



Name	Sunette Viljoen-Louw
DOB	06-10-1983
Nationality	South African
Player Status	Available
Playing Role	Batting All-Rounder (Seam)
Batting Style	RH Top Order Bat
Bowling Style	RA Medium Fast
Entry Route	

Sunette Viljoen has had a fairy-tale relationship with cricket. For years, pursuing an elusive Olympic javelin gold medal consumed Sunette Viljoen-Louw's life before she returned to her first love: cricket.

More than 20 years after she last played international in cricket, Viljoen-Louw has now mapped out an audacious plan to represent her country at the highest level in the sport.

Much has changed in the women's game which is far more professional than when Viljoen last put on a Proteas cap.

At just 17, she became the South Africa's youngest international woman cricketer, making her One Day International (ODI) debut in 2000 and going on to play at the Women's World Cup in New Zealand. She played in 17 ODIs scoring 198 runs and taking five wickets.

Her last match was her sole Test (four-day match for women) - scoring 17 and 71 against India in March 2002 - before focusing on the javelin.

Within weeks of returning to cricket action, Viljoen-Louw was signed by one of the country's top provincial sides, Titans Ladies. She smashed 160 not out from 123 balls on her Titans debut in January 2022, and has since performed well in all match formats including the shortest version of the sport. She was also named Women's Club player of the year with 645 runs with an average of 215 and strike rate of 160.

Viljoen-Louw's exploits for Titans saw her picked for Cricket South Africa's premier women's T20 competition, the Women's T20 Super League. Playing for the Thistles, she recently scored an impressive 66 off 48 deliveries against the SA U19 Women.

Proteas women's head coach Hilton Moreeng told reporters in November, "She has been putting in the performances and we've had a look into it. The door is never closed on some of those players."

And while she is yet to receive a national team call-up ahead of the T20 World Cup being held in South Africa from 10-26 February 2023, hope springs eternal for the never-say-die Viljoen-Louw.

"I think I proved in the provincial season what I have in me. I showed at the Super League what I can do in an innings," Viljoen-Louw said.

"I don't know if it will be enough. It is now out of my hands, I can only keep dreaming and praying for it, but there is definitely a chance. I will never write myself off. I will always believe that I have the potential to participate at the highest level, whether it is throwing a javelin or holding a cricket bat."

Viljoen-Louw is willing to bide her time and continue working hard to achieve her goal of pulling the green and gold over her head again. And even the prospect of turning 40 this October cannot dampen her desire to once again reach the summits of the sport, citing the successes of Roger Federer and Serena Williams in their late 30s.

"If I can stay healthy, stay conditioned and keep my little flame burning, I'll keep doing what I'm doing," she said. "Any professional sportsperson will tell you, if you get up in the morning and you no longer have a flame in your heart for what you want to do, then you know your time is up."

Cricket boasts plenty of examples of players, such as fellow South African Imran Tahir and West Indies legend Chris Gayle, both 43, still competing in major tournaments despite their advancing years.

Viljoen-Louw hopes to showcase her cricketing talents and take advantage of what is considered a blooming era for the female game, which offers opportunities all over the globe.

"In my heart, cricket is my game. It is because of my cricket that I have ended up where I have with my athletics. I want to show the world what a good cricketer I am and how well I can play," Viljoen-Louw stated.

"I want to play in The Hundred (England's short-format summer tournament), I want to play in a Women's Big Bash (Australia's T20 competition), I want to play in the Women's IPL (Indian Premier League). I am pushing my boundaries towards achieving that."

"When I take something on, it is to be the very best in that sport. That's just how I am. You don't settle for mediocre. That's just how I was put together."

Viljoen-Louw admitted she was disappointed to miss out on the 2023 showpiece but is hellbent on making the Proteas team in the future. She would not rule out setting her sights on the (50-over) 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup in India.

That would be some achievement, a full quarter-century after making her debut in the tournament.

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