

## South Africa missed Boucher's experience

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THE ICC World Cup is coming to its final week and on the way there have been surprises and upsets as would be expected of any major sport. The upsets have been in the elimination of the champions of the last three editions Australia and the hot favourites South Africa at the quarterfinals stage itself.



The Australians admittedly were not looking the unbeatable team they were for the last couple of decades or so and they went out to a determined Indian team. The South Africans were humbled by lowly rated New Zealand who have now reached the 6th semi finals in the history of the cricket world cup which is a terrific record indeed. The Protease must hate the 'c' word but they made such a hash of chasing a small total that they lost by a big margin in the end. How they would have missed the gutsy batting of Mark Boucher who had the priceless ability of hitting South Africa out of trouble. Experience is a very handy weapon in crunch situations and South Africa badly missed Boucher's experience in the quarterfinals.

India have had the toughest of examinations this World Cup. They have been in a group where they had to work hard at winning their games even against the associate teams like Ireland and Netherlands. What that has done is to toughen the team up and make the opposition understand that this is not a team that depends on any individual but has plenty of players who will put their hand up when needed. No praise can be too high for Suresh Raina who played a capital innings and helped Yuvraj Singh take India to a win against Australia. When he came to the crease the match was delicately poised and another wicket at that stage would have tilted the game Australia's way. The Aussies knew it and so they came all guns firing at Raina but he was equal to the task. He dealt with the short ball positively pulling it to the deep or quietly going under it and when Brett Lee after having a few words with him pitched a length ball Raina dispatched it over long on for a six and shut the pacer up effectively. Australia's bullying tactics failed miserably simply because these bullies did not have the intrinsic ability to back their words with skills that the McGraths and Warne's had.

However India owe their place in the semifinals mainly to Yuvraj Singh who has now won the man of the match award four times in seven games and is bidding fair to be the player of the tournament. The fair-weather observers of the game had written him off before the tournament started calling him overweight, disinterested and all things negative. What he has done with both bat and ball has shown is that in this game of glorious uncertainties no player or team should ever be written off. His batting has been unhurried, sure and positive and as his stay at the crease

has extended the range of shots too has been varied. His bowling once described as pie chucking has taken wickets at crucial times for India and he can justifiably claim to be an all-rounder now. He is the CEAT international cricketer of this week. PMG