

NZ beat India by 4 runs in last T20, win series 2-1

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Feb 10: Colin Munro plundered 72 runs from 40 balls to set New Zealand on course for a four-run win over India in the third Twenty20 cricket international on Sunday and a 2-1 win in the three-match series.

Munro and Tim Seifert, who made 43 from 25 balls, gave New Zealand a lightning start that allowed it to reach 212-4 as it batted first after losing the toss.

India mostly lagged behind the necessary run rate and came to the last over needing 16 runs to win. Tim Southee bowled a tight over and though Dinesh Karthik thrashed the last ball for six, India came up just short at 208-6.

Karthik finished 33 not out and Krunal Pandya 26 not out but India lacked the substantial partnerships that might have lifted it to its winning target.

Vijay Shankar, with 43 from 28 balls, and Rishabh Pant with 28 from 12 looked, along with the last pair, as if they might propel India to victory but the India run chase was poorly organized and fell just short.

"It was pretty disappointing not to go through that finishing lane but I thought



"we fought pretty well." India captain Rohit Sharma said. "I thought 210-odd was always going to be a tough chase but I thought we were in the game right until the end. "But I thought New Zealand bowled pretty well at the end. They kept using that yorker which rewarded them."

Munro signaled his and New Zealand's intentions from the outset, hitting the first ball he faced from Bhuvneshwar Kumar for 6.

He rushed to 50 from 28 balls with three fours and four sixes and his entire innings contained five fours and five sixes and set the tempo for a strong New Zealand batting performance.

New Zealand was 46-0 after five overs and its first 50 runs came from only 32 balls.

Seifert fell at 80-1 to a dubious stumping decision as M.S. Dhoni completed a slick dismissal from the bowling of Kuldeep Yadava. Munro continued to set the rapid tempo of the innings before falling to Yardav when New Zealand was 135-2.

Further contributions of 27 from 21 balls by captain Kane Williamson, 30 from 16 balls from Colin de Grandhomme, 19 from Daryl Mitchell — son of England assistant rugby coach John Mitchell — and 14 from seven balls by Ross Taylor swelled the New Zealand total and proved decisive in a close finish.

India suffered an early setback when it lost the wicket of Shikhar Dhawan to the bowling of left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner in the

first over of its reply.

Captain Sharma set out to play an anchor role and batted until the 14th over. He was prepared to understudy the big hitters who were likely to see India to a match and series victory but their contributions were too sporadic and too short.

Vijay Shankar blasted 43 from 28 balls with five fours and two sixes and Rishabh Pant began what looked like a match-winning innings with three sixes and a four from his first eight deliveries. But he fell to one of the soft dismissals that undid India's chase for victory.

It stayed in the hunt for a win when it took 14 runs from the penultimate over, bowled by Scott Kuggeleijn. But Southee bowled a tight last over and Karthik, who monopolized the strike at the expense of Krunal Pandya, who had taken 26 runs from 13 balls, wasn't able to clinch a win.

"It was a brilliant series and both teams put on a fantastic display of cricket, especially today," Williamson said. "What a brilliant game and great advertisement for T20 cricket.

"Credit to India, they've been outstanding through this whole series but it was nice to get across the line tonight."

With Iran in hindsight, Indian women gear up for Nepal



BHUBANESWAR, Feb 10

Anju Tamang's 48th-minute winner led India to a perfect start in the Hero Gold Cup beating IR Iran 1-0 in their opening encounter. But for coach Maymol Rocky and her players, it was just another day in office which went right as they were continued their winning spree -- taking the tally to five victories (2 each against Indonesia and Hong Kong).

"We play for a win in every match, and against Iran it was no different. We knew this will be a tough match for us. We wanted to start the tournament of a positive note," said Maymol. "This is a win for all stakeholders involved, and every Indian. We dug deep and fought our way every minute to get the win."

India could have scored more but were unlucky as Sanju hit the woodwork in the second half, and Anju muffed almost scoring an-

other in the dying embers.

"Everyone did their job on the pitch to the fullest. We were confident before the match. I am aware of the potential this team has, and we played to the best of our abilities, and stunned one of the best women teams in Asia."

Goalkeeper Aditi Chauhan made a mere four saves in the entire match and was not stretched even once. "The team performed really well defensively. It was because of the 10 players playing ahead that Aditi was not called into action much. We are aiming for this kind of defensive solidity in each match," Maymol informed.

Defender Sweety Devi said: "Our game plan was to delay their forwards and keep them on the flanks for as long as possible and we were able to do that. There were times when we were stretched at the back and had to rush in."

Meanwhile, the duo of

Sanju and Anju gave constant trouble to the Iranian defence, bedazzling and bewildering them with almost every move. "Me and Sanju had our little game plan before the match. We discussed what we will do once the ball gets on the wins," informed goal scorer Anju Tamang.

"We are room partners as well. So we talk a lot. I believe I complement Sanju in attack, as she complements me."

Coach Maymol further thanked the fans for their support. "It was amazing to see the fans in the stands who chanted and cheered for us. You play for these moments and I am glad we could give the fans a win to cherish."

"We need their constant support as we play for them and represent them. They give us the energy to perform day in and day out," she added.

The Indian Women next clash against Nepal in their second match on February 11. Nepal had lost 3-0 to Myanmar in their first match but Maymol believes they are no pushovers.

"Nepal are a very strong team. We cannot underestimate them. They are really quick on the break and have decent finishing skills. We need to be on the top of our game and aim for a win."

AIFF Media Team

Women's T20I: Smriti Mandhana fifty in vain as New Zealand sweep series 3-0

HAMILTON, Feb 10

India's batting sensation in women's cricket, Smriti Mandhana's on Sunday blasted her eighth half-century in the Twenty20 Internationals but it went in vain as New Zealand clinched a last-ball thriller to sweep the three-match series.

Mandhana hit 86 off 62 deliveries but that was not enough as India managed 159 for 4 from their 20 overs in chase of 162 against New Zealand in the third and final match of the series in Hamilton. India had earlier won the five-match ODI series 4-1. India's chase of 162 was rocked early when Priya Punia fell for 1 in the third over. Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues then added 47 for the second wicket before Rodrigues departed in the 9th over.

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's poor form continued as she struggled once again scoring 2 off 3.

Mithali Raj, playing her first game off the series, and Deepti Sharma were involved in an unbroken 36-run stand but failed to take India over the line. Mithali was unbeaten on 24 off 20 balls while Deepti scored 21 not out off 16 balls. Earlier, New Zealand women rode on Sophe Devine's fifty to post a 161 for 7 after they won the toss and opted to bat.

New Zealand openers provided a fiery start before previous match star Suzie Bates was caught by Harmanpreet Kaur off Arundhati Reddy in the 6th over.

Hannah Rowe too fell soon after but captain Amy Satterthwaite joined forces with opener Devine and the duo added 71 runs for the third wicket to revive New Zealand. Devine's departure for a well-made 72 off 52 balls opened the flood gates and none of the lower-order batters were able to do much against the Indian bowlers.

Deepti Sharma was pick of the Indian bowlers finishing with 2 for 28. Manasi Joshi, Radha Yadav, Arundhati Reddy and Poonam Yadav also chipped in with one wicket each. *India Today Web Desk*

Jeremy takes weightlifting silver

CHIANG MAI, Feb 10

Youth Olympic Games gold medalist Jeremy Lalrinnunga aggregated 288kg to take the silver medal in the men's 67kg category in the EGAT's Cup international weightlifting championships, an Olympic qualifying event, here on Friday.

Jeremy lifted 131kg in snatch and 157kg in clean and jerk behind gold medal winner Deni (303kg, 132kg, 171kg).

Ruben Kataotau (125kg, 160kg, 285kg) of Kiribati won the bronze. Meanwhile, Swati Singh (86kg, 109kg, 195kg) and K. Shireesha (79kg, 110kg, 189kg) took sixth and ninth places respectively in the women's 59kg class. *The Hindu*

Indian Super League Jeje Lalpekhlua, Gregory Nelson score as Chennaiyin FC beat BFC

CHENNAI, Feb 10

Chennaiyin FC claimed a much-needed victory after downing table-toppers Bengaluru FC 2-1 in a closely-contested Indian Super League clash at the Jawaharlal Nehru stadium in Chennai on Saturday.

After withstanding some early pressure from Bengaluru, Chennaiyin roared into a two-goal lead with fine strikes from Jeje Lalpekhlua (32') and Gregory Nelson (43'). Sunil Chhetri pulled one back for Bengaluru FC in the second half (57') but the home team held on valiantly for all the three points and inflicted only the second loss of the season on the visitors.

The result does not alter the teams' position in the ISL table with Chennaiyin still rooted to the bottom while Bengaluru remain four points clear of second-placed Mumbai City FC.

As expected, it was Bengaluru FC who saw most of the ball in the initial exchanges. The Blues forced Chennaiyin FC goalkeeper Karanjit Singh into a save as early as the third minute when Xisco Hernandez saw a dipping shot parried away.

The home team looked a bit short of ideas in possession and were dealt a blow in the 15th minute when centre-back Zohmingiliana Ralte suffered an injury after a tackle by Miku. John Gregory was forced to bring in Anirudh Thapa and Christopher Herd dropped back into defence.

The substitute almost had an instant impact when he stung Bengaluru custodian Gurpreet Singh Sandhu's palms with a long-range effort.

The home team continued to build on that and took the lead just past the half an hour mark. Raphael Augusto dismissed Harmanjot Khabra before feeding CK Vineeth who broke forward. However, Nishu Kumar failed to

deal with Vineeth's attempted pass and the ball broke to Jeje who slammed the ball in to break his ISL duck for the season.

Spurred by that goal, Chennaiyin started to show more confidence on the ball, with Augusto pulling the strings. The Bengaluru defence had a tough time dealing with the increased impetus from the home team and ended up conceding another goal just before half-time.

Lalrinnunga sent in a dangerous cross from the right wing after some good work from Vineeth. Nelson, who had ghosted in behind a static Bengaluru defence, sent a good header past Gurpreet into the far corner.

Just like they did in their previous game against Kerala Blasters FC, Bengaluru produced a response after going two goals behind in the second half. After a spell of incessant pressure, the Blues pulled a goal back three minutes before the hour mark.

Xisco picked the ball up on the right wing and teased a left-footed cross in behind the defence for Chhetri. None of the Chennaiyin defenders picked up Chhetri's run and he gleefully sent a diving header past Karanjit Singh from close range.

Bengaluru tried to keep the pressure up in search of an equaliser but frequent stoppages in play meant they lost some rhythm and Chennaiyin found some respite.

The match turned sloppy as the half wore on with frequent interceptions and turnovers. With eight minutes left, Xisco had the best chance of equalising when second-half substitute Edmund Lalrindika teed off the Spaniard. But his shot was straight at Karanjit.

In the end, it was three points and a much-needed win to savour for Chennaiyin FC in a season that has brought very little joy. *India Today Web Desk*

India clinch four medals in Bahrain Open Table Tennis

NEW DELHI, Feb 10

India's young paddlers stole the limelight in the Bahrain Junior and Cadet Open table tennis tournament, clinching four medals, including a gold, in Manama.

Besides the gold, India won two silver and a bronze. India fielded three teams in the cadet girls' team event and swept all the three medals on offer.

India A team won the gold, the India B the silver and the India C the bronze.

India B team of Yashaswini Ghorpade and Kavya Sree Baskar beat Egypt in the first semifinal while India A defeated India C in the other semifinal.

In the final, the India A team of Suhana Saini and Anargya Manjunath proved too strong for India B and clinched the gold medal on Friday night.

In the junior girls' competition, which was played in a round robin format, the Indian team of Manushree Patil and Swastika Ghosh beat three teams before losing to eventual champions Russia.

The Indian team collected seven points to win the silver medal. *PTI*

Made our mind on India's core for WC, says chief selector MSK Prasad



THE INDIAN EXPRESS

Feb 10: Ahead of the third and final T20I between India and New Zealand, Chief Selector MSK Prasad said that they have made up their mind regarding the core team that will get to feature in the ICC World Cup 2019, set to take place in May.

In a recent interview with Times of India, Prasad said, "Like most other teams, we have made up our minds with regard to the core team that will figure in the World Cup. The IPL is a major tournament that throws up a variety of challenges. I'm sure the IPL will help players with their form and also keep their minds in good shape ahead of the World Cup."

Speaking on the importance of proper rotation policy, Prasad said, "The most important thing that we need to focus on is to have the right mix of players for different formats. We need to keep planning for every tour well in advance by keeping our players fit and fresh through proper rotation. Since we have created enough bench strength across formats, I have no doubt about the success of our rotation policy."

Prasad also said that they have a reserve bunch of five fast bowlers to be selected in the team. "I have absolutely no worry about our pace bowling backups. Apart from our premier five fast bowlers, we have reserve bunch of five fast bowlers who are competent enough to get into the senior team. Hardik (Pandya) lends good balance as he can chip in with ball and bat. His fielding adds that edge."

The chief selector also said that they were trying to work on the aspect of resting their World Cup-bound pacers during the Indian Premier League.

On Kuldeep and Chahal evolving as Test spinners, Prasad said, "Kuldeep has bowled extremely well in the opportunities he has had. He is definitely a bright prospect across all formats. We have tried Chahal in the longer formats by putting him in India 'A' squads but he seems to be more comfortable with the white ball. Having said that, if he is willing to put in the hard yards in red-ball cricket, he is most welcome to do so and we will monitor his progress."

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India finish 4th in Fed Cup after losing 1-2 to Korea

ASTANA, Feb 10

India ended its campaign at the Fed Cup with a fourth place finish after losing the classification tie-1-2 to Korea as the team badly missed injured Karman Kaur Thandi, who did not play on Saturday.

Captain Vishal Uppal handed national champion Mahak Jain her Fed Cup debut after a groin strain forced Karman out of the tie.

The diminutive Mahak played her heart out before losing steam towards the end for a 2-6 6-3 1-6 defeat against Na Ri Kim.

Like on many occasions, Ankita came out to level the tie as she outplayed Sunam Jiong 6-3 6-3 in one hour and 18 minutes.

The doubles became decisive but Ankita and Prarthana Thombare lost the close rubber 4-6 4-6 to the Korean team of Su Jeong Jang and Kim.

Captain Uppal said India had a good chance to win this tie. "Big learning curve for Mahak today. She could have won this match but she dropped off at the start of the third set which you cannot afford to do against a good player," Uppal told PTI.

"Ankita dominated her match and we could have won 2-0 today or even 2-1 had Karman been fit enough to play."

Mithali Raj to lead India Women's team for ODI series against England Women

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

Feb 10: The All-India Women's Selection Committee announced the Indian Women's Cricket team for the three-match ODI series against England Women.

The series, which is a part of the ongoing ICC Women's Championship, will begin on on February 22 at the Wankhede Stadium Mumbai.

Mithali Raj continues to lead the side which also features veteran Jhulan Goswami, Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet Kaur, Deepti Sharma, Taniya Bhatia (wicket-keeper), R Kalpana (wicket-keeper), Mona Meshram, Ekta Bisht, Rajeshwari Gayakwad,

Uppal said future was bright for the Indian Fed Cup team players.

"As a captain I have seen a lot of good things which we need to build on. I think once we have all our best girls healthy we can become an even more dangerous team. I am encouraged by the fact we are a young team and we will only keep getting better."

"I am probably a bit disappointed about today's result but overall I am very upbeat about our future prospects. I think Ankita can break through to top 100 this year if she stays healthy and keeps playing the way she has played this week," said Uppal. *PTI*

Poonam Yadav, Shikha Pandey, Mansi Joshi, Punam Raut.

The Board President's XI squad will play a one-day warm-up game prior to the ODI series in Mumbai on 18th February.

Mithali Raj and Harmanpreet Kaur are not a part of the team.

Board President's XI: Smriti Mandhana (Captain), Veda Krishnamurthy, Devika Vaidya, S Meghana, Bharati Fulmali, Komal Zanzad, R Kalpana, Priya Punia, Harleen Deol, Reemalaxmi Ekka, Manali Dakshini, Minnu Mani, Tanuja Kanwar

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