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## Kiwis beat India to claim T20 series

Munro's explosive 72 set up a four-run win for New Zealand



HAMILTON: New Zealand players celebrate winning the third Twenty20 international cricket match between New Zealand and India in Hamilton yesterday. — AFP

**HAMILTON:** Colin Munro's explosive 72 set up a four-run win for New Zealand over India in a cliff-hanger finish to yesterday's Twenty20 match in Hamilton, handing the hosts a 2-1 series victory. India looked to be on the ropes when they needed 47 off the last three overs.

But Dinesh Karthik and Krunal Pandya together plundered 32 off overs 18 and 19 before Tim Southee restricted the duo to 11 in the 20th. "It was obviously touch-and-go there for us," said Munro whose whirlwind knock at the start of the match laid the platform for New Zealand's 212 for four with India 208 for six at the close.

The morale-boosting victory for New Zealand gave captain Kane Williamson something to smile about after they were whipped 4-1 by India in the earlier one-day

international series. "It came down to the last couple of balls and it's nice to come out on the right side," he said.

It was a more sombre mood in the India dressing after Rohit Sharma had won the toss and defied convention by not batting first in a series decider, saying his team preferred to chase regardless. "It was pretty disappointing to not get over that finishing line but I thought we fought really well till the end," he said.

"We started off really well with the ODI series and we wanted to do well here with the T20." It was a vital knock from Munro, whose position in the New Zealand side ahead of the World Cup had been in question after a string of failures in the ODI and Twenty20 matches against India.

But he was on song from the start of the decider,

charging down the track to smack Bhuvneshwar Kumar over the rope with the first ball he faced to kick off a flying partnership with Tim Seifert.

The pair raced to 80 in the eighth over when the lightning hands of MS Dhoni had Seifert stumped by a hair's breadth for 43. Munro's belligerence saw him face just 40 balls in his innings, faying the bowling with five fours and five sixes. He was removed by Kuldeep Yadav when he skied a ball to Hardik Pandya running in from long-on. Kane Williamson (27) fell in the next over when he pulled a rising delivery from Khaleel Ahmed to Yadav at fine leg. Colin de Grandhomme chimed in with 30 off 16 to ensure New Zealand passed the critical 200 mark for the second time in the series.

Vijay Shankar took an equally aggressive stance at

the start of India's chase and the visitors were up at the required run rate through the first half of their innings, but were unable to establish partnerships. Rishabh Pant belted a four and two sixes with his first three scoring shots and raced to 28 off 12 before he became debutant Blair Tinkner's first victim, swiping at a full toss that was caught at mid-wicket.

Sharma made 38, Hardik Pandya's brief cameo produced 21 while MS Dhoni, feted as the master finisher, could only make two in a brief stay at the crease. With the game slipping away from India, Dinish Karthik pounded the boundaries with 33 off 16 deliveries while Krunal Pandya made 26 off 13 but they ended up four runs short. New Zealand next host Bangladesh in a series of three ODIs and three Tests. — AFP

## City hit humiliated Chelsea for six to go top once more

**MANCHESTER:** Sergio Aguero grabbed a hat-trick as Manchester City scored four times inside 25 minutes to thrash Chelsea 6-0 and leapfrog Liverpool again to top spot in the Premier League on goal difference yesterday.

Aguero should have had even more than three as the Argentine missed a glorious early chance and hit the bar in the second-half in a humiliating afternoon for Maurizio Sarri's men.

Raheem Sterling started and ended the scoring and Ilkay Gundogan also netted in the first quarter of the game as City ended what could have been a testing week with a trip to Everton in between the visits of Arsenal and Chelsea with maximum points.

Jurgen Klopp's men maintain the advantage of a game in hand, but handed a reprieve by Liverpool's draws against Leicester and West Ham in recent weeks. City look determined to become the first side in a decade to retain the Premier League.

Chelsea on the other hand slip to sixth with the scale of the defeat sure to raise further doubts over Sarri's future. A 4-0 defeat to Bournemouth in their last away game was Chelsea's heaviest league defeat since 1996.

And this was their worst loss in any competition since 1991 after failing to recover from Sterling's fourth-minute opener. Eden Hazard went to sleep from Kevin de Bruyne's quickly taken free-kick and Bernardo Silva had acres of space to cross for the England international to fire home.

Pep Guardiola had described this match as a "final" for his side given that Chelsea had a week to prepare, while City ground out a 2-0 win at Everton on Wednesday.

Guardiola fell to the floor in exasperation when Aguero somehow side-footed wide with his easiest chance of the game moments later. But the Catalan coach need not have worried that would prove a costly miss as Aguero made amends in stunning fashion by blasting into the top corner from 25 yards to double City's after just 13 minutes.

Aguero had a simple task to make it 3-0 six minutes later when he pounced on Ross Barkley's slack header towards his own goal. And Gundogan's shot from the edge of the area then had too much power for the world's most expensive goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga to compound Chelsea's woes.

Such was the defensive collapse at the other end, Gonzalo Higuain had little chance to shine but the Argentine striker was unfortunate not to score his third goal in as many league starts for Chelsea when Ederson turned over his dipping volley five minutes before the break.

That was as much of a response as Chelsea mustered, though, and it only got worse for Sarri's chances of keeping his job in the second period. Aguero missed his first chance to seal a second hat-trick in two games



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Argentinian striker Sergio Aguero (R) vies to head the ball against Chelsea's Brazilian defender David Luiz (C) during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Burnley at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, yesterday. — AFP

when he headed against the crossbar.

But when Sterling was too quick for Cesar Azpilicueta and chopped down by the Spaniard inside the area, Aguero coolly slotted home from the penalty spot to move level with Liverpool's Mohamed Salah as the Premier League's top scorer on 17 for the season.

Even after Aguero went off to a standing ovation, City's strength in depth shone through as Gabriel Jesus, Riyad Mahrez and David Silva came off the bench. And Silva's pass opened the visitors up again for the sixth as he picked out Oleksandr Zinchenko who crossed for Sterling to tap home. — AFP