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# LET'S GET IT ON!

Three KFC T20 INTLs. Five Carlton Mid ODIs. The ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 within cooee. From the very first delivery on November 5, 2014, you can bet Australia and South Africa will be playing for keeps. We preview the 2014-15 series between these ever-so-familiar foes...

David Warner feasted on South Africa's bowlers in 2013-14, and will be looking to pick up where he left off come November





The ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 starts here. Make no mistake, this series against South Africa is where Australia's quest for the trophy begins in earnest. And the good news for action-hungry spectators is that South Africa are thinking exactly the same thing.

There are just a handful of weeks until Valentine's Day, when the World Cup hosts get their campaign underway against England in Melbourne. Australia's recent travels to Africa and Asia are a thing of the past now. It's home cricket and home conditions all the way to D-Day. It's fine-tuning time.

Few sides will provide a better test of Australia's combinations than South Africa. Both teams want to land mental blows ahead of the ICC Cricket World Cup, and neither will back down this November. Three KFC T20 INTLs provide an appetising starter before these great foes get stuck into five juicy Carlton Mid One-Day Internationals in Perth (twice), Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney.

It's not hard to imagine the fourth game, at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, as a dress rehearsal for a possible March 29 ICC Cricket World Cup final showdown at the famous Victorian arena. And then there's the series closer in Sydney, where one of the World Cup semis will be played. Psychological points in these games could be worth plenty if the sides meet at the business end of the tournament.

Australia will get more ODI practice in January, when they take on India and England in a triangular series. But neither of those sides, not even World Cup holders India, has got the kind of



South African captain AB de Villiers (centre) has passed on wicket-keeping duties to countryman Quinton de Kock, but he remains a constant and consummate threat with bat in hand

one-day record South Africa have in this country. Winning this series will be the best possible sign for the Aussies ahead of the World Cup.

**Restoring the balance**

The broader cricketing rivalry between the two nations has been explored already in this publication. There's no love lost – we know that. And when you think about their limited-overs history in Australia, the home side has some scores to settle. South Africa has won 16 of the contests played here, with 14 Aussie wins and a tie.

The hosts can put that imbalance right this November. And though it is five long years since the last bilateral series this side of the Indian Ocean – during which time Australia has won an ODI series on South African soil – the 4-1 loss of 2011 won't have been forgotten. The hosts will also want to continue their unbeaten home T20 International record against the Africans, whom they've defeated in all three contests so far.

Then there's the payback to be dished out for the triangular series that took place a couple of months ago in Zimbabwe. The Aussies took a win over the Proteas in the group stages, but

**HEAD TO HEAD**

**One-Day Internationals**

Australia 42  
South Africa 38  
Tied 3

**T20 Internationals**

Australia 7  
South Africa 4

**Tests**

Australia 50  
South Africa 21  
Drawn 20



couldn't get across the line in the final in Harare. All of which means South Africa will be feeling pretty flash coming into this series.

But they shouldn't get ahead of themselves. In Zimbabwe, Australia were missing the likes of Michael Clarke (apart from one cameo in which he top-scored), Shane Watson and David Warner. And the wickets were very different to the one on which the captains will toss at the WACA for the first of the ODIs this month. They'll also be rather different in New Zealand, where South Africa stop for three ODI matches en route to this showdown. So it's the tourists who might have to come up with quick adjustments this time around.

**New guard**

Some bright stories came out of Australia's recent exploits overseas. In Zimbabwe, Mitch Marsh emerged as a superstar batting all-rounder of the short format, while Nathan Lyon became as reliable a spinner as he is in Tests. He topped the Aussie wicket-takers list in the Zimbabwe triangular.

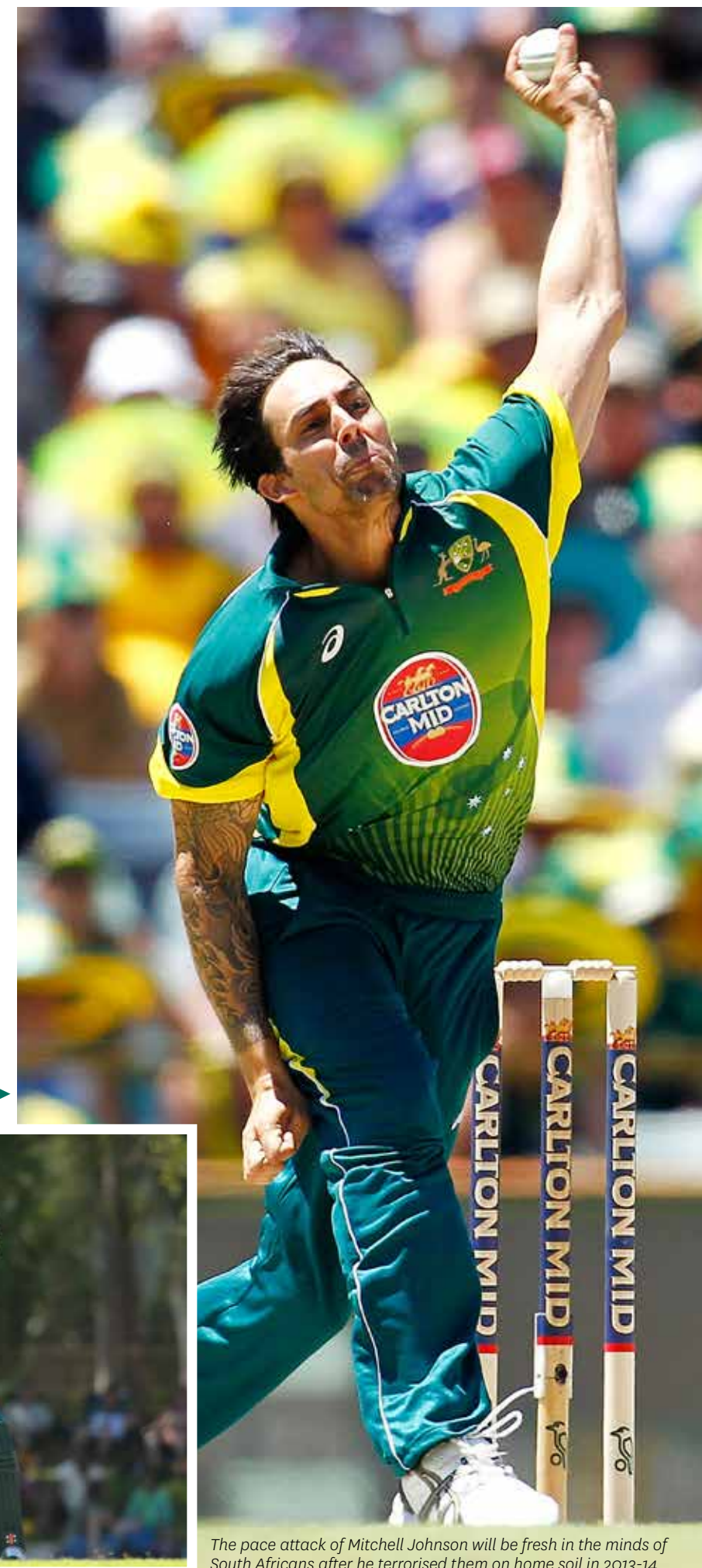
Mitchell Johnson kept up his good work with the ball, and remains the bowling talisman, while Aaron Finch developed further as a dependable

**“Psychological points in these games could be worth plenty”**

Two of Australia's finest leaders, George Bailey and Michael Clarke, will be hoping to have even more to smile about this summer



Mitch Marsh was running out for Australia A not long ago, but staked his claim as a top-line all-rounder in Zimbabwe



The pace attack of Mitchell Johnson will be fresh in the minds of South Africans after he terrorised them on home soil in 2013-14



**SERIES PREVIEW**

Aussie skipper Michael Clarke has been battling a hamstring injury, but he's no stranger to playing hurt – he scored 161 n.o. with a fractured shoulder against South Africa back in March



**THE RETURN OF TAHIR?**

yet smashing hitter in the top order. The latter, who sits high in the T20 International batting rankings, was rewarded with the T20 International captaincy when George Bailey stepped down from the role. This series will see the Melbourne Renegades skipper lead his country for the first time at home.

Clarke should captain the 50-over side, fitness permitting. The difference his presence brings to any Aussie team, both as a batsman and as a leader, is always noticeable. But Bailey has now captained more than a dozen times as stand-in for Clarke, so Australia have the luxury of a solid skipper in any scenario.

His opposite number should be AB de Villiers, who has relinquished the keeping gloves since he was last seen in Australia. His batting remains strong, particularly when he's out there with his old classmate Faf du Plessis. Du Plessis, who leads SA in T20 Internationals, was unstoppable in Zimbabwe, where he registered three centuries.

**Battle of the quicks**

Pace bowling will be the most absorbing battleground in these contests. It has been a huge theme in recent tussles between these two countries, and it certainly won't hurt that the first two ODIs are scheduled for the quick WACA Ground. Western Australia boy Johnson has become not just a wicket-taker against the Proteas, but also an ever-present menace, and he'll be fired up in front of the home crowd.

If the name Imran Tahir rings a bell, it's probably because you saw David Warner and Michael Clarke carting the South African leg spinner to every corner of Adelaide Oval in 2012. It was record-breaking punishment, to the tune of 260 wicketless runs.

The Pakistan-born bowler still owns the Test record he set that week: most match runs conceded without a wicket. You could be forgiven for assuming he'd never be seen on these shores again. And yet, you might just spot the spirited, enthusiastic Tahir whirling away in this series.

'Imzy' has continued to be expensive in Tests, but, paradoxically, has remained respectably miserly in the form of the

game where economy is at a premium. Not just that, but he has struck regularly in his 22 games. Remarkable as it may seem, he sported a career ODI average of 18.92 at the end of the triangular series in Zimbabwe. Economy rate, 4.25. A long way from shabby.

He has proven he can trouble sides, even Australia, on spin-friendly wickets in limited-overs cricket. He picks himself at times. Letting him have another crack at the Aussies on their own pitches, though, would be a massive call. But South Africa have a habit of showing faith in their man, so don't rule it out. Imran Tahir could be a wild card in this series yet.



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## RECAPPING THE 2013-14 TEST SERIES

Right now there is no closer rivalry in Test cricket than the ongoing duel between Australia and South Africa. The last five series have been a bewildering series of punches and counter-punches. And neither team has quite managed to knock the other out.

That said, Australia took a convincing points victory in the last tussle, away on South African soil. Mitchell Johnson bounced and blitzed the home batsmen in the first Test, sending them back to the sheds as cowering wrecks no less than 12 times in the match. David Warner, Shaun Marsh and Steven Smith did the damage with the bat, and the 281-run rout was completed in under four days.

But South Africa, being South Africa, didn't respond to Johnson with an England-style capitulation. They pulled off a remarkable regroup for the second Test, made best use of a slower wicket, and Dale Steyn reverse-swung his side to 1-1 with four second-innings wickets. Again, it was game over in four days.

Some thought South Africa had seized the initiative and would run out comfortable winners in the Cape Town decider at Newlands, a ground where they rarely lose. But lose they did, though this was a fittingly tight contest.

Warner's cavalier batting – he made hundreds in both innings – put the game out of South Africa's reach early in the piece, but the Proteas would not lie down and the finale went down to the final hour on day five. Australia nearly ran out of time to break down one of the home side's trademark stubborn rearguards. Fortunately, injured bowler Ryan Harris refused to lie down either, and claimed that last wicket with just 27 balls remaining in the match.

It was yet another epic battle in an ever-growing history of epic battles between these nations. When limited-overs hostilities resume in November, you can bet the last Test series will be fresh in every player's mind.



Emerging as one of Australia's future leaders, Steven Smith will chip in with both bat and ball

Of course, the Aussie batsmen will be tested by quick bowling too, and again, it's recent history (across all formats) that tells us so. Dale Steyn needs no introduction. The speedster is remembered for his savage assault on Clarke in the Cape Town Test back in 2011. And Australia have learned more than once this year that he poses a terrific threat with a swinging ball.

Steyn's partner in crime is usually tall Morné Morkel, who followed his leader's example in this year's Cape Town Test match. Clarke will never forget the bruising he took at Newlands that day. Nor the fact that he came out on top – scoring a tough ton that will go down in Aussie cricket folklore – just as he did after Steyn's attack three years earlier.

With all those fast bowling antics in mind, the stage is set for plenty of fire and brimstone on Australia's bouncy wickets. Which side's batsmen handle the Johnsons and Steyns of the series best could be the decisive factor. South Africa's key batters are du Plessis and de Villiers, who typically bat at three and four. Hashim Amla is also a proven danger man if he finds his best form.

Johnson and the rest of the bowlers will have high hopes of getting du Plessis and de Villiers in early, because the Amla/Quinton de Kock opening pair were shaky in Zimbabwe. And South Africa, still trying to settle on an all-rounder replacement for the recently retired Kallis, may yet put out some sides short on batting depth.

Indeed, Australia can usually be relied upon for its stronger lower order. The likes of Johnson and Mitchell Starc, should they play, could be decisive batting assets for the hosts. Death bowling is another area where Australia will go in as favourites, as South Africa lack a reliable option in this department.

Eight matches between these two cricketing titans are a fitting start to what will be the biggest summer of cricket Australia has ever witnessed. You won't want to miss a ball.



The Aussies go wild after winning the third Test match at Newlands to seal the 2013-14 series

## “The stage is set for plenty of fire and brimstone on Australia's bouncy wickets”

Australian fans will remember his terrific spell in the Test match at the aforementioned WACA Ground six years ago. It was the start of a destructive habit he has developed against South Africa in all forms of the game. Johnson broke Ryan McLaren's arm in the recent Zimbabwe triangular, just a few months after felling the same batsman in the 2-1 Test series win in SA.

Johnson's destructiveness against South Africa is much broader than that, though.

He has injured and dismissed the likes of Graeme Smith and Jacques Kallis – both now retired – in the past. The South African batsmen found him an unplayable force of nature at times in those away Tests this past autumn. Most of his more recent exploits against this opposition have come in Africa, though. Will form and fitness allow him the chance to wreak havoc on the Proteas in front of his countrymen once again?

## AUSTRALIA VS. SOUTH AFRICA: INDIVIDUAL RECORDS

### TOP 5 RUN SCORERS – ODIs

- Ricky Ponting (1995-2011)  
1,879 from 48 innings
- Jacques Kallis (1997-2011)  
1,639 from 47 innings
- Jonty Rhodes (1992-2002)  
1,610 from 52 innings
- Steve Waugh (1992-2002)  
1,581 from 44 innings
- Hansie Cronje (1992-1999)  
1,364 from 36 innings

### TOP 5 RUN SCORERS – T20 INTLS

- JP Duminy (2009-2014)  
301 runs from 8 innings
- Dave Warner (2009-2014)  
199 runs from 8 innings
- Cameron White (2009-2014)  
188 runs from 8 innings
- David Hussey (2009-2011)  
173 runs from 6 innings
- Shane Watson (2006-2014)  
163 runs from 5 innings

### TOP 5 WICKET TAKERS – ODIs

- Shane Warne (1993-2002)  
60 wickets from 410.4 overs
- Glenn McGrath (1993-2007)  
58 wickets from 375.5 overs
- Shaun Pollock (1997-2007)  
55 wickets from 371.4 overs
- Allan Donald (1992-2002)  
45 wickets from 267.3 overs
- Brett Lee (2000-2006)  
40 wickets from 184.3 overs

### TOP 5 WICKET TAKERS – T20 INTLS

- David Hussey (2009-2011)  
7 wickets from 19.1 overs
- Nathan Bracken (2006-2009)  
7 wickets from 18.0 overs
- Robin Peterson (2006-2012)  
7 wickets from 16.0 overs
- James Hopes (2006-2009)  
7 wickets from 20.0 overs
- Morné Morkel (2009-2012)  
6 wickets from 14.5 overs



South Africa's Morné Morkel (pictured), along with Dale Steyn and Vernon Philander, form one of cricket's most feared pace attacks