

SPORT



Stay at home to win the war: Mashrafe

SPORTS REPORTER



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza may have stepped down as the captain of the Bangladesh ODI team earlier this month, but the inspirational cricketer, who is also an elected MP, is still doing his bit as a leader.

Mashrafe, under whose captaincy numerous young talents flourished and made a name for themselves in the Bangladesh team, has once again put his faith on the youth of this country, calling on them to take measures against coronavirus and exercise self-isolation by staying home to help prevent the spread of the deadly virus.

The 36-year-old borrowed a verse from the famous poem 'Nishiddho Shompadakiyo' by the famous poet Helal Hafiz. However, in light of the current situation, Mashrafe slightly tweaked the words of the poem while keeping the message of the poem

intact.

The original two lines of the poem that Mashrafe borrowed, read: Ekhn joubon jar, michile jawar sreshtho somoy tar. Ekhn joubon jar, juddhe jawar sreshtho shomoy tar. Roughly translated, it means 'Now is the best time for young men to go to the procession. Now is the best time for a young man to go to war'.

But Mashrafe wrote on his official Facebook page: "Ekhn joubon jar, bashay thakar tar sreshtho somoy [It is the best time for the youth to stay at home]. Be safe. Be at home".

The inspirational leader asked the youth of this country to stay at home as that is now the best way to fight this virus. It might be a challenge for the enthusiastic youth of the country to stay put at home for days to come, but according to Mashrafe, it is the youth who need to take this challenge and win this war against this contagious virus.

'Want to beat big teams away'

Known to be a shy and soft-spoken person, Mominul Haque's life has changed dramatically since becoming the Bangladesh Test captain last year. The 28-year-old -- at home now as the coronavirus outbreak put a halt to all sporting activity -- opened up and spoke to The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin on various topics, including his personal life and his new role as a captain.

The following are the excerpts of the interview:

The Daily Star (TDS): How is life during the growing coronavirus outbreak worldwide?

Mominul Haque (MH): I had never imagined such a situation in my life. It's honestly very boring, but you know, it is important for us to remain safe at home and follow instructions of the government and health ministry. I do a bit of shadow practice and work on my fitness as much as possible at home.

TDS: You just got married. How has life changed for you personally?

MH: I led a disciplined life even before getting married. Normally, I don't hang out with friends much and after marriage I spend more time with my wife, that's the difference. Yes, I used to be quiet previously due to my mother's illness after she had a brain stroke back in 2010. My elder brother got a job then and I was also playing, so there was an added responsibility on me. My elder brother took care of everything and later, I had also gotten into the national team, so everything is fine now. My mother is doing well and that is a huge relief.

TDS: Obviously, it's a huge challenge to captain Bangladesh, and especially in the Test format. Your thoughts?

MH: Not everyone is able to take up the challenge and honestly, I am enjoying it. It's important to have the right chain of command in the leadership as I think everything depends on the captain in cricket. It has to come from inside that this is my team and I need to do everything to make things right. I am sure things will change and it is important for players to have that belief in them.

TDS: Where do you want to see Bangladesh in Tests in the coming days?

MH: I haven't thought about it as we are now focusing on our attitude towards Test cricket. We are trying to develop a good culture -- previously we used to do well in one session but went on to throw it away like the lower-ranked sides. For instance, normally we play well in the first innings but can't replicate that in the second innings with the bat, so my aim is to bring consistency. We have won Test matches against big sides at home in the past but we never won a series. So, my goal will be to win series against big teams. I would also want to win matches away from home as previously we tended to aim for a draw when we go abroad. I think if we are able to beat a big side in their own backyard, it will be a massive boost for the players.

TDS: What about Mominul the batsman?

MH: I think I will remain the same as a batsman but yes, the responsibility of being the captain

will definitely help my batting. Previously when I was just a batsman, I only focused on my batting but now even while batting I need to think about my team and take more responsibility and look to score even bigger now.

TDS: All of your nine Test hundreds have come at home. Do you think scoring one hundred away will turn the tide for you?

MH: My thinking on this is different. If I think like that then after getting one hundred away from home I will be relaxed, which means the hunger will not be there. Maybe you journalists will stop writing about it, but it won't make a difference to me. I want to play good cricket for

my team and yes, I am confident that I will score a century abroad.

TDS: Has the captaincy bring change on your personality?

MH: I used to talk less, that's true, but after the Pakistan series Tamim Iqbal bhai told me to be more vocal. When a captain doesn't talk much the message does not get across to other players properly. It is important for everyone to know what the captain wants. Things have changed now as I talk to everyone both on and off the field. And being the captain of the Bangladesh team there is a lot to do, and I am trying to do all that.



QUICK SINGLES

Favourite batsman

Previously it was Michael Clarke. At the moment it's Virat Kohli, Steve Smith and I also like Kane Williamson a lot.

Favourite ground

Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur

Memorable knock

All my hundreds are memorable.

Toughest bowler you have faced so far

Ishant Sharma and Mohammad Shami among the pacers, and Ravichandran Aswin

among the spinners.

Favourite Test captain

Kane Williamson.

Any funny incident during a game?

Back in 2012 I had a good series against New Zealand. So, their wicket-keeper BJ Watling was saying something to me as Tamim Iqbal bhai from the other end came and asked me, 'what is he saying?' I said I don't know then Tamim bhai said to me 'go and ask him did he scored the half of the runs you scored in the series in his career.' It was funny although I never said that to him.



It has been a while now that the major sports events around the world have come to a halt due to the coronavirus pandemic. People have confined themselves indoors, maintaining social distance in order to stay safe and help prevent the spread of the deadly virus. And while self-isolation has been the need of the hour, in a sport-loving country like Bangladesh, it is having immense impact over sports related businesses. Sports shops around the Maulana Bhashani Hockey Stadium, which usually draw a lot of buyers, now remain vacant throughout the day.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Coaches now heading back to China

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladeshi tennis coaches have started returning to China with hopes of avoiding the coronavirus pandemic, despite having earlier returned home in fear of the coronavirus outbreak in China.

Some 40 tennis coaches, most of them former BKSP students, have been working at different tennis academies or their own academies situated at different provinces such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and other places in China.

"Some 20 to 25 coaches from Bangladesh have been working in different provinces of China and most of them returned to Bangladesh due to fear of coronavirus and they are now returning to China because of the same problem in Bangladesh now," Henry Prithul Mondal told The Daily Star yesterday.

Prithul, who has been working at

Think Shot Tennis Academy in Shanghai since 2013 and returned home on January 29, is all set to return to China on March 29.

"Family members have been anxious after the breakout of coronavirus in China, because I was there without family, though there are others like Murad, Babu, Shahnewaj who are also working as coaches at different academies.

"However, I have to now leave Bangladesh as the situation in China is much better now, but I am now anxious about my family in Bangladesh," said Prithul, adding that he knows that he has to go through some medical process before entering China.

"I know the process and am ready to do it as I am scheduled to fly out on March 29. If I have any problem, then the authorities will take some steps. If everything is alright, then I will self-quarantine at home [in China] for 14 days," said the former national tennis player.

CORONAVIRUS FALLOUT

Stokes shares detailed routine plan

Several cricketers are practising social distancing and self-isolation during the Coronavirus pandemic. The World Health Organisation and the governments all around the world are asking people to stay at home to stop the spread of the virus. With all schools, education centers, and offices closed, parents are trying to find new ways to pass their time with their families.

English cricketer Ben Stokes took up the baton and provided a roadmap for other parents during this stay at home challenge. Stokes posted a line of activities that he has been doing throughout the day. These included lessons for children, playtime, lunch, movies, dinner, etc. This is what Stokes' posted on Instagram. -- AGENCIES

SLC grants LKR 25m to fight coronavirus

The governing body of cricket in Sri Lanka, SLC (Sri Lanka Cricket) have decided to help fund the fight against the coronavirus epidemic with a sum

of 25 million Lankan rupees to the government of the country.

"SLC has taken a decision to grant a sum of LKR 25 million to the Government to help its efforts toward combating the Covid-19 pandemic, which has created a national health crisis.

"Accordingly, the grant will be handed over to the Government immediately.

"SLC, whilst understanding the gravity of the ongoing health problem, has also taken several other steps to provide its fullest assistance to the Government in order to combat the crisis. -- AGENCIES

No plan yet to move CPL

Caribbean Premier League (CPL) officials said on Monday they had no immediate plans to postpone or cancel this year's Twenty20 cricket competition over the coronavirus pandemic.

Launched in 2013, this year's six-team CPL is scheduled to run from August 19 to September 26, with the Barbados Tridents the reigning champions.

"CPL has been in constant communication with our medical advisors in recent weeks, as well as speaking with Cricket West Indies about the current situation." -- AFP

'Want people to call me Azam, not Kohli'

AGENCIES



Haider Ali, the young Pakistan batsman is widely tipped to be the next big player from the country. He was impressive in the Under-19 World Cup and was one of the stars in the Pakistan Super League. He has the talent and pedigree to take the next step forward and the right-hander wants to keep improving his game so that people can talk about him in the same vein as Babar Azam.

"A batsman can never become like his role models, but can improve himself and develop shots like they play. I want to improve myself to the extent that people call me Babar Azam and not Kohli because Babar has good shots," Haider said in a video on YouTube as quoted by Cricket Pakistan.

However, he then went on to add that he wants to keep learning and imbibe the good qualities of Virat Kohli as



well. "I cannot become Kohli but can develop shots like him through practice. I'm Haider Ali so I can only become Haider Ali," he further added.

"I met Babar Azam during the first-class tournament and he gave me tips regarding my batting. We also get to learn a lot from him in the National Cricket Academy in Lahore. He also supported me during PSL by boosting my confidence and advising me to keep scoring runs and leave the rest to Allah Almighty," the young batsman added.

Former Pakistan batsman Ramiz Raja also praised Haider and drew parallels with Virat Kohli and Babar Azam.

"Haider also has to work on his consistency like Virat and Babar and try to be consistent. He is a batsman who should bat at the number 3 position and few dot balls should not worry him, he should have faith in his capability that he can cover up for the dot balls later and win matches for the team just like Virat Kohli and Babar Azam," Ramiz said in his YouTube channel.