



Nayeem training in his private bowling alley

The coronavirus halt has marred every athlete's plans and 19-year-old Bangladesh spinner Nayeem Hasan is no exception. The youngster, who was in fine fettle before the enforced break, talked to The Daily Star's Ramin Talukdar over phone, sharing insights into his life during the pandemic. The following are excerpts from that conversation:

The Daily Star (TDS): How are you and how have you been maintaining fitness in this crisis?

Nayeem Hasan (NH): I am fine but it is a challenging time for everyone in general. My fitness is good because I have been working on it. I am doing gym sessions and running sessions and I have also been practicing bowling in front of our house. I am trying to follow the BCB-provided guidelines. I have nothing to do during this time so I am trying to do all types of fitness work.

TDS: Do you have enough space in front of your house to practice bowling?

NH: It is not much space but there is an alley in front of our house. Usually, only a few pedestrians walk by that alley. So I have made it like a pitch by laying down a mat and practice bowling there. I am trying to follow whatever [Bangladesh spin consultant Daniel] Vettori has taught me such as cross-seam bowling and arm bowling.

TDS: How are you maintaining your diet?

NH: My mother is very careful about these things and helps me a lot. I have been avoiding food that I usually like. I suffered from an injury before the Pakistan series



Nayeem Hasan has been spending the majority of his days at home doing gym work, but he also makes sure to carve out a large chunk for his family.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

[in January this year] and stopped having sweet dishes since then. I have a routine for food intake. I have been avoiding all kinds of desserts and even soft drinks even though I like these very much.

TDS: How are you spending time?

NH: I am doing an English-speaking course and I also try to give my family time. But I spend the majority of the day doing gym work,

running and practicing. I do the gym sessions in the morning and then practice bowling from 3 to 5 in the afternoon. I study a bit in the evening. Apart from these, I watch highlights of different matches. I watched the World Cup matches and the matches against Ireland. I also watch my bowling on Youtube.

TDS: How do you take this break after you have been in such a good

form?
NH: I had been playing well since the start of the [Bangladesh Cricket] League. I was amongst the wickets and I also worked on fitness-bowling for a bit. I had started getting wickets in the second phase of the BCL after an average start. Everything was going very nicely but now I actually don't know what will happen on the field. I am doing drills during practice and have been trying to hone my spinning skills. Every player struggles after returning from a long break. I think after one match I can get my rhythm back.

TDS: Do you follow anyone in cricket?

NH: I like Nathan Lyon's bowling so I try to follow him. I also liked Graeme Swann's bowling. And I follow Shakib [Al Hasan] and Mushfiqur [Rahim] bhaish' workout styles.

TDS: Do you work on your batting and become an all-rounder?

NH: I had a flow in my batting before the lockdown as I was working on it then. But now I am not getting the opportunity. I actually want to be an all-rounder but it is not something that can be achieved overnight. I need to get the chance and I will have to prove myself when I get the chance. But I do want to become an all-rounder.



Cristiano Ronaldo (L) scored a penalty and created goals for Paulo Dybala (R) and Gonzalo Higuain as Juventus got a 4-0 win over 10-man Lecce at the Allianz Stadium on Friday and moved seven points clear at the top of Serie A. PHOTO: AFP

WHAT TO WATCH

LA LIGA (Facebook)

Levante v Real Betis
Live from 6:00pm
Villarreal v Valencia
Live from 9:00pm
Granada v Eibar
Live from 11:30pm
Espanyol v Real Madrid
Live from 2:00am (Monday)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Star Sports Select 1
Wartford v Southampton
Live from 9:30pm
FA CUP (Ten 2)
Sheffield Utd v Arsenal
Live from 6:00pm
Leicester City v Chelsea
Live from 9:00pm
Newcastle v Man City
Live from 11:30pm
SERIE A (Ten 2)
Parma v Inter Milan
Live from 1:45am (Monday)
(Ten 1) Napoli v Spal
Live from 11:30pm

Pakistan to fly for England today

AGENCIES



The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced the name of 20 players and 11 support personnel who have been cleared to fly to England on a chartered flight today to play three Tests and as many T20s against the home side.

Upon arrival in Manchester, the squad will be transported to Worcestershire where they will undergo the testing before completing a 14-day isolation period, during which they will be allowed to train and practice.

The side will move to Derbyshire on 13 July. In a positive news, all 18 players and 11 player support personnel have returned negative tests in Thursday's retests.

Cliffe Deacon and Waqar Younis will join the side directly from South Africa and Australia, respectively, while Shoaib Malik is expected to travel around 24 July.

Amongst the four reserves players, who were tested on Wednesday, only Imran Butt has tested positive.

Our goal is to create stability, says Henry

REUTERS

German manager Juergen Klopp and his squad of players have been given most of the credit for Liverpool's Premier League triumph but behind the 19th top flight title has been the astute ownership of a group of American executives.

It did not take great imagination to work out why the owners of the Boston Red Sox saw potential in Liverpool when they bought the team 10 years ago. In 2004, Fenway SG saw the impact success could have on a club that had been starved.

After 86 years, the Red Sox finally won the World Series again, ending the 'Curse of the Bambino' - a reference to the team's decision to sell star pitcher Babe Ruth to rivals the New York Yankees after the 1919 season.

"Our goal in Liverpool is to create the kind of stability that the Red Sox enjoy," said John Henry, who became Liverpool's principal owner after the takeover. "We are committed to building for the long term."

There was some justifiable scepticism about the takeover on Merseyside given that the club's previous American owners, Tom Hicks and George Gillett, had presided over a period of decline and rancour.

It was also noticeable that Henry's goal

was a modest one - to bring stability. So many owners take over club's promising glory to come but the avoidance of grandiose pledges was a sign of what was to come.

The Americans inherited Roy Hodgson as manager and sacked him in January 2011 with the club in 12th place in the league. Legendary former player and manager Kenny Dalglish was put in temporary charge until Brendan Rodgers was chosen as the man to take the club forward.

Rodgers went close to winning the title in 2014 but things really started to click in October 2015 with the appointment of Juergen Klopp, who brought charisma, motivation and his energetic tactical system.

The nearest Henry got to a promise was shortly after taking over when he outlined the key lesson from the Red Sox revival.

"We have to have everyone from top to bottom on the same page...exactly the same page. And we will," he said. "We will make mistakes and it will be up to us to correct them. With the level of support this club has, if we are all on the same page, we will be incredibly successful."

The Red Sox's 2004 victory was followed by World Series triumphs in 2007, 2013 and 2018. Perhaps, Liverpool's success under American and German management, has only just begun.



England cricketers Moeen Ali and Saqib Mahmood, two avid Liverpool supporters, celebrated the club's historic triumph in a closed-door training camp ahead of the Test series against West Indies. PHOTO: COLLECTED



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Golfers left in the lurch

ATIQUÉ ANAM

The Kurmitola Golf Club inside the Dhaka Cantonment should have been abuzz with members, golfers and caddies: playing, practising and spending a lively time golfing and in social activities. Instead, the sumptuous clubhouse and the sprawling course - the finest in the country - is deserted. There is an eerie silence about this place, a silence that reverberates around a dozen or so public and private golf courses around the country.

A silence brought on by Covid-19. No other sporting community in the country has perhaps been as deeply affected by the pandemic as golf despite its image of an elitist sport.

There are more than 150 registered professional golfers in the country and many more amateurs, with only a small fraction of them coming from well-off families. Most of the pros and amateurs, not to mention the caddies and ball-boys, come from impoverished families who live inside or around the cantonment areas where golf clubs are situated.

And golf, to these golfers, is the only medium of earning a living. Many of them may start their golfing journey with big dreams, but with time, most of those dreams subside as reality takes over. They are invariably left with the only

option of earning a bare pittance from playing in local tournaments, coaching club members or even working as caddies.

But more than three months into the 'lockdown' of the golf clubs and no imminent sign of 'unlocking', those sources of income have been cut out from the golfers and caddies and they are desperately seeking alternative avenues for a living.

Mohammad Muaz is a promising young golfer from Savar, who lives near the Savar Golf Club. He had turned pro at a very young age in 2014 with the dream of someday becoming a seasoned golfer.

He has won a number of local events over the years, including the Hosaf Golf Tournament - played from March 16 to 18 this year in Savar, just before a countrywide shutdown was enforced.

Muaz received a trophy for his triumph, but is yet to receive the winner's cheque. All that he has got so far is Tk 8000 from the BPGA (Bangladesh Professional Golfers Association) as a one-time assistance and relief/ration from the golf club. Now he is having to borrow money from his friends and relatives to survive and help his family survive.

"I have been spending from my savings and borrowing from others. I even thought of trying to go for a job, but then thought if the clubs open soon then I might not be able to give up the job and return to golf,

where I have invested so much time, effort and money," Muaz told The Daily Star from Savar.

"It is a precarious situation for the golfers. I live with my family and we have our own home here. But there are plenty others who live in rented houses with their families and have had nothing to do since the coronavirus pandemic came. Many of them may have to leave golf unless things normalise soon," Muaz said with a lot of anguish.

BPGA organises between 10 and 15 tournaments each year, with prize purses of around Tk 10-15 lacs for each event. Those tournaments are an invaluable source of income and experience for these golfers.

Till March 18, three BPGA events took place. The season was about to kickstart with the Bangabandhu Cup Golf - an Asian Tour event - in addition to PGII events and a number of BPGA events lined up. Instead Covid-19 kicked in, upending the plans and livelihoods of the golfing community.

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman, who has carved out a successful career from his humble beginnings and ensured a life of financial security, can see the predicament of his peers.

"The truth is that most of the golfers do not have specialisation or skill in any other field of work. And they don't have the capital to start a seasonal business in these times. So

the only way for them is to wait for good times and expect help from the authorities," the two-time Asian Tour winner told The Daily Star.

But help from the authorities is something not easily forthcoming. According to many golfers, the BPGA provided its members with a lump sum amount and clubs arranged rations for them a couple of times. There have been sporadic donations from sponsors and members, but any substantial monetary help - like the ones provided by the Bangladesh Cricket Board or any fund from the sports ministry - is yet to arrive.

Lieutenant Colonel (ret'd) Abdul Bari, coordinator at the Bangladesh Golf Federation, said they were doing all they could to help golfers and caddies.

"The situation regarding the pandemic is not ideal anywhere now. We have not received any instructions regarding when the clubs could be opened. We are observing what other federations are doing. Meanwhile, we have helped our caddies and ballboys during these tough times. We are hoping to receive financial support from the authorities," Bari said.

As opening up of the golf courses does not look like a wise idea in view of the deteriorating situation of the pandemic, financial support from the sports ministry is the only option to help these floundering golf people survive.