

CAVANI DOUBTFUL FOR PSG'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GAME AGAINST MANCHESTER UNITED | 19

PAUL CASEY LEADS MICKELSON BY THREE AFTER 54 HOLES IN PEBBLE BEACH EVENT | 18



FOUR SHORT OF A PERFECT FINISH

India Denied Undeclared Overseas Season As Kiwis Clinch T20I Series

Hamilton: New Zealand denied India a perfect finish to their highly successful overseas season by clinching the T20 series 2-1 with a slender four-run win in the series-deciding third match here on Sunday. India savoured a historic Test and ODI bilateral series win in Australia before recording their biggest ODI series win on New Zealand soil.

A first ever T20 series win would have been an icing on the cake but the hosts held their nerves to pull off a thrilling victory. With Sunday's result, India have lost their first T20 series after winning nine and drawing one. India needed to knock off a stiff 213-run target to bring curtains on a memorable three-month tour in a befitting manner but fell just short.

Exploiting batting-friendly conditions at the small Seddon Park ground, New Zealand cut the Indian attack to shreds to post an imposing 212 for four. Opener Colin Munro produced a 40-ball 72 and shared a 80-run stand with fellow opener Tim Seifert (43) to lay foundation for a big score.

Krunal Pandya was the most expensive of the Indian bowlers, bleeding 54 runs in his four-over quota. If it was not for left-arm Chinaman Kuldeep Yadav (2/26)'s tight bowling in the middle-overs and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (1/37), India would have got a bigger target to chase.

India captain Rohit Sharma, who usually bats explosive in such situations, made an uncharacteristic 32-ball 38 and it also hurt India's chances. Vijay Shankar (43 off 28) played a useful knock though at the top after Shikhar Dhawan (5) fell early. Rishabh Pant (28 off 12) and Hardik Pandya (21 off 11) infused some life into India's chase with some brutal hitting but perished while trying to keep up with a steep scoring rate. Mahendra Singh Dhoni (2 off 4) also could not do much.

India needed 16 runs off the final over and Dinesh Karthik (33 not out off 16) after taking a double off the first ball, stunned the crowd and his teammates by refusing to take a single in the third ball. Krunal (26 not out off 30) had reached the striker's end but Karthik did not run, sending his partner back. This was after umpire did not give a clear wide bowled by Tim Southee.

Karthik could only manage a single off the next ball as Southee bowled a straight ball. By then, the match had clearly slipped out of India's hands. Both Karthik and Krunal did exceedingly well to take the game into the final over but their unbeaten 63-run stand off 28 balls did not prove to be enough.

New Zealand bowlers fared much better than India, consistently hitting the short-of-length, which proved to be key on this small ground. Pant though changed the pace of Indian innings with his scintillating batting, 40.

SCOREBOARD

New Zealand: T Seifert st Dhoni b Yadav 43, C Munro c H Pandya b Yadav 72, K Williamson c Yadav b Ahmed 27, C De Grandhomme c Dhoni b Bhuvneshwar 30, D Mitchell (not out) 19, R Taylor (not out) 14. **Extras (LB-4, W-3) 7; Total (for 4 wickets; 20 ovs) 212; FoW:** 1-80, 2-135, 3-150, 4-193; **Bowling:** Bhuvneshwar 4-0-37-1, Ahmed 4-0-47-1, Hardik 4-0-44-0, Krunal 4-0-54-0, Kuldeep 4-0-26-2.

India: S Dhawan c Mitchell b Santner 5, R Sharma c Seifert b Mitchell 38, V Shankar c De Grandhomme b Santner 43, R Pant c Williamson b Ticker 28, H Pandya c Williamson b Kuggeleijn 21, Dhoni c Southee b Mitchell 2, D Karthik (not out) 33, K Pandya (not out) 26. **Extras (LB-1, W-11) 12; Total (for 6 wickets; 20 ovs) 208; FoW:** 1-6, 2-81, 3-121, 4-141, 5-145, 6-145; **Bowling:** Santner 3-0-32-2, Southee 4-0-47-0, Kuggeleijn 4-0-37-1, Ticker 4-0-34-1, Sodhi 2-0-30-0, Mitchell 3-0-27-2.

Total	RR	Opponent	Venue	Date
244/4	12.20	West Indies	Lauderhill	27-8-2016
208/6	10.40	New Zealand	Hamilton	10-2-2019
199/5	9.95	South Africa	Dharamsala	2-10-2015
192/2	9.60	West Indies	Mumbai	31-3-2016
190/6	9.50	West Indies	Kingston	9-7-2017

Stats: Rajesh Kumar



SPINNING IT THEIR WAY: Mitchell Santner celebrates the wicket of Vijay Shankar at Hamilton on Sunday

2

New Zealand have clinched both the T20I series against India at home — 2-0 in 2008-09 and 2-1 in 2018-19

NUMBERS GAME

161.99

Strike rate registered by Colin Munro while aggregating 1411 at an average of 33.59, including three hundreds and nine 50s, in 52 matches — the highest among the batsmen with 700 runs or more in T20Is. Munro's 72 is his second highest score vs India behind the 109 not out at Rajkot on Nov 4, 2017

54-0

Runs conceded by Krunal Pandya without capturing a wicket — his second worst bowling analysis in T20Is behind the 4-0-55-0 vs Australia at Brisbane on November 21, 2018. Four times in nine matches, he has failed to capture a wicket despite bowling four overs each time.

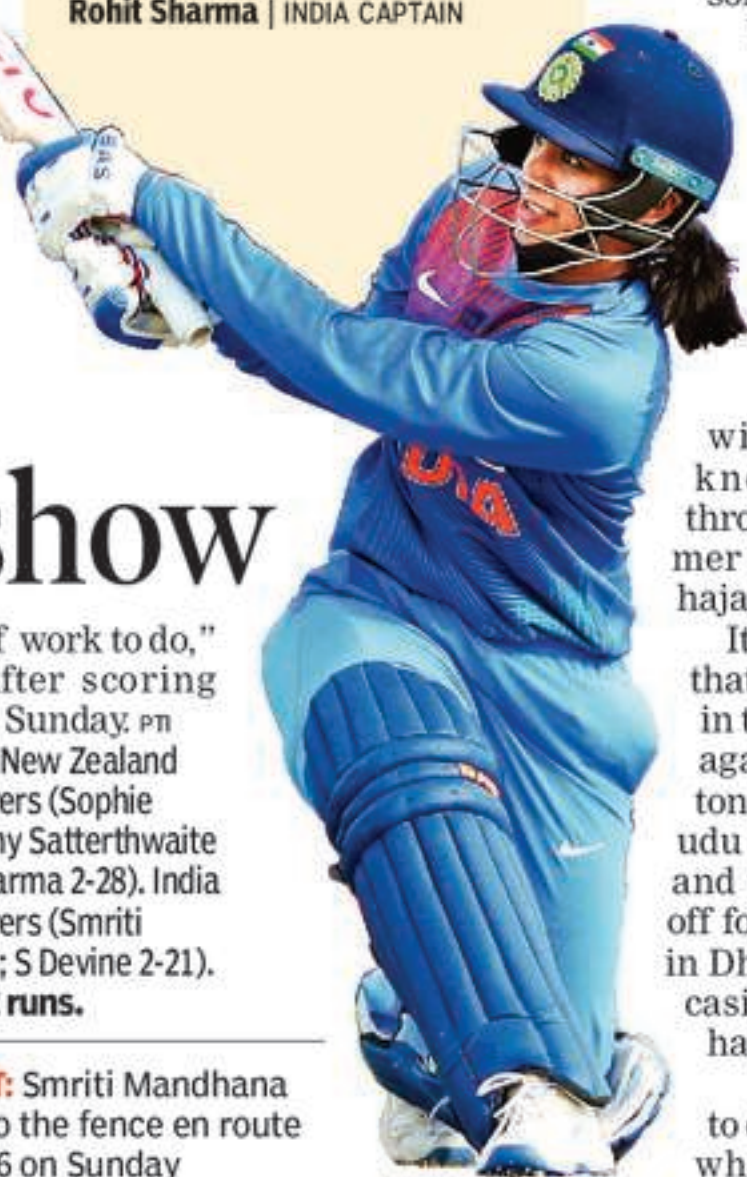
300

Dhoni has become the first Indian player and the 13th overall to appear in 300 T20 matches or more. Two players with 400-plus appearances are Kieron Pollard (446) and Dwayne Bravo (429).

Rajesh Kumar

“Disappointing to not cross the line but we fought well right till the end. We've to learn from the mistakes we made and move ahead. Would've been nice to fly back with a series win, but yes, lot of positives through the tour, looking forward to heading home and playing Australia

Rohit Sharma | INDIA CAPTAIN



have a lot of work to do,” she said after scoring just two on Sunday. **Brief Scores:** New Zealand 161/7 in 20 overs (Sophie Devine 72, Amy Satterthwaite 31; Deepti Sharma 2-28), India 159/4 in 20 overs (Smriti Mandhana 86; S Devine 2-21). **NZ won by 2 runs.**

OPENING ACT: Smriti Mandhana sends one to the fence en route to scoring 86 on Sunday

Girls suffer whitewash despite Smriti show

Hamilton: The Indian women's team almost pulled off a dramatic win but failed to score a boundary in the final delivery to lose the third and final T20 International against New Zealand by a mere two runs here on Sunday. Chasing 162 for a win, star opening batswoman Smriti Mandhana took the Indian team on course for a consolation win with a career-best knock of 86 from 52 balls but the visiting side failed to build on her scintillating knock to end their innings at 159 for 4.

With the three-match series already lost after defeats in the first and second T20Is,

“We need someone who can bat through 20 overs and someone who can go in at the middle overs and get runs later on

Smriti Mandhana | INDIA OPENER

India surprising named senior player Mithali Raj in the playing eleven and she contributed 24 not out from 20 balls after coming to bat at the fall of captain Harmanpreet Kaur (2).

But she failed to hit a four from the final

delivery bowled by Leigh Kasperick as India lost the match by two runs.

India needed 16 runs from the final over and Raj and Deepti Sharma (21 not out) raised hopes of a remarkable win by hitting boundaries in the first and third deliveries but were left to hit a four off the last ball. Captain Harmanpreet Kaur, whose indifferent form has hurt the team, said she was disappointed. India had won the three-match ODI series 2-1 before this T20 contest.

“We are disappointed to lose the series like this, we could have done better. We



Vijay Shankar

about their job, I learnt a lot.”

The fact that he had come to New Zealand with the India 'A' team in December also helped him. He got starts in all three innings in the T20 series but could not play a match-winning knock.

“Even the last game was a learning experience for me. I could have gone for single or a two than go for another boundary,” Shankar said.

“I also had a very good opportunity to win this game for the team. If I can win matches for the team, that will automatically help me personally. For me, the most important thing is that I adapt quickly to different conditions and be consistent.”

On the tight loss in the series decider where India were chasing an imposing 213, Shankar said: “We played well right through the 20 overs. Everyone was very positive when we were trying to get closer to the total. Eventually we were just one hit away.”

Pope helps Lions draw first 'Test' vs India 'A'

Wayanad: Ollie Pope (63) and Sam Hain (57) stood out on the final day with fighting half centuries as England Lions drew the first unofficial Test against India 'A' at the Krishnagiri stadium here on Sunday. Beginning day four at 20 for no loss, openers Ben Duckett (30) and Max Holden (29) looked positive and brought up the team's 50 in the 12th over.

India 'A' captain Ankit Bawne rotated his bowlers around, in an attempt to break the partnership. However, Duckett and Holden made smooth progress, hitting some crisp shots in the process.

Paceman Avesh Khan got the first breakthrough for the

home side, when he had Duckett caught by K L Rahul after the openers had added 82.

Holden went seven overs later, giving Lalaj Saxena, who plays for Kerala in domestic cricket, his first wicket in the second innings.

Hain and 21-year old Pope, a highly rated batsman who has played two Tests so far, joined forces and defied the India 'A' bowlers for the next couple of hours.

They were willing to play the waiting game and didn't miss out on scoring opportunities.

Brief scores: England Lions 340 & 214/5 (Ollie Pope 63, Sam Hain 57, Lalaj Saxena 2/41) drew India 'A' 540/6 dec

Oz refuse to play in Pak, series shifted to UAE

Karachi: Australia have refused to any of the ODI series matches in Pakistan due to security concerns and the two teams will now compete in the World Cup preparatory five-match rubber in the UAE. After much delay the Pakistan Cricket Board on Sunday finally announced that the one-day series would be played entirely in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from March 22 to

31. The PCB had invited CA to send its team to Karachi to play one or two matches.

“The PCB was optimistic that it will be able to convince Cricket Australia to send its side for some matches after successfully staging high-profile bilateral series and the Pakistan Super League matches in the past 18 months,” PCB director cricket - international, Zakir Khan, said.

'Promotion to No. 3 was a big surprise'

Hamilton: India allrounder Vijay Shankar on Sunday said being promoted to bat at the crucial No. 3 position came as a big surprise to him and he returns home from the maiden tour of Australia and New Zealand as a much improved cricketer. Shankar batted at No. 3 in two of the three T20s against New Zealand, scoring 43 off 28 balls in the final game and 23 in the series opener.

He made his ODI debut against Australia in Melbourne and featured in three out of five ODIs and all three T20s against the Black Caps. The 28-year-old might not have done enough to stake a strong claim for a World Cup spot but gave a good account of his all-round abilities.

Going forward, Shankar said he would love to bat higher up the order.

“It was a big surprise for me when they asked me to bat at three. That is a big thing. I was focussed on playing the situation. You need to be open any way if you are playing for a team like India,” said Shankar after his team's four-run loss in the third T20.

“These (Australia and New Zealand) two series I have learnt a lot. I might not have bowled a lot but I learnt to bowl in different conditions. In batting, just watching seniors like Virat (Kohli), Rohit (Sharma) and (MS) Dhoni, how they go

Questions raised over Rathour appointment

New Delhi: BCCI is set to appoint former Test opener Vikram Rathour as batting coach of India 'A' and Under 19 teams. Since he is a relative of U19 national selector Ashish Kapoor, the appointment may lead to a case of conflict of interest.

It has been learnt that GM (Cricket Operations) Saba Karim got a green light for temporary appointment of Rathour and wicket-keeping coach Vijay Yadav from the Committee of Administrators (CoA) chief Vinod Rai as “additional staff for A and U19 teams”.

However Kapoor is Rathour's brother in law and as per new BCCI constitution, it could lead to a direct case of conflict of interest. “India A and U19 coach Rahul David had specifically recommended two names - Rathour as batting coach and Vijay Yadav as fielding coach as additional staff for A team,” a senior BCCI official privy to the development said.

“The appointment is on a temporary basis and they will also work with U19 set up during Quadrangular series and also at the NCA. He (Rathour) will also be Rest of India coach in Irani Cup,” the official added.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Rathour is supposed to be part of India U19 set-up during an upcoming Quadrangular series involving India U19 A and B teams along with colts from South Africa and Afghanistan.

The question being raised is whether GM (Operations) Karim had apprised CoA chief Rai about problems that can arise due to Rathour's appointment even it has been Dravid's recommendation.

While Karim was unavailable for a comment despite being contacted, a se-

nior official did raise a few questions about the process.

“It is not Mr Rai's duty to know who is related to whom. Did Karim intimate him about a potential conflict of interest situation? That's the first question.

“The second question here is whether a due diligence was followed by Karim while appointing Rathour and Yadav? Were proper interviews conducted on basis of advertisement on board's site?” he further questioned. “Last and final point is that if he will work on a temporary basis with U19s, and he is also supposed to work at the NCA as batting consultant, so does that mean a separate batting coach (for NCA) will be appointed later?”

Rathour, a prolific run getter for Punjab and later Himachal Pradesh in Ranji Trophy, played a handful of Tests in 1996 in England and South Africa.

Oz can win WC with Smith, Warner: Ponting

Melbourne: Australia can successfully defend its World Cup title in England this year with Steve Smith and David Warner back in the fray, newly-appointed assistant coach Ricky Ponting said on Sunday. His upbeat assessment comes despite the misfiring team losing its two most recent ODI series at home, to India and South Africa. “Absolutely, I actually do,” said Ponting when asked in Melbourne if Australia could win the World Cup.

“India and England are probably the two standout teams right now but if you add Warner and Smith back into that lineup, I think that team looks as strong as any. Conditions in England will suit our style of play,” added Ponting, who was appointed on Friday as assistant to coach Justin Langer for the World Cup, focusing on the batting group.



The former national captain is hugely experienced in the one-day game, playing at five World Cups and winning at three. “I think I have a pretty good grasp on what it takes for tournaments like that,” he said. “Hopefully I can have an impact right from the start. The feedback from the boys has been positive.”

Ponting, a close ally of Langer, will start after Australia's upcoming one-day tours against India and Pakistan.

Smith and Warner are available for selection again from March 29, when their one-year bans for ball-tampering expire. Cameron Bancroft, who was suspended for nine months, is already back playing.

“Once we get Warner and Smith and Bancroft back into the fray, and looking ahead to the World Cup, I don't think they'll be too many better teams on paper. “You've got a lot of experience as well as a fair bit of youth going into that tournament,” he added. “Any team I've been a part of, we've always had a really good mix of youth and experience and this current group will certainly have that going into the World Cup.”

Ponting, who played 375 one-dayers and 168 Tests, previously worked as an assistant with Australia's Twenty20 side in 2017 and 2018. He also accompanied Langer during his first tour - to England - after taking over as head coach from Darren Lehmann last April following the tampering scandal in South Africa. AFP