



Bangladesh all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz was surrounded by his teammates in elation after Tigers’ five-run win against India in the second ODI of the three-match series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Miraz hogged all the spotlight as his match-winning 38-run knock during one-wicket win in the first game was followed by a scintillating maiden hundred in the second match, which guided the Tigers to win the series with one match in hand.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mehedi Hasan Miraz hit his maiden ODI ton and was unbeaten on 100. The all-rounder amassed 148 runs for a record seventh-wicket stand alongside Mahmudullah Riyad (77) after the Indian bowlers rattled the hosts on 69-6. It was Tigers’ highest partnership against India and the highest seventh-wicket stand by any team against India in 50-over matches.

BANGLADESH’S HIGHEST PARTNERSHIPS AGAINST INDIA	
<b>148</b> Mahmudullah-Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Dec 2022, Mirpur	<b>123</b> Mushfiquir Rahim-Tamim Iqbal, June 2017, Birmingham
<b>133</b> Anamul Haque-Mushfiquir Rahim, Feb 2014, Fatullah	<b>120</b> Liton Das-Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Sept 2018, UAE
	<b>113</b> Jahurul Islam-Tamim Iqbal, March 2012, Mirpur



# Tigers excel in a game of partnerships

SPORTS REPORTER

The second ODI yesterday turned out to be another tense affair in the end after the first one was won by just a wicket. The match went right down to the wire, in fact to the last delivery and Mustafizur Rahman prevailed against India captain Rohit Sharma, thwarting a six that was needed off the last delivery to win the game by five runs and clinch what was Bangladesh’s second consecutive bilateral ODI series win against India at home following the triumph of 2015. Skipper for the series Liton Das found the joy of winning two close contests against India and said his team will go with the same mentality for the third and final ODI in Chattogram. “Very happy to win in my first series as captain, it feels good,” Liton said at the post-match presentation ceremony yesterday as the Tigers now look to seal a memorable whitewash. “We felt that 240-250 was a good score. We were under pressure but they were brilliant. The focus for the next game will also be about winning,” he added. When Mehedi Hasan Miraz pumped his fist in the air on the last delivery of the Bangladesh innings yesterday, the moment raised the roof of the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, filled to the rafters. Miraz, having prevailed under such uncer-

<b>BANGLADESH:</b> 271-7 in 50 overs (Miraz 100 not out, Mahmudullah 77; Washington 3-37, Umran 2-58)
<b>INDIA:</b> 266-9 in 50 overs (Shreyas 82, Rohit 51 not out; Ebadot 3-45, Shakib 2-39)
<b>RESULT:</b> Bangladesh won by five runs
<b>PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH:</b> Mehedi Hasan Miraz

tainty in the first ODI, had found himself coming into bat in a similar scenario with Bangladesh down six wickets for just 69 runs. At the end of innings, he had propelled the Tigers to 271 for seven, playing some extraordinary shots along the way to his maiden ODI ton, becoming just the second batter after Ireland’s Simi Singh to hit a ton as a number eight. The expectations from Miraz are great after two immense knocks. “Last few years, I have worked hard on the batting and focused on certain areas to improve,” Miraz said at the post-match presentation ceremony. There was uneven bounce on the surface and not just in terms of low bounce as a couple just flew off the surface too, catching batters off-guard. In Mahmudullah Riyad,

Miraz had a partner at the other end facing criticism for lack of runs. The duo put colour back on Bangladesh’s face with a 148-run stand – the second-highest seventh-wicket stand for Bangladesh in ODIs and the highest ODI stand for Bangladesh for any wicket against India. “My coaches have given me a lot of information on improving my game. Riyad Bhai kept telling me that we need to keep playing deep into the innings, and the conversations were mostly about keeping small targets of partnerships,” Miraz added. Miraz also picked up key wickets of KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer with the ball. “I was just trying to hit the good areas with the ball and put pressure on them,” said the allrounder. It did not appear after the first half that the game would be so close. Rohit Sharma, who came in at number nine after an injury to his left-hand thumb, almost pulled off a miracle during an unbeaten 28-ball 51. The India skipper informed he had a ‘dislocation’ which fortunately was not a fracture. “Not taking anything away from Mehedi and Mahmudullah, was a great partnership, but we also need to find ways of breaking such partnerships,” Rohit said at the post-match ceremony. “In one-day cricket, it’s about partnerships and when you get those, you have to ensure that they are converted to match-winning partnerships. That’s what they did,” he concluded.

# Pass-masters Spain face identity crisis

AFP, Doha

Spain arrived in Qatar with grand dreams of winning a second World Cup, fully convinced in their style of play, but departed early Wednesday, ruminating on an identity crisis. La Roja last lifted a major trophy a decade ago at Euro 2012, while they have not won a single knockout game at the World Cup since triumphing in South Africa in 2010. They attempted over 1,000 passes against Morocco but ended up with nothing to show for it, forcing Yassine Bounou into only one save before the shootout. There he made two more and Spain were eliminated in the last 16 again, just as they were in Russia four years ago. When Xavi and Andres Iniesta ruled the world, opponents were largely still too naive to know to stop them, and they had too much quality to be fended off for long. Now only truly elite club sides like Pep Guardiola’s Manchester City can succeed by dominating the ball entirely – with perhaps the world’s best striker, Erling Haaland, as the spearhead. Against Morocco, Luis Enrique left his top scorer Alvaro Morata on the bench, opting instead for Marco Asensio, whom he trusts more not to lose the ball. The coach buys “the complete pack” when it comes to possession football, for better or for worse. That means there is no Plan B, with Nico Williams’s pace and directness on the right flank as much of a nod as Luis Enrique will give to other ideas. Players he left at home like strikers Iago Aspas and Borja Iglesias might have been able to offer more of a challenge to Morocco’s excellent rearguard. Should he depart, Spain might start looking at other strategies, at least against opponents savvy enough to keep from being enveloped by La Roja’s passing web.

# ‘Why not dream of winning the cup?’

REUTERS, Doha

Thanks to Walid Regragui, the coach who has made Morocco the first Arab nation to reach the World Cup quarter-finals, avocados may just be the nation’s favourite fruit. When the appointment of Regragui following the departure of Bosnian Vahid Halilhodzic was announced in August, underwhelmed pundits branded him “avocado head” as a belittling term of derision. But the shaved-headed coach, who teased those critics at the tournament in Qatar by holding an avocado with a soccer ball inside it and pointing his finger at his head, has more than proved his credentials. The previously unheralded Regragui, who led Wydad to the Moroccan league and CAF Champions League double last season, masterminded a win for the ages against mighty Spain in the last 16 on Tuesday. The Atlas Lions produced an amazing defensive performance, allowing Spain possession without threatening danger, before winning a penalty shootout to set up a last-eight clash with Portugal. Morocco first grabbed attention at the World Cup with a goalless draw against Croatia, the runners-up four years ago. The 47-year-old coach talked about how his team must develop a winning mentality, and that Morocco would see how they fared

against Belgium before their final group game against Canada. The Moroccans, however, stunned the second-ranked Belgians 2-0 to ease their passage to the last 16 for the second time in



their history. Following another victory over Canada, Regragui became the first Arab coach to lead a team to the knockout rounds.

“I told (my players) we should be proud of ourselves,” Regragui said. “It is an opportunity that may not be repeated. Unfortunately, I did not play in the World Cup. God has now given me an opportunity to make history as a coach. I am the happiest person in the world,” he said. “I think Africans can go far, why not dream of winning the cup? We want the

next generation to dare to dream.” From the first minute against Spain, those familiar with Moroccan football felt that the 2010 world champions had a long night ahead of them. Regragui relied on the usual mixture of North African style, combining committed defence with counter-attacks led by Hakim Ziyech, who returned to the national team when Regragui took over from Halilhodzic. But Regragui’s importance extends far beyond on-field tactics. He gives his team confidence and motivates them in his own unique way. Regragui has managed to convince his players they are playing for all of Morocco and, as a result, the team camp has been different from before. Regragui decided to invite the players’ families to the camp in Qatar. “I lived my life in Paris, but it was the first

time that I attended a tournament with Walid participating, whether as a player or a coach,” Regragui’s mother told the Moroccan TV station Arryadia. Although 14 of the 26 players in the Moroccan squad were born abroad, their love for their country is clear. “We fought and made the Moroccan people happy. We made history and Morocco deserves it. The Moroccan people made us united on the field,” Regragui told Bein Sports. It is possible to feel the warmth between Regragui and his players during training as he treats them like friends. “They like to hit me on the head,” Regragui said. “Maybe it brings them good luck.” At Al-Thumama Stadium on Saturday, the Moroccan, Arab and African world will hope to continue the avocado-inspired fairytale against Portugal.

