

Shakib, in his own genre of self-isolation

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

“There has been criticism of him not training here and going off to the IPL and things like that, but Shakib [Al Hasan] does his talking on the field. I don't know him as that kind of boy who prioritises things other than the national team. Definitely, money matters, but a person who doesn't prioritise the team would not have been able to play like that at the World Cup. The mental commitment, passion and determination to play in a World Cup like that is not present in everybody,” Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, Shakib's mentor from his age-level days, said.

All through his career, Shakib has courted controversy. So often criticised for his attitude -- often mistaken for being blasé -- and perceived arrogance that only his calibre might be able to justify, they do go a long way in defining him and setting him apart.

Controversy followed when he was banned from all forms of cricket last year but his 'self-isolation' had begun even before the World Cup, when he missed out on the Tigers' jersey unveiling photo session. A wonderful tournament further reinstated that isolation. He was in a level of his own.

Eight matches played. Five fifties. Two tons. 606 runs scored. 11 wickets taken. Shakib was a different beast. He weaved a magical tale but his performances remained singular too, the rest of the team failing to measure up to the standards. All that against the backdrop of an ICC ban he knew was looming? A feat beyond extraordinary pulled off under near-debilitating adversity.

If going against the grain of the collective is a kind of arrogance, it is also one that requires immense ability and grit to be channelled positively. His ban does not come to an end before October ends but Shakib, who is currently in the USA, is now planning to go to England to train for his return. It is that same kind of drive that propelled his World Cup performances and at the same time one that isolates him from his peers in the national team -- many of whom are still hesitant about training outdoors due to the coronavirus



pandemic. Shakib's proactivity is a mark of his character.

Nazmul Abedeen, one of the foremost thinkers on cricket in the country, is well aware of the differences that sets his student apart from the rest.

“We talk about being professional but he is a true professional. He has set a standard for himself and doesn't want to go below that standard at any cost. When he is thinking of the game, he doesn't think about anything else. He has family and a new-born baby but I feel that when it comes to cricket, he is obsessed and does not want to compromise. Cricket

training is also possible in America but the standard of things he wants to do is not possible there. That is why he is thinking of England. Nothing has been confirmed yet but what is behind his drive to do that is the will to not compromise on his quality. That sets him apart from everyone else,” Fahim said.

It paints the picture of a single-minded approach to the game and the task at hand, a methodical one too. It can often be perceived as selfishness. “He is not interested about whether someone is watching his effort or not. He wants to perform on the field and show everyone.

For his own satisfaction and the fact that he owes it to his fans and people of this country is a big motivation.”

The picture of that different genre of self-isolation is not complete without taking into account the work he did before the World Cup. A finger injury in 2018 that put his career at risk and led him to say it 'will not be 100 per cent okay again', saw him miss out on key fixtures. A relapse saw him return home from the Asia Cup too. He brushed aside all those and even when not featuring for his Sunrisers Hyderabad outfit in the IPL just prior to the World Cup, he ensured the best preparation. Another mentor in Mohammad Salahuddin, who personally worked with the all-rounder in India, said even for Shakib's high standard, the preparation and motivation from his student surprised him.

“There is a kind of self-motivation in him that is very rare. It's not present in many cricketers. He thinks of a lot of details. Most recently [prior to the World Cup], I noticed that he sets his own targets for individual training and chalks out everything from which bowlers, pitches he would face. There were limitations to his shot-making but you will notice that he has a lot more shots now than before. To change even after playing for such a long time is a very serious thing,” Salahuddin said.

“He takes time to think in advance. He isn't thinking of tomorrow's match but of the things he is going to work on next. I was surprised with the level of detail in his training,” he said about Shakib's foresight and meticulous preparation that is a clear sign of his understanding of his own game. “He would find relevance in what I'm saying, not merely accepting what I have to say.”

“He is still looking to go further and reach new heights. Because of the clarity of thought process his comebacks are usually very good,” he said.

If his World Cup preparation is anything to go by, Shakib is now determined to carry on the mantle as a one-off of Bangladesh cricket and it is that drive which urges him to resume training well in advance of his ban coming to an end and carry on his own genre of isolation. There is something others can take from his positivity too in this regard.

Positive test won't affect City-Real tie, says UEFA

REUTERS



UEFA says it is confident Real Madrid's Champions League clash with Manchester City will go ahead as planned next week despite one of the Spanish side's players testing positive for Covid-19.

Real confirmed on Tuesday that forward Mariano Diaz had tested positive, casting doubt on his participation in the Aug. 8 tie at the Etihad Stadium.

“UEFA is in contact with the club and monitoring both the situation and decisions of the relevant Spanish authorities,” UEFA said in a statement to British media. “We are confident that this case will not affect the regular staging of the match in question.”

Real trail Manchester City 2-1 from the first leg of their last-16 tie before the competition was suspended in March.

Spain has seen a surge in COVID-19 positives with thousands of new cases reported on a daily basis in the past week, taking its tally up to over 298,000 cases.



La Liga champions Real Madrid, led by indefatigable captain Sergio Ramos, were back for another session of training yesterday. PHOTO: REAL MADRID



A perfect advertisement for cricket in coronavirus era

AGENCIES

The just-concluded Test series between England and West Indies had some memorable performances in front of empty stands across two venues and the series came as a delight to cricket-starved fans across the globe amid the pandemic.

Two of England's 'big match' performers played key roles despite a lack of crowd support, with Ben Stokes scoring 176 and 78 not out in the second Test and paceman Stuart Broad becoming just the seventh bowler to take 500 Test wickets when he reached the landmark on Tuesday. England won the Wisden Trophy back from the West Indies after coming back from behind and captain Joe Root heaped rich praise on Stuart Broad and James Anderson after the series victory, saying it was a privilege for them to play with two of the world's finest fast bowlers.

But the collective effort of people who helped make England-West Indies series a reality after the enforced break due to the novel coronavirus pandemic has certainly given the cricket community much-needed hope and confidence.

When the pandemic disrupted the global sporting calendar, forcing the postponement or cancellation of some of the biggest tournaments, not many would have imagined



“Someone is going to have to play a lot of cricket because there is a lot of competition out there, between different T20 leagues franchises, 100-ball. I feel very lucky to have played for England in an era where we've played a lot of Test cricket in the summer and a lot in the winter. I think there's talk of thinning the amount of Tests we play in a summer down. You need a lot of Test matches to get 500 wickets. I think there'll be people who have the talent to get the numbers but whether they'll be able to play the amount of Test cricket the seam bowlers have to get that feat remains to be seen.”

STUART BROAD

international cricket as early as July. Kudos to England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and Cricket West Indies for making it happen and giving the fans of the sport something to cherish during the difficult times. It wasn't easy but the two cricket boards made sure the series went ahead without any major setbacks.

Despite fears that life in a bio-secure bubble -- with teams holed up in onsite hotels and no spectators allowed into grounds to guard against the spread of Covid-19 -- might produce equally sterile cricket, both sides produced a high standard.

Fears a ban on shining the ball with saliva would neuter bowlers proved largely groundless, with sweat allied to seam movement off the pitch and helpful overhead conditions allied to the skills of the attacks.

The one concerning moment came when England had to omit Jofra Archer from the second Test after it emerged the fast bowler had breached regulations by making an unauthorised trip home following the West Indies' four-wicket win in the series opener at Southampton.

England director Ashley Giles said Archer's error "could have cost us tens of millions of pounds" but he added he was a "fine young man" who would learn from his mistake.

The players lived and trained in the bubble for more than 2 months and Jason Holder said "same hotels, same rooms" were challenging and players were a bit "mentally worn out" by the end of 7 weeks.

The historic series is not just going to be remembered for the high-quality action on the field but also for everything off it that made an entire cricket community believe that it can rise above the coronavirus threat and get the sport back on its feet.



ESSENTIAL DRUGS COMPANY LIMITED

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S.L No.	Tender No & Date	Name of the Item	Cost of Tender Schedule	Last date of Closing & opening
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