

# Renowned tennis coach Bollettieri dies at 91

REUTERS

Nick Bollettieri, the larger-than-life coach whose famed Florida tennis academy changed the face of the game by producing some of its greatest players, has died at the age of 91, with ex-student Tommy Haas leading tributes to the “one of a kind” American.

The son of Italian immigrant parents, Bollettieri served in the United States army and dropped out of law school to become a coach, shaping the careers of top names including Andre Agassi, Serena and Venus Williams, Monica Seles and Maria Sharapova.

A pioneering mentor who coached 10 world number ones, he was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 2014.

“Thank you for your time, knowledge, commitment, expertise, the willingness to share your skill, your personal interest in mentoring me and giving me the best opportunity to follow my dreams,”

Indian Wells tournament director and Germany’s former world number two Haas wrote on Instagram.

“You were a dreamer and a doer, and a pioneer in our sport, truly one of a kind.”

Germany’s Sabine Lisicki, the 2013 Wimbledon runner-up, said that Bollettieri had “shaped the game of tennis”.

“You have given so many children a place to work for their dream. Supporting them with your knowledge and the belief that anything is possible. I was fortunate to be one of them,” Lisicki wrote on Twitter.

“You will be dearly missed!”

Bollettieri’s daughter Angelique Anne had announced on Facebook last month that her father was nearing the end. “Dad is close to transitioning to the next place. Please keep him in your thoughts for a peaceful departure and wonderful journey. We love you, Daddy,” she wrote.

Reports in the U.S. media said Bollettieri died on Sunday. One of Bollettieri’s first accomplished students was American Brian Gottfried, the world number three in 1977.

Bollettieri founded the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy the following year. It was bought by the International Management Group in 1987.

“RIP Nick Bollettieri. Aside from being the greatest coach ever, you were so kind to me, my parents, and my siblings ... that meant more to me than anything, you had a big heart and a zest for living,” said former women’s number one Chris Evert.



While Kylian Mbappe has stolen the headlines for defending champions France with his quick feet, electric dribbles and ruthless finishing, Antoine Griezmann has quietly kept things ticking over for Les Blues, pulling the strings from deeper in the park.

# Griezmann thankful for thankless role

AGENCIES

France’s Antoine Griezmann has yet to score as he toils away at this World Cup, but the attacking midfielder could not care less as he is enjoying his comeback at the highest level with the defending champions.

Griezmann, whose job is to link the midfield and the front line in a role where he defends as much as he goes forward, is a happy man on and off the pitch.

While Kylian Mbappe has scored five goals in Qatar to take his overall World Cup tally to nine and Olivier Giroud has surpassed Thierry Henry to become France’s all-time top scorer with 52 goals, Griezmann has been slaving away tirelessly in the engine room behind them.

“I had chances to score against Denmark but I missed them. Maybe I’m not as close to the box as I used to be. I’m playing good games,” Griezmann, who has played a record 71 consecutive games with Les Bleus, told reporters.

“I’m still missing a goal but I don’t shoot 50 times a game and I’m not obsessing about it. The team need me in midfield to make the link between the defence and the attack. I’m very proud and happy.”

Coach Didier Deschamps kept his faith in Griezmann even when the playing was struggling at Barcelona and got benched upon his return to Atletico Madrid last year.

“I owe him everything, so when I play I play for France, my team mates, but also for the coach,” said Griezmann, who ran no less than 11.3 kilometres on Sunday as France beat Poland 3-1 to set up a quarter-final clash with England on Saturday.

“Being well physically helps me a lot. There are no problems

in my private life,” said Griezmann. “In my head I had tough moments at Barca and last year when I came back to Atletico. It was complicated, I had to make myself very small, I had to find myself, on and off the pitch.”

Having a super-fit – and happy – Griezmann has obviously made things easier for Deschamps, who has won 75% of his World Cup games as a coach.

“Every game, every move, is like a thank-you to him. I want to try to do everything I can to make him proud of his number 7,” Griezmann said.

“He will always try to find the best solution for the balance of the team. We find it, we found it, we have to continue on that. He trusts everyone, that’s a strength of his.”

A large part of the why he’s gone unnoticed comes from how he vanished from the best players in the world conversation in 2019 when he made a (in hindsight) disastrous move to Barcelona. It didn’t help that he had announced this by releasing a documentary (called ‘the Decision’) on the transfer, either.

He struggled for game time and goals and any kind of form at Barca, the ‘Decision’ made him look a bit ridiculous, and people either outright dismissed him or just stopped talking about him. In 2021 he moved back to Atletico on loan, but continued to struggle -- till a permanent deal was found in early October.

If you’d been paying attention, you’d have seen Griezmann was slowly getting back to his best for Atletico since then. The occasional flashiness was still there, he wouldn’t be himself without it, but there was a seriousness to him that’s becoming for a player who’s now a veteran.



## THE LATERAL VIEW

# Bangladesh, Argentina fans rejoice in unison

IRESH ZAKER

Cometh the hour, cometh the man! When all hope was fading, a diminutive hero from a small third-world town stepped up to save the day. His name starts with ‘M’ and it was not Lionel Messi with a ball at his feet. Instead, it was Mehedi Hasan Miraz with a bat in his hand.

I know that it is World Cup time and I am supposed to write about football but Miraz’s deeds on Sunday night were just too miraculous to ignore. Bangladeshi cricket fans have long suffered from our team’s inability to close the deal, especially against India.

We went from a comfortable yet nervy 128 for four to a 136 for nine, all in the space of just 26 deliveries. Another nauseating defeat seemed etched on the cards on Sunday until, that is, Miraz and Mustafiz declared their unexpected intentions.

In less than an hour, the country was bathing



in the glory of the most improbable of one-wicket wins. Our tired hearts once again made optimistic, that maybe we have finally turned a psychological corner.

I found myself being envious of Argentina fans, who had two glorious moments in less than twenty-four hours; who had two small heroes, whose names start with M, to celebrate. What a day to support Bangladesh and the Albiceleste!

As all this was unfolding on the field, another wonderful tale was developing off it. Having learned about the Bangladeshi support for the Argentine football team, a group of Argentinians have started a Facebook fan page for the Bangladeshi cricket team: “Fans argentines de la seleccion de cricket de Bangladesh” it is called.

At the time of writing, the group had sixty-three thousand members (up from seven thousand when this paper reported the story for the first time twelve hours prior). Bangladeshis are enthusiastically educating the Argentines about cricket, and the Argentines are responding with characteristic verve. It is beautiful to witness.

Far be it from me to put my head in the Selecao’s mouth, and I usually do not have any preference when it comes to Brazil and Argentina. But two countries, literally on opposite sides of the globe, coming together in symbiotic prayer for minor miracles is a tale too beautiful to not root for.

Regardless of how the teams end up performing on their respective quests, we can safely say that, in this one small instance, we have seen the best of what both sports and the human spirit can achieve.

# Miraz’s success stems from his roots

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Mehedi Hasan Miraz was hoisted in the air by teammates with none other than Shakib Al Hasan amongst those lending a shoulder, for he had done the seemingly impossible.

Miraz took along Mustafizur Rahman with him as the last batter to stage an immense fightback under dire circumstances and prevailing where others did not. But if anyone felt that there had not been any precedent set by Miraz for that immense knock, it had come during the days of his forays as a young star, who was ready to take it all and leave nothing behind until the last ball.

Miraz had been one of the youngest bowlers to bag 10 wickets in a Test, having achieved the feat just three days past his 19th birthday. This year, he and Afif Hossain put on a 174-run stand to bring Bangladesh back from the dead against Afghanistan after the Tigers slumped to 45 for six in chase of 216 in Chattogram.

Country’s leading spin coach Sohel Islam has seen Miraz in his developmental years, having worked in both domestic and international assignments. The seminal change in Miraz’s ability to thrive under pressure was apparent even during his younger days.

“A player’s approach during his youth and the roles he played is very important to



their development. I have seen Miraz in U-15, U-17, U-19 stages, and during his journey in those six years, he was captaining the side and used to play the lead role,” said Sohel.

“His approach was such that he would always say ‘hand me the ball sir and I will

be able to do this’. I remember once that we were playing in Pietermaritzburg in serious cold conditions. It was probably two degrees but he was saying that the cold was nothing. Then he played a really good innings with the ball moving around and they had

quite a few pacers playing. He has been leading teams and that develops character and when one comes to the national team there is reflection of that. That played a crucial role in his growth but more crucially that approach has remained,” Sohel said of

his student.

In South Africa this year, Miraz was hit for runs during the first ODI but yet he asked for the ball during a critical scenario from skipper Tamim Iqbal and picked up four wickets to play a match-winning hand. Despite his initial impact with the ball in the national team, there were always signs that Miraz was a proper all-rounder, according to his mentor.

“There is a gap in Bangladesh’s domestic and international scene when it comes to batting so it takes time to cope but as time goes, his batting is growing in stature. He used to bat really well and is a proper all-rounder. When he played the World Cup in 2016, he was the highest run-getter. When you see Shakib you can’t decide whether he creates more impact with bat or ball. Miraz is very close to that,” Sohel said.

Watching Miraz’s innings on Sunday was something special for his mentor. “I talked to him later and said that ‘Miraz, I have seen many innings but it’s not like I get very excited but this innings made me really excited.’”

“He always shows bravado, but the thing he said to the press that he believed, that was completely true,” he concluded.

From being captain in youth cricket to national team, Miraz has come up leaps and bounds and Tigers will like to believe this is just the beginning.