

## Miraz steps up once again

SPORTS REPORTER

Mehedi Hasan Miraz produced the goods with the bat once again, scoring a team-high 89-ball 74 during Bangladesh's second and final World Cup 2023 warm-up match against defending champions England in Guwahati yesterday.

After Bangladesh lost two early wickets, Miraz held the innings together as he stitched a 52-run third-wicket stand with opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim, who also impressed with a 44-run knock following a fifty in the first warm-up against Sri Lanka last Friday.

Miraz and Tanzid were among only four batters who scored double figures as the Tigers once again produced a below-par batting display in a rain-affected 37-over-a-side encounter, managing 188 for nine.

However, Miraz's form with the willow will definitely give the Tigers a breather at a time of batting peril. Captaining the side in the previous warm-up, Miraz played a solid unbeaten 67-run knock in a winning cause. The challenge for the all-rounder, however, will be to carry his form into the tournament proper.



All-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz celebrates reaching a fifty during Bangladesh's second and final World Cup 2023 warm-up match against England in Guwahati yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## Ajay Jadeja to mentor Afghans

AGENCIES

Former India captain Ajay Jadeja has assumed the role of mentor of Afghanistan for the duration of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023, the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) confirmed on Monday.

"ACB appointed former Indian captain and middle-order batter Ajay Jadeja as Afghanistan's Mentor for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023", ACB wrote.

Jadeja arrives with a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of Indian conditions. His impressive ODI record boasts 196 matches, amassing 5359 runs at an average of 37.47, including six centuries and 30 half-centuries. In addition, Jadeja represented India in 15 Test matches between 1992 and 2000.

He was also part of India's World Cup squad in three editions -- in 1992, 1996 and 1999. One of the standout moments from India's 1992 World Cup campaign was when Jadeja took a remarkable catch to dismiss Allan Border during their group-stage match against Australia.

Afghanistan are currently in India, gearing up for the World Cup. However, their preparation was hampered during the first round of warm-up games after their match against South Africa was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to heavy rain in Thiruvananthapuram.

They will be in action again today against Sri Lanka in Guwahati as they look to get some game time ahead of the tournament.

Jadeja will have his work cut out during his tenure as the mentor for Rashid Khan and Co as Afghanistan go into the mega event on the back of some disappointing performances.

Afghanistan are on a six-match losing streak, dating back to July this year. They won their first-ever bilateral ODI series against Bangladesh in July but since then went on to lose a three-match ODI series against Pakistan in Sri Lanka and both their Asia Cup encounters in September. They begin their World Cup campaign against Bangladesh on October 7.



## Tamim issue still hard to leave behind?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh team director Khaled Mahmud felt the team need to focus on having a good World Cup and let go of whatever had transpired during the squad-selection announcement and the subsequent feud between Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan.

Despite Tamim having opted out of the World Cup, it appears that the team are still being asked questions regarding the incidents that unfolded with the left-handed opener having suggested in the video message that he felt he did not want to be part of the "dirty environment" where obstacles were being enacted on his path.

"I feel the team is bigger than any personality and the country is bigger than the team. We can't just focus on one player or say that if this happened then that would've happened," Mahmud told reporters on Sunday.

"Of course, many things could have happened. We have to fight with whatever we have.

"The World Cup is a tough place. It's a mental game. If the boys can keep their thinking straight and play their best cricket, we can try. I don't care anymore. No point in looking backwards, we have to go forward. The team are in good condition and this incident didn't affect the team. They are

looking for something good and waiting for the World Cup to start."

Tamim had also said a board high-up "very involved" with cricket had talked to him about batting lower down the order or opting out of the first game. Mahmud felt such remarks provided ammunition to suspect everyone involved with the

team and asked Tamim to speak more straightforwardly.

"Truth be told, if Tamim has said something like that, he should say who did it and why, for what reason. If you have a strong mentality, you should say who said it.

"It's not right that you say something that puts everyone under suspicion. If you have evidence, then say who it was. It's not time for us to think about such things," he said.

Skipper Shakib said that Tamim was not a team man as he was only thinking of his individual needs. Mahmud said both Tamim and Shakib are mature enough to talk about their issues and no one was teaching them what to say.

"I feel that everyone talked in regards to their own point of view. It's their personal matter, and both are very mature. If someone now says that Tamim was taught what to say, or if it's said that we taught Shakib what to say, then it's completely wrong," Mahmud concluded.



## Kings revive AFC Cup campaign

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings fought back from a goal down to beat Odisha FC 3-2 at the Kings Arena yesterday to bring their AFC Cup campaign back on track.

Dorielton Gomes scored twice after Miguel Figueira had drawn the home team level following an early goal from the visitors. However, the Bangladesh Premier League champions, who lost their opening fixture 3-1 away to Maziya S&RC, would have to be more clinical in front of goal when they play their next match against Mohun Bagan in Bhubaneswar on the 24th of this month after having missed a plethora of goalscoring chances in yesterday's game.

Bashundhara Kings started with two changes from the match against Maziya, with Mehedi Hasan replacing goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico and Miguel replacing Sheikh Morsalin in attack. Those two were forced changes as Bashundhara Kings were missing five players from their squad due to club-imposed suspension on disciplinary ground.

Although the home team started the game brightly, they got on the backfoot pretty early as Mauricio de Brito beat Mehedi with a diagonal shot following a clever through-ball from Laldinliana Renthlei on 19 minutes.

Laldinliana then turned Odisha's rescuer 12



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

minutes later, sliding in front of goal to block a goalbound shot attempt from Robson Robinho, who had the goal at his mercy following a clever cutback from Dorielton.

Dorielton then failed to keep his diagonal shot on target from inside the box after a neat one-two with Robinho in the 36th minute, but the persistent pressure paid off three minutes later when an unmarked Figueira headed home from close range after Robinho's toe-poked attempt deflected off an Odisha player.

Dorielton gave the home side the lead on the stroke of half-time with a powerful header on a perfectly weighted cross from Rakib Hossain as the home team went into the lemon break with a slender lead.

Dorielton extended Bashundhara's lead nine minutes after restart with a clinical finish on a clever through-ball from Robinho. The Brazilian striker, who had been much maligned in recent times over his performance against Sharjah FC in the AFC Champions League playoff and against Maziya in the first AFC Cup fixture, took off his shirt in wild celebration.

Odisha's substitute forward Roy Krishna's header came off the far post in the 58th minute before Jerry Lalrinzuala reduced the margin with a shot from inside the box in the 66th minute after Mehedi's fist on a cross from Sakamoto fell to him.

Chances kept coming at both ends in the dying stages of the match, with Dorielton missing a golden opportunity to clinch a hat-trick and then Boburbek Yuldashov's flying header bouncing off the crossbar.

Roy Krishna had another header come off the crossbar from point-blank range at the other end as Bashundhara just about held on to the one-goal lead to leave the pitch with a crucial victory.

## Kabaddi off to a mixed start

SPORTS REPORTER from Hangzhou

Bangladesh men's kabaddi team got off to an impressive start with a 52-17 win over Japan with four 'Iona,' but the women's team fell to Nepal by 37-24 points in their respective Asian Games group matches at Xiaoshan Guali Sports Centre yesterday.

The men in red and green led 25-5 at halftime before adding 27 more points in the second half; during which a few players, including captain Tuhin Tarafder, were rested to make room for fresh faces.

"We have been going through the medal drought for a long time. We played a very good game today (yesterday)

and want to carry it to the next matches against Thailand and Chinese Taipei to realise our target," said vice-captain Mizanur Rahman, who tormented Japan players throughout the game.

Bangladesh women's team, meanwhile, looked to be lacking technical knowledge, fitness as well as the defending capacity despite having undergone a one-and-a-half month training in India.

**Men's recurve team stand out**

After Bangladesh's five archery teams --

women's recurve team, mixed recurve team, men's compound team, women's compound team, and mixed compound team -- fell short against their respective opponents at Fuyang Yinhu Sports Centre yesterday, only the men's recurve team advanced to the quarterfinals following a 5-4 tie-breaker win over Vietnam.

**Mabia falls short**

Mabia Akter Simanta was far from her best as she finished fourth among five weightlifters in the B section of 64kg category at the Xiaoshan Sports Centre Gymnasium yesterday.

Mabia, the South Asian Games double-gold medallist, could lift 77kg in snatch and 98kg in clean and jerk to register an overall 175kg -- around eight kilos fewer than her personal best which she pulled off in the 2019 World Championship.

**Hockey team handed heavy defeat**

Harmanpreet Singh and Mandeep Singh each scored a hat-trick as Bangladesh's hockey team succumbed to a 12-0 thumping against India yesterday.

Bangladesh finished fourth in Pool after suffering their third defeat in five matches, setting up a seventh-place decider against Oman on October 6.



## A point to prove for Ancelotti in Naples

AFP, Barcelona

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti is not a man to hold a grudge, as reflected by his return to the Spanish capital despite being harshly sacked by Los Blancos chief Florentino Perez in 2015.

However, the 64-year-old veteran would doubtless enjoy proving a point when his Madrid side visit Napoli in the Champions League on Tuesday at the Diego Armando Maradona Stadium.

Ancelotti was axed by president Aurelio De Laurentiis in December 2019, less than an hour after helping Napoli reach the Champions League knock-out stages with a 4-0 thrashing of Genk.

Ancelotti spent a year and a half in charge of Napoli, guiding them to a second-place finish in the 2018-19 campaign, but his tenure was abruptly cut short in its sophomore year.

However, Ancelotti's surprise return to the helm of Madrid in 2021 put him back among the elite, and in 2022 he won his fourth Champions League title as a coach, more than anyone else, as well as La Liga to complete a superb double.

Madrid's 3-0 win at Girona on Sunday ensures they also arrive in Italy as leaders in La Liga, after a wobble in the derby against rivals Atletico Madrid.

The coach deployed Eduardo Camavinga at left-back instead of the more attacking



Real Madrid's Brahim Diaz, Rodrygo, and Vinicius Junior on their way to Naples where they will take on Napoli in a Champions League Group C clash today. PHOTO: REAL MADRID

Fran Garcia, and also asked Jude Bellingham to help with covering Girona to ease the burden on Vinicius Junior.

Bellingham has seven goals and two assists this season across all competitions, largely playing in the number 10 role, despite his capacity to operate in deeper areas.

It was an "invention" by Ancelotti to help cover for the departed Karim Benzema and so far it has paid dividends.

Part of the reason behind the new set-up is to add muscle to the team and bolster the

midfield, after Manchester City demolished the record 14-time European champions in last season's semi-final.

The visit to Napoli will be another acid test for both Ancelotti's plan and Madrid's squad depth, with striker Victor Osimhen in excellent form, despite his recent anger over the club insulting him on social media.

Real are without injured defender David Alaba, leaving only Antonio Rudiger and Nacho Fernandez available in central defence.