Nepal’s bowlers turned a modest total into a commanding victory on Tuesday, defeating hosts Rwanda by 38 runs in the ICC Women’s T20I Challenge Trophy.

Despite a shaky start with the bat, the visitors successfully defended 103 to keep their title hopes alive at the Gahanga Cricket Stadium.

Nepal’s innings began in near-disaster as Rwanda’s attack tore through the top order, leaving the visitors reeling at 23/4 within the powerplay. However, skipper Indu Barma anchored the side with a persistent, unbeaten 33 off 45 balls.

Barma found a reliable partner in Kabita Kunwar (24 off 26), and together they stabilized the innings with a 46-run partnership for the fifth wicket. Rwanda’s Henriette Ishimwe was the pick of the bowlers, claiming 3 wickets to keep Nepal to a sub-par 103.

What Nepal lacked in batting fireworks, they made up for with a ruthless defensive display that saw Rwanda bundled out for just 65. As wickets kept falling, collapsing from 4/38 to 7/44, the chase slipped further out of reach.

Manisha Upadhayay earned Player of the Match honors with a suffocating spell of 3-10, including a rare maiden.

Kabita Kunwar (2-17) continued her record-breaking form, bringing her career T20I tally to 65 wickets, moving three clear of veteran Sita Rana Magar for the national record.

Rachana Chaudhary (2-11) and Riya Sharma (2-13) ensured no Rwandan middle-order recovery was possible.

Rwanda’s chase never gained momentum. Only skipper Marie Bimenyimana (19) and Geovanis Uwase (12) reached double figures as three batters fell for ducks in the collapse. Flora Irakoze added 8, but it was too little, too late. Rwanda were eventually bowled out for 65 in 17.4 overs.

“Our bowlers showed incredible character today,” noted a team official following the match. “Defending 103 requires absolute discipline, and the execution of the plans was clinical.”

Nepal now looks ahead to crucial upcoming fixtures against Italy and Vanuatu as they attempt to climb further up the table.

The Standings

The result tightens the race at the top of the double round-robin table. With the team finishing first set to claim the trophy, every remaining match is now a must-win for the chasing pack.

The Road to the Title

- USA (1st Place): With five wins from six matches, the Americans are the favorites to claim the trophy. Their consistency has given them a two-point cushion at the top.
- Rwanda (2nd Place): Despite being the hosts, Rwanda has struggled with consistency, dropping three games out of seven. They currently hold 8 points but have played one more game than their closest rivals.
- Nepal (3rd Place): Following their “stunner” against the hosts, Nepal now sits on 6 points from six games. With a balanced record of three wins and three losses, they remain the dark horse of the tournament.