

## AN OVERVIEW Sports in Bangladesh

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

**T**HE road to self-actualisation is fraught with obstacles. And none know it better than the sporting enthusiasts of this beloved land. As a child of distinct post-Liberation Bangladesh, yours truly grew up listening to tales of cricketers talents of the then East Pakistan, of Raqibul Hasan and his in/famous "Joy Bangla" bat, of Salahuddin and his inimitable football skills and Aslam and his razor sharp passing and the famous Bangladesh football team of the late 70's and early 80's. And of course I grew up learning of the gross biasness of the selection process that prevented our precociously talented sporting community to ever showcase their talents on a world stage.

With Bangladesh, we were supposed to have that chance. As things turned out however, that never really materialised.

Why or why not is a topic for another day but it was not until the late eighties that Bangladesh really had something to shout about as far

as the sporting agenda was concerned.

And it was not a cricketer but a chess player, Niaz Murshed who put us on the map with his exceptional performances between 1980-87 earning him in March of 1987 the title of Grand Master. To put his achievement into perspective, Niaz was twenty-one at that time and was the first man from South Asia and the fifth from all of Asia to achieve that feat.

Shooting has always been one of Bangladesh's strengths, with our shooters consistently turning out good performances in national and Asian level. But two years into the new millennium we shocked the world.

Plucked from obscurity, fifteen-year old Asif Hossain Khan shot to international fame when on the 31st of July 2002 when against all odds he edged out the favourite Abhinav Bindra of India to capture gold in the men's 10-metre air-rifle final of the Commonwealth Games in Manchester. It was Bangladesh's first gold in the 17th edition of the Games. Shooting brought another gold for

Bangladesh when Sharmin Akhter won the 10m air-rifle event in the Ninth SAF Games in Islamabad on the 31st of March in 2004.

A mention of sporting success would be incomplete without the unsung hero or heroine of Bangladesh sport.

Zobera Rahman Linu is a unique example for Bangladeshi sports-women, having won 16 national table tennis titles in an illustrious career spanning three decades. She is also the only Bangladeshi citizen to have her name in the Guinness Book of World Record for this outstanding achievement. And she is also a Unicef Goodwill Ambassador.

But at the end of it all, it was with cricket that we begun and it is with cricket that Bangladesh truly achieved international acclaim. While football took a downturn and made a nosedive cricket shot for the stars.

Ironic then that we owe it all to a leg-bye.

That leg-bye did it all for this country. But before that who can forget the exploits of the burly Akram Khan and Mohammed Rafique and of course the elements that will forever play a role in all that transpired later.

The victory in the final of the ICC Trophy in Malaysia was the catalyst behind Bangladesh's cricket and should rightly be called the birth of outcricketing nation.

Just a few months later, we were given full ODI status and Bangladesh had started to grow.

Under tumultuous circumstances just two years later on May 31st 1999 a Khaled Mahmud inspired Bangladesh beat Pakistan and sent a nation into wild celebrations. That on the back of their previous triumph over Scotland saw us return from the World Cup with two victories an outstanding achievement.

A year later on the 26th of June, 2000 Bangladesh were given Test



status. We had finally truly arrived.

Since then, Bangladesh have given rise to the mercurial talents of Mohammed Ashraf, who became the youngest centurion in Test cricket and Mohammed Rafique has continued with his meteoric rise to gain acclaim all over the world. Our

victory over Australia and our maiden Test and Test series victories are achievements worthy of mention. Unlike their predecessors in the 80's and early 90's like Jahangir Shah Badshah and Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu to name a few, these men have the world as their stage. The audi-

ence is greater, the pressure ten folds, but the opportunities are limitless.

This is the dawn of Bangladesh's sporting success. The day is yet to come.

Quazi Zulquarnain Islam Reporter, Sports The Daily Star.



## Confession of a youth

ARIF ASHRAF NAYAN

**A**LATE teenager with a tight T-shirt, extremely loose pants, pair of rugged sandals, a pool queue in one hand with a burning cigarette in the other this is me. A youth of Bangladesh the future of Bangladesh.

It is a matter of great pride in being a Bangladeshi. Bangladeshi is not only an identity but a reason for celebration. Bangladesh has become a symbol of celebration in many aspects. Most of the time people are so busy celebrating that they even forget the reason for celebration. Ekushey February, 26 March, Pahela Baishak, Eid, Puja everything. I still get confused with the liberation day, is it 26th March or 16th December? The whole nation counts for the special days as they add to their list of annual holidays. I strongly believe that history has no future and all the historical events have become a mere occasion for holiday and celebration. It does not matter too much to me now as I don't invest too much time thinking about the country. Since my childhood I remember lot of people saying that the country has no future and I perceived it as a fact. I saw too many evidences around me that proved this phenomenon. I heard that Bangladesh topped the corruption chart, the poverty rate and crime rate increases at regular intervals and so on. Moreover I did not have the opportunity to learn a great deal about Bangladesh. I pursue my studies in a reputed English

Medium school where I studied a lot about European History and Geography. It was a part of my academic curriculum and my world at that stage was confined to my school premises, tutor's house, in front of computer monitors and television. I had no time to think anything except my studies, my friends and high tech gadgets. I knew from an early stage that to survive in my world I have to be more materialistic i.e. own as much toys, cds, and branded clothes as possible.

I knew that there are a lot of people who are there to care for the country plus I feel that I don't belong here. Since my childhood I grew up in an environment that was so much Western. I did not visit any western countries but it was not hard for me to imagine their culture, practices and norms. I felt that my mind is in West and my body is stuck in the East. Once I went to a Pahela Baishak party at one of my friends' house. My friend's dad is a famous industrialist and in the middle of the party he attracted the attention of all the guests, raised his spirit glass and said in English "This is the one day when we can all be Bangladeshi" and proposed a toast. Everyone cheered. My heart filled with joy, at least someone is endorsing that it is possible to be a disposable Bangladeshi.

I am a modern man and it not cool to think about the country, I am not a politician nor I have any interest in politics. I have a world of my own where Bangladesh constitutes of Dhanmondi, Banani, shop-

ping malls, fast food restaurants not the poverty, illiteracy or the hunger. I simply don't care and I don't want to care. I have never breathed the dust filled polluted air of Dhaka I have my air conditioned car. I am a global citizen, I believe in globalization. I have never been a part of this country, in my O level and A level exam I competed against students all over the world. I have the power of the internet. I am praying to god that I will get admission in one of the North American universities. I will not stay here at any cost. They say that liberty is not a gift but a reward to the brave, I say liberty is the puppet of money. The country has a huge defense force and it is their duty to protect our liberty. I can sleep peacefully because I believe that someone is awake in the borders protecting the country. No big deal, it is their job. When I will join in a multinational company I will also do my job honestly and earn in dollars.

Everything in the world changes and so the context of a country change, 30 years back the situation was different and so people reacted in a different way. Now it is a different ball game and it is pointless to think in a patriotic manner in today's competitive era. They wanted freedom they achieved it a long time before my birth and liberty is not renewable. They earned liberty and their job is over now it depends on us how we utilize it. Freedom is earned once and enjoyed forever no one needs to earn it over and over again.

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## My freedom fighter father



SHEGUFTA YASMIN

**A**mother stopped using pillow while sleeping, because her son went to war and she was anxious if he could sleep properly or not, whether he was alive or not! She expressed her solidarity in this way with her son's struggle. That freedom fighter son is my father, Md. Mizanur Rahman. I am proud of him.

I found my father a versatile man from my early childhood. As I can remember, when I was very young, every year 16 December used to create different moods in my father-reflective, contemplative and even restive. May be on that day he used to go back to those excruciating nine months. I always like to hear from him about his experience as a freedom fighter. My father was only twenty-three years old, an MA student of Journalism Department in Dhaka University. He was involved in student movements from his early student life. I asked him what made him to take such a perilous course when much safer options were available. He answered, "Spirit of youth, to have a free motherland and create a fair environment for all." He was ready to stand up to

the challenge.

After hearing the March 7 speech of Bangabandhu, my father left his university hall on the 8th, and went straight to his village home, and then organised a group of young people who were eager to join the liberation war. Every day they took part in parades. Thus passed a few days. Then after the dark night of 25<sup>th</sup> March he left for India with the freedom fighters for training. After obtaining three months training, he came back and participated in the war in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. He was injured in an accidental fall from a hilltop. After the victory on 16 December, he along with his group entered Bangladesh on December 25 with lots of hope. Still I feel thrilled to hear from him the stories of a triumphal return.

But his dreams were not really fulfilled. As I was young, my father didn't usually share the pain of his heartbreak.

His goal of participating in the war was to bring about a new Bangladesh, free from all parochial thinking. He dreamt of a society where all the citizens would be equal. But his dream crumbled at the very dawn of what was supposed to be a bright day. He always



wished to be an army officer, so when he came to know in 1973 that a group of newly recruited army officers had been taken for training, he was just astonished. Because there no circular had been issued, whereas he was waiting for that chance so eagerly. All of them were recruited with reference to their army officer relatives. It made him very frustrated. Then he found that freedom fighter certificates were distributed in his university hall among non-freedom fighters to provide them extra facilities as freedom fighter! He was shocked! Thus days were passing. Then he joined Bangladesh Civil Service as a magistrate in 1973. Here he found a new world full of fakeness, no place for neutrality.

My father was attacked and ill treated by each government for not being their very own person. He was always strict to his official rules and regulations and tried to be neutral, for which he had to pay. Such treatments have repeatedly struck his spirit of freedom fighter, but he never surrendered. He lives in his own moral world with his head high. I really feel proud of him.

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