

Last-ball victory for Sri Lanka

Geelong

Asela Gunaratne slammed a pulse-racing 84 to power Sri Lanka to a last-ball victory against Australia yesterday, clinching their Twenty20 series.

Gunaratne pounded the Australian bowlers with five sixes and six fours off 46 balls to get his side home by two wickets to scenes of wild jubilation at Geelong.

The Sri Lankans remain unbeaten in five T20Is in Australia, but this was their finest come-from-behind performance in front of their excited expatriate fans.

With four overs left Sri Lanka needed 52 to win but an undaunted Gunaratne tore into the Australian attack, slamming Moises Henriques for three consecutive sixes and a four and then taking two fours and a six off Andrew Tye's final over.

"Asela's was an amazing innings. We lost too many wickets early but Asela finished the game for us," skipper Upul Tharanga said.

Australia's captain Aaron Finch paid tribute to Gunaratne's dynamic innings.

"When you've got an in-form batter in, it is tough. That was one hell of an innings," Finch said.

"I thought the way we bowled in the middle was outstanding. When you have a good player in good form, they hurt you.

"Sri Lanka played very well there. Take nothing away from them. We have been on the receiving end again. The series is gone, hopefully we can salvage something in Adelaide."

The series may be decided but there is one match to play, in Adelaide on Wednesday, with the Sri Lankans eyeing a clean sweep.

Their triumph in Australia follows a 2-1 T20 series victory over South Africa last month. (AFP)



Asela Gunaratne

Hamilton

Apolished Quinton de Kock half century laid the foundation for South Africa's four wicket win over New Zealand in a tense finish to a rain-shortened opening one-day international in Hamilton yesterday.

In a clash that went down to the wire, it was a man-of-the-match performance from de Kock on a wicket that took an exceptional amount of spin in New Zealand conditions.

The departure of de Kock for 69 sparked a middle order collapse as even the New Zealand quicks turned to bowling cutters on the responsive pitch before an AB de Villiers rescue mission saw his side home with a ball to spare.

"We never expected it to turn like that in Hamilton," de Villiers said.

With the fixture reduced to 34 overs a side following heavy rain early in the day, New Zealand posted 207 for seven, boosted by a whirlwind 51 off 23 balls at the end by unbeaten pair Colin de Grandhomme and Tim Southee.

But any thoughts New Zealand had that they were in a strong performance were soon dashed by the way de Kock launched into South Africa's reply.

"At the halfway stage we felt we were right in the game," captain Kane Williamson said.

"South Africa showed their class with the bat, batted very well and their composure towards the end was very important."

South Africa went into the final over of their reply requiring 12 to win, and de Villiers ended the game with a four off the fifth ball of Tim Southee's over.

De Villiers with 37 off 34 balls and Andile Phehlukwayo (29 off 23) combined efforts to get the tourists home.-(AFP)

Scoreboard

New Zealand Total (7 wickets; 34.0 overs) 207
South Africa

Q. de Kock c Taylor b Boult	69
H. Amla c & b Williamson	35
F. du Plessis lbw Sodhi	14
A. de Villiers not out	37
J. Duminy c & b Southee	1
F. Behardien b Southee	0
C. Morris c Boult b Santner	16
A. Phehlukwayo not out	29
Extras (b2, lb3, w4)	9
Total (for 6 wickets; 33.5 overs)	210

Scoreboard

Australia Total (all out, 20 overs) 173

Sri Lanka

N. Dickwella c Paine b Faulkner	14
U. Tharanga c Richardson b Turner	4
D. Munaweera c Paine b Tye	10
K. Mendis c Paine b Richardson	5
A. Gunaratne not out	84
M. Siriwardana c Turner b Tye	0
C. Kapugedera c Dunk b Cummins	32
S. Prasanna c Head b Faulkner	7
N. Kulasekara c Klinger b Tye	12
L. Malinga not out	1

Extras (lb2, w5) 7

Total (8 wickets, 20 overs) 176

Fall of wickets: 1-5 (Tharanga), 2-22

(Dickwella), 3-27 (Mendis), 4-40

(Munaweera), 5-40 (Siriwardana), 6-92

(Kapugedera), 7-119 (Prasanna), 8-160

(Kulasekara)

Smith replaces Dhoni as skipper

New Delhi

Mahendra Singh Dhoni has been removed as skipper of his Indian Premier League team with Australia's Steve Smith replacing him for the upcoming tournament, an official statement said yesterday.

Dhoni, who stepped down as India's limited-overs captain last month, will continue to play as wicketkeeper-batsman for the Rising Pune Supergiants in the Twenty20 franchise-based competition that begins April 5.

"Rising Pune Supergiant today announced the appointment of Steve Smith as their new captain for the forthcoming edition of IPL season 10," a team statement said.

Team owner Sanjiv Goenka said Dhoni "is supportive of the decision,

keeping the franchise's best interests in mind".

Under Dhoni's captaincy, the Pune team finished second last in last IPL season, winning only five games and losing nine.

Some reports said Dhoni took the decision to step down and was not sacked, but team owner Goenka told the Press Trust of India that wasn't the case.

"Dhoni has not stepped down. We have appointed Steve Smith as the skipper," said Goenka.

"Frankly speaking, we did not have a good last season and we wanted someone young to lead the side and revamp it ahead of the upcoming season 10."

There was no immediate reaction from Dhoni. (AFP)



AB de Villiers of South Africa (L) and his teammate Andile Phehlukwayo celebrate winning the one-day international

De Villiers gets SA home