

Captain Miraz’s all-round test in Antigua

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Not often can a cricketer boast reaching a milestone just by stepping onto the field. But on Friday, all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz reached not one but two significant career milestones when he went out for the toss ahead of the first of the two Tests against West Indies in Antigua.

Miraz, in the absence of regular captain Najmul Hossain Shanto who is out injured, became the 14th cricketer to lead the Tigers in Tests and also earned his 50th Test cap alongside teammate Taijul Islam.

As one of only seven cricketers to play 50 Tests for Bangladesh, Miraz is undoubtedly among the most experienced Test cricketers of the country. Playing in the ongoing series, only Mominul Haque has played more Tests than him in the Bangladesh squad (68).

Experience inevitably attracts responsibility, and adding the role of captaincy on top of it, the pressure is definitely mounting high on Miraz in the Windies Tests.



On top of that, the absences of all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, the experienced Mushfiqur Rahim, and Shanto have created a vacuum in the batting

department and made it exceedingly difficult for the team management to form a balanced unit.

In a bid to have five proper bowling options, something they did not have in the two Tests against South Africa at home and suffered dearly for it, the management made the call to pick four bowlers – pacers Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud and Shoriful Islam and spinner Taijul – and place Miraz in the all-rounder’s role for the Antigua Test.

Till the West Indies Tests, Miraz has been Bangladesh’s most successful batter in the ongoing cycle of the ICC World Test Championship, making 561 runs in 11 innings with five half-centuries.

Miraz has been scoring crucial runs for the Tigers batting at number 7 and 8 and in the ongoing Test, there is a possibility of him occupying the number 6 position, usually reserved for Shakib in Tests.

Form-wise, this should be the ideal time for the 27-year-old to bat higher up the order. However, his past record in the Caribbean as a batter in Tests does not

present a rosy picture.

The right-hander has batted eight times in five Tests against the hosts in the Caribbean and has reached the double-figure mark only once, making 10 in the second innings in Kingston back in 2018.

He averages an appalling 4.12 with the bat in Tests in West Indies, whereas his career average is a shade below 23 and his average in the last two years has been a shade above 39.

West Indies have packed their eleven with four pacers and would try to run through the Tigers’ batting line-up, like they had done many times in recent tours.

Miraz deferred this trial by pace by choosing to bowl first after winning the toss, but he and the Bangladesh batters will have to face the music in the second innings.

For Miraz, the Antigua Test began with achieving two milestones. However, if he fails to deliver with the bat and succumbs to the West Indies’ attack as he has in the past, the ending would not feel as sweet for the all-rounder.

Nine banned, fined in 3rd division league

SPORTS REPORTER

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) yesterday issued one-year suspensions and fines to eight players and a team official for breaching the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB)’s Code of Conduct during the Meghna Bank Dhaka Third Division Cricket League 2024-25.

BCB President Faruque Ahmed reaffirmed the board’s zero-tolerance stance on disciplinary breaches, stating, “Let this be a message to all players and officials.”

The incident occurred earlier this week on November 18, during a Super League match between Tejgaon Cricket Academy and Sapphire Sporting Club at the PKSP Ground – I.

A field altercation between players from both teams prompted an investigation by the CCDM Technical Committee, which reviewed visual evidence before delivering its verdict.

Consequently, Tejgaon Cricket Academy players Yeasin Arafat, Md Rifat Al Emon (Anik), Tasin Ahmed Ronobi, Md Rabbi Hasan, Md Parvez Ahmed Joy, and team official Robin, along with Sapphire Sporting Club’s Md Rana Khan, Saiful Islam Shawon, and Md Hridoy, were found guilty of a Level 4 offence under Article 2.19 of the BCB Code of Conduct.

Level 4 violations carry severe repercussions, including a potential lifetime ban. After deliberation, the CCDM decided on a one-year suspension from all BCB competitions for the nine individuals. Each was also fined a minimum of 50,000 taka.

BUMRAH SHINES brightest on pacers’ day

India roared back in the first Test against Australia on Friday after being skittled for 150, taking seven wickets in the final session to put themselves in the box seat after a riveting opening day in Perth. At the close, the hosts were in disarray on 67-7 after stand-in captain Jasprit Bumrah demolished the Australian top order in a devastating spell to end the day with 4-17.

- On the opening day of the first Test between India and Australia at the Perth Stadium yesterday, a total of 17 wickets fell -- the most number of wickets on the first day of a Test in Australia since 1952.
- All 17 of those wickets were scalped by pacers, with Australia’s Josh Hazlewood’s four for 29 in 13 overs being the best figure after India’s Bumrah.
- India were bundled out for just 150 in 49.4 overs -- the ninth instance of India being all out on the opening day of an away Test, and the first since their game against West Indies in Kingston in 2011. However, 49.4 overs is the fewest overs faced by India in those nine instances.
- India captain Jasprit Bumrah became only the second bowler after South Africa’s Dale Steyn (at Port Elizabeth in 2014) to dismiss Australia’s star batter Steven Smith for a golden duck.
- The ball on average seamed more than 0.793 degrees yesterday -- the average seam movement on a day has been more than that only 94 times in Test history.
- Yesterday’s batting average of 10.64 for both India and Australia combined (181 runs for 17 wickets) is the second-lowest in those 94 days of play -- with the second day’s play in a game between Australia and South Africa in Brisbane in 2022 seeing an average deviation of 0.810 degrees and batters averaging 9.16 (18 wickets for 165 runs).

Day 1
India: 150 all out in 49.4 overs (Reddy 41, Pant 37; Hazlewood 4-49, Marsh 2-12)
Australia: 67 for seven in 27 overs (Carey 19 not out, Head 11; Bumrah 4-17, Siraj 2-17)

“We have the advantage now and I’m hoping we can bat better in the second innings and put them under pressure,”

said India’s debutant **Nitish Kumar Reddy**, who top-scored for the visitors with 41 off 59 deliveries.

“Obviously a good day to be a fast bowler. There was a fair bit in the wicket, swing and sideways movement, and some good pace and carry. We’ll come out tomorrow [today] and try and get as close to their total as we can,”

Australia pacer **Mitchell Starc**, who got two wickets for 14 runs.



Redemption for Topu and Kings

SPORTS REPORTER

After flicking home Miguel Ferreira’s corner from an unmarked position inside the box to draw Bashundhara Kings level in their Bangladesh 2.0 Challenge Cup fixture against Mohammedan at the Bashundhara Kings Arena last night, Topu Barman made a shushing gesture to the crowd as if he was celebrating in front of opposition fans.

The goal came in the 73rd minute of the match, right after a lengthy hold-up in play due to flares thrown onto the pitch, and there was no looking back for the five-time Bangladesh Premier League champions since then.

Two more goals -- Faysal Ahmed Fahim’s side volley on a Ferreira cross in 81st minute and then Ferreira’s top-notch finish in the seventh minute of the 18-minute stoppage-time capped off a superb fightback for last season’s treble winners.

While it was a redemption for Kings who had lost all three of their AFC Challenge Cup fixtures last month under new coach Valeriu Tite, it was also some sort of redemption for Topu, who had copped considerable amount of flak for his performances with the Kings and the national team recently.

Topu, not at his usual best in recent times, was at fault for Bangladesh conceding the first goal in an eventual 2-1 win against Maldives at this venue a week ago.

When asked about his celebration, Topu said there was ‘noise’ from the galleries which he tried to shut with his celebration.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

“It was a relief,” Topu said after the match. “I admit I was at fault for that goal against Bangladesh. We were under some pressure as a team after going down in the first half. There was noise from the galleries, and my celebration was a reaction to that.”

“This was a very important match for us. We had lost three matches in Bhutan

(AFC Challenge Cup). And we conceded early here. So we were under pressure. Plus Mohammedan are never an easy opponent. So I believe this win will boost our confidence in the upcoming tournaments,” said Topu, who was adjudged the player of the match.

The inaugural match of the season which was named Bangladesh 2.0 Challenge

Cup to pay homage to the martyrs of July Movement, started with a minute’s silence to July Martyrs as well as former national team skipper Zakaria Pintoo, who passed away recently.

The contest was a tale of two halves. Mohammedan, who had finished second to Kings in all three competitions last season, were clearly the better team all through the first half, and deservedly took a seventh-minute lead through a towering header from captain Souleymane Diabate.

But the Black and Whites sort of went into a shell in the second half as the Kings once again showed their bouncebackability with three wonderful goals.

Mohammedan coach Alfaz Ahmed did not admit that his team went defensive in the second half, instead said the throwing of flares and the subsequent hold-up of play was the turning point of the match.

“It is never easy to win at this venue against the Bashundhara Kings. The ground, the atmosphere and their familiarity with it make them almost invincible here,” the former national team striker, who has guided the Black and Whites through a resurgence in recent years, said.

“However, the break in play was the turning point for me. Our concentration and flow of play was broken because of it,” Alfaz added.

The match was attended by Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud, who handed over the prizes to the teams. Later the prize money from the match, -- Tk 25 lac -- were donated to the July Martyrs Memorial Foundation.

Youth hockey team eye WC qualification

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national U-21 hockey team will leave the country in the afternoon today for Muscat, Oman to take part in the Men’s Junior Asia Cup with hopes of securing a place in the FIH Hockey Junior World Cup next year.

The 11th edition of the Junior Asia Cup is scheduled to take place in Oman from November 26 to December 4, with 10 teams, split into two groups, competing in the tournament. The top six teams will qualify for the 2025 Hockey Junior World Cup.

A total of four teams from Asia competed in the 16-team Junior World Cup last year. However, International Hockey Federation (FIH) this time decided to increase the number of participants to 24 in the upcoming Junior World Cup, allotting six spots for teams from Asia.

Bangladesh, placed along with Pakistan, Malaysia, Oman, and China in Pool B, entered into the Junior Asia Cup after emerging champions in the qualifiers with a 7-6 win over hosts Oman in the final in January.

Coach Moududur Rahman Shuvo has set his sights on beating Oman and China in the pool matches to brighten their chances.