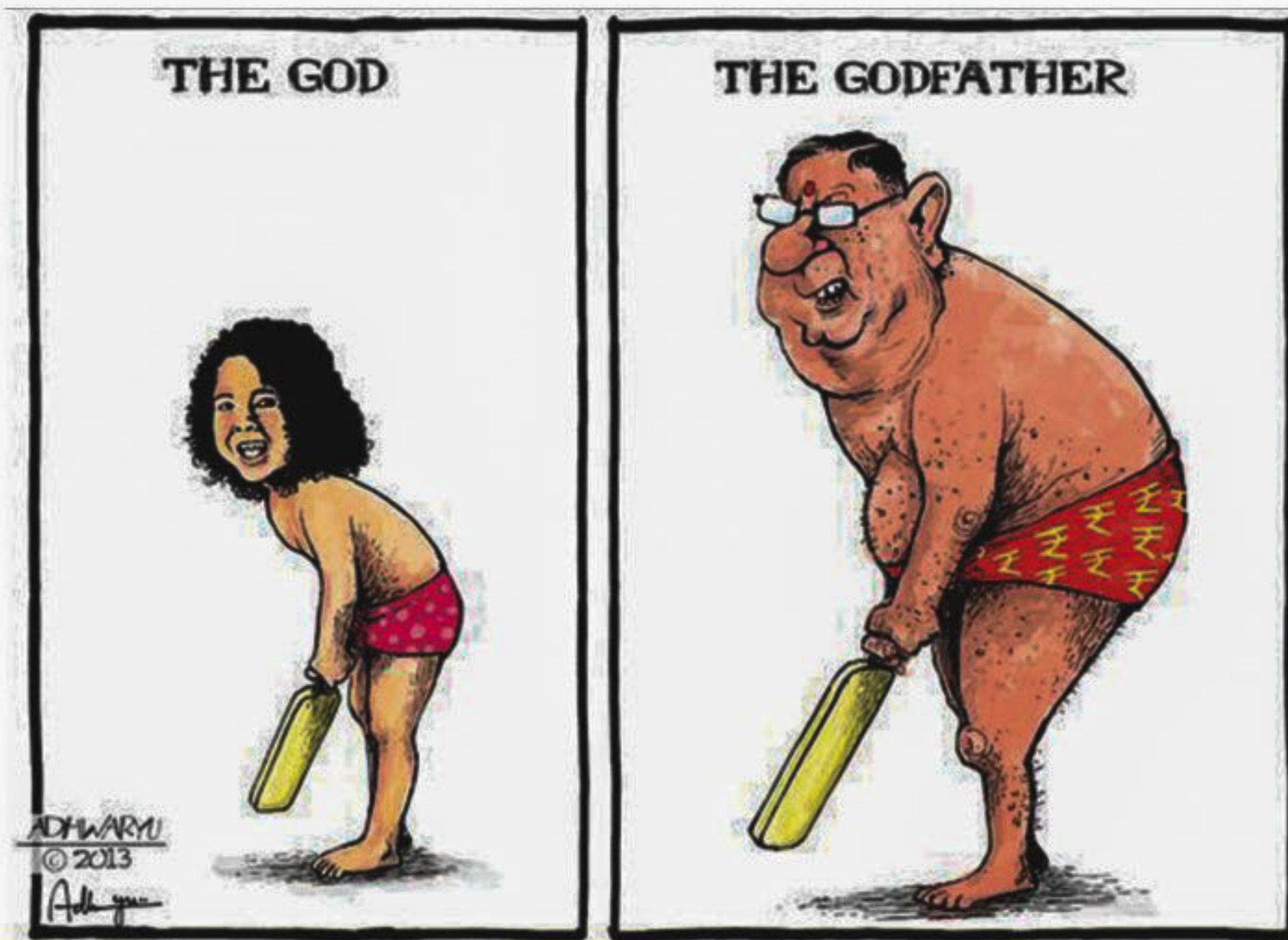
"Brad Haddin, and presumably Shane Watson and Mitchell Johnson, will not be defending their title in England in 2019, but otherwise the strength of the current team is its youth."

At the Melbourne fan meet and greet, Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss said "all of Australia is proud of them".

"They're a champion team and they're a team of champions. And they've flown the flag of Australia with great pride," he added.

"They won the trophy, they won the man-of-the-match for the final, they won the man-of-the-tournament."

Left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc was named player-of-the-tournament for a haul of 22 wickets at a meagre average of just over 10 apiece, while fellow quick James Faulkner was man-of-the-match.



After Australia's victory on Sunday, when Mark Nicholas read out the names of those on the dais, ICC chairman N Srinivasan was welcomed with boos from the audience. Nicholas quickly introduced the next guest -- Sachin Tendulkar. The boos then turned to cheers. Breaching the ICC's constitution, which mandated that ICC president AHM Mustafa Kamal give away the cup, Srinivasan decided to give it away himself. The above comic-posted by journalist Freddie Wilde on twitter-referring to Tendulkar as God of cricket, as he is sometimes referred to in India, and Srinivasan as the 'Godfather', went viral on the internet yesterday.

BCL one dayers from Apr 5

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board announced the schedule of the Bangladesh Cricket League's one-day version yesterday. The four-team tournament will begin on April 5. It will be played in a single league format with the top two finishers battling in the final on April 11.

Baz skipper of ICC XI

AFP, Melbourne

Brendon McCullum has been named captain of the ICC's team of the tournament. The team was announced yesterday. The selection panel said batsmen Mahmudullah, Shaiman Anwar and fast bowlers Umesh Yadav, Mohammad Shami and Wahab Riaz as well as South African spinners Imran Tahir and Ravi Ashwin were unlucky to miss out.

SQUAD

Martin Gupthill (NZL), Brendon McCullum (NZL - capt), Kumar Sangakkara (SRI), Steve Smith (AUS), AB de Villiers (RSA), Glenn Maxwell (AUS), Corey Anderson (NZL), Daniel Vettori (NZL), Mitchell Starc (AUS), Trent Boult (NZL), Morne Morkel (RSA), Brendan Taylor (ZIM - 12th man).

One-sided wins & Tigers' time under the sun

NAIMUL KARIM

This was a one-sided World Cup. Period. Let's keep room for no ifs and buts with regards to this issue. Even if there was a scope for argument; it was quashed with Australia's emphatic win against the Black Caps on Sunday.

All those hopes for an exciting finish -- similar to the match in Auckland -- faded away after Michael Clarke and Steven Smith showed their class on the biggest stage. Eventually it was the team that utilised the conditions best, 'batted' themselves to victory.

Come to think of it, you can barely keep track of the number of batting records broken in this tournament.

The World Cup was like a storm that appeared out of nowhere and destroyed all those records that were, in a sense, safely preserved for decades. The double-centuries, the fastest fifties, the highest score in a World Cup, the highest score in a semifinal, the most number of boundaries in a game; you name it and in all likelihood it's been broken.

Now this isn't just one of those cynical rants; after all it did have its share of fun. However, the series of one-sided games, to a certain extent, took away the shine from the game's flagship event.

If one were to define 'one-sided wins' as matches which were won by more than a 100 runs or by more than eight wickets, then there were 19 such occasions.

The 2011 World Cup witnessed 17 such matches, while 2007 saw 19. In essence, there may not seem to be much of a difference, however a closer look at the matches reveal as to why the event in 2015 lost a lot more appeal.

While 2007 and 2011 witnessed most of the non-Full Members get thrashed, in 2015 it was one Full Member thumping the other. Of the 19 one-sided games this time, nine of them were between Test nations. This of course excludes New Zealand's 98-

run win over Sri Lanka or Australia's 95-run against India in the semifinals.

While there was the occasional close game, there just weren't enough thrillers to fill the appetite. Yes, 400s and double-centuries are fun to watch; but witnessing a match fade

away only 20 overs into the second innings is not.

The overall context of the World Cup however was hugely different to that of Bangladesh's perspective. When it comes to the Tigers' performance, this was clearly the best World Cup treat that their fans have ever received.

The effect that the Tigers had on their fans worldwide was amazing. The soap operas on Star Jalsha were replaced with cricketing drama; Mahmudullah Riyad was suddenly the most ideal family-man in town and the thousands of aspiring slow left-arm bowlers across the neighbourhood preferred bowling pace during those two months. The deteriorating political scenario was no longer the most talked-about issue; heck, the World Cup had even become a reason to withdraw strikes.

For the Tigers, the moment of the World Cup was the huddle in Adelaide. Minutes after Rubel Hossain reversed a yorker past James Anderson's helpless bat, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza breathed a sigh of relief and collapsed on the ground. That was followed by the entire team jumping over the skipper.

They had gone through such a rough time prior to the World Cup that a mere handshake or a group huddle wouldn't have been enough to release all that built-in frustration. It was the World Cup which raised the bar for the Tigers.



The World Cup down under is something the Tigers fans will cherish for a long time. They will also remember this particular huddle of Team Tigers after their fantastic win against England in Adelaide on March 9.

PHOTO:
STAR FILE