

Perera's 46-ball ton gives Sri Lanka consolation T20 win over New Zealand

AFP- Kusal Perera cracked a career-best 101 off just 46 balls as Sri Lanka secured a consolation seven-run victory in the third and final Twenty20 match against New Zealand in Nelson on Thursday.

Sri Lanka posted 218-5 in their 20 overs and New Zealand replied with 211-7.

New Zealand had already wrapped up the series after winning the first two games by eight and 45 runs respectively when the Sri Lankan middle order failed to fire.

But Perera was determined to show there was fight in the visitors as he plundered four sixes and 13 fours to register the fastest century by a Sri Lankan in T20 internationals.

He was helped by being dropped on 15 and 60 before he was caught at point by Rachin Ravindra off Daryl Mitchell in the penultimate over.

He was also shaken by the first ball he faced from Zak Foulkes which was edged towards third man.

"It was a wake-up call so I had to back myself and try to execute my normal game," Perera said.

"The coach had said 'once you get a start you have to finish the game', so that's why I was trying to do my best."

Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka said he always felt his side were capable of beating New Zealand despite the first two losses.

"It's a good win for us. Throughout the series we have played

good cricket but couldn't manage to get a win and finally we got it," he said.

Perera featured in partnerships of 41 with Avishka Fernando (17) and then 100 with Asalanka, who hammered 46 off just 24 deliveries with five sixes and one four.

Sri Lanka, opening the batting for the first time in the series, had 24 on the board inside three overs before Pathum Nissanka went for 14 after an exceptional catch by Mitchell Hay.

Wicketkeeper Hay had to sprint back to the boundary to take the top-edge and then throw it in the air as he stepped over the boundary before returning to the field of play to complete the dismissal.

New Zealand maintained the required 11-an-over run rate through 15 overs led by 69 off 39 balls from Ravindra.

Tim Robinson added 37 off 21 and Daryl Mitchell smacked 35 off 17 including four sixes in the final over by Asalanka.

Asalanka, a part-time bowler, had 3-25 off his first three overs and finished with 3-50.

New Zealand and Sri Lanka play the first of three one-day internationals in Wellington on Sunday.

AFP