

Rising Stars

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C FOR CRICKET

By: Khondker Zunaed Rabbani

I have been sticking up myself to the bed for the last few days. As a matter of fact that's the only option my pediatrician [I have stopped using the word 'doctor'] I left for me! Just when my 'boring' Eid vacation was about to end I fell sick, namely with this disgustingly yellow disease that goes by the name of jaundice! Now instead of having drowned in the college books for the Post-Eid-Exams I spend my eternal-everlasting days reading newspapers and the 'Ingredients' of the vitamins that are specifically mentioned with BOLD letters on the back of the capsule files. (What else do you expect, huh?)

Not that I regret too much being out of shape and out of college for quite some time I am extremely pleased. Yes, I was very much stirred up to see a picture in the newspaper. Some kids, under-10 as per mentioned in the daily, were playing a cricket tournament on the occasion of ICC CRICKET WEEK 2000, with the hopes of becoming future Superstars! Just when I used to play Paratrooper and Pac-man or devote my divine attention to the LEGO box, these kids are playing cricket with a professional attitude. I myself had done a bit of cricketing at the tender age of ten and still do the same besides going through my last days as a teenager, but not as much as they do now. And our performance compared to this lot... boy it was truly childish. They are taking the game more seriously, as a bright career in this arena lay ahead of them. It is an obvious, isn't it? After all, it was kind of expected, right after we clinched the ICC trophy and bagged the coveted one-day status, our little brothers [and sisters too] got hooked up with more cricket than football, volleyball, Hadoo-doo, Kana-machi or whatever that they used to play before. What it seems that we are having a CRICKET REVOLUTION in our country. [Thanks to our WC players and the authority for expanding cricket to the grass root level.]

Cricket, to be precise, has rejuvenated our nation once again. It has turned out to be this nation's prime hope. After all we do not see much hope shining these days, except some 'imported' degrees for outstanding and dynamic performances! Just few days earlier we celebrated the ICC Cricket Week with our cricket craze soaring sky high having all the cricket heroes amongst us. This phase of craze had reached every nook and corner of the country when Bangladesh outplayed Scotland and Kenya in the ICC Championship and eventually clinched the trophy. Still vivid are those days when we used to take the radios to the class, which was in a way against the rule, and the teachers fully aware of the fact had their silent approvals. Loud cheers followed after every boundary scored; fall of an opponent's wicket created nothing less than wild jubilations.

Talking about myself, I have never been a Cricket-fanatic. I am sort of **Jack of all trades, master of none**, quite used to shuffling around with almost all the available games- soccer, basketball, table tennis, pool and other board games such as Monopoly, solitaire, shaap-ludu what not! [You name it... I played it. Even we played Rugby in school!] Not only am I **NOT** a serious cricketer, I am no fanatic follower either. For me one-dayers with some blazing shots and delightful fast bowling sounds pretty cool but Test Series, **NOWAY** you'd be pushing me too far! I have got better things to do other than sitting idle in front of the TV, researching the shots and exploring the hidden talents of the players.

But hey, whenever my team is on the run, I hardly move from my couch. It is always good to see Saeed Anwar scoring a good knock, Shoaib Akhter ripping off the batting order, Walsh glaring at the victims. I really enjoy them, as much as I enjoy debating with my friends on who's the best, Saeed Anwar or Sachin

It has happened once again! In front of the home crowd of forty thousand people yet another dream of this sports loving nation has bitten the dust. No longer can we pride our self over having defeated a former champion; all the glory has now been masked by a shameful defeat. The cricket crazy nation helplessly beheld the infant-like display of cricket by the Bangladeshi boys and a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Pakistanis. For those who were unfortunate enough to attend the match, the frustration and the shame was even more vivid and real. As the fifth Bangladeshi wicket fell thousands of people left the stadium with a heavy heart; the enthusiasm of the early hours had died even before the game came

to an end. Such a scenario however, is not new for this sports loving nation. Time and again we have been foolish enough to have faith on Bangladeshi sports be it football, kabadi, hockey, cricket... it all comes down to the same thing- shattered dreams!

The scene at the stadium that day reminded me of a time when the people of Bangladesh were known for their passion for the game of football. Followers would

Tendulkar, Wasim Akram (my BOSS) or Glenn McGrath.

Back to the days when cockroaches were called birds (I) and I used to play cricket, there had been no dream coming true for me rather some dreaded nightmares! The most horrifying, eye popping, nail biting, hair tearing, hand trembling, knee buckling, spine tingling, heart-beat stopping, blood boiling, close to X-rated, earth shattering, long lingering memory I have ever experienced is the last time I was involved in a cricket match. Let me make it clear to you. [You will share my sorrows, won't you?]

It was a bright sunny day, in fact a doom's day in disguise. I was the last batsman in my team, not to mention my batting skills only remained in the *chaad* (rooftop) where I used to play with my six and seven-year old cousins. But hey still I was in the team; I guess only because that the team needed a leg-spinner. He he! I was not that bad you know, caused few major break-through. Everything was there, my devotion cum effort cum Shane Warne attitude, but the trick was, in my case, the ball never spun! May be that's why the batsmen got fooled!

Anyway, the last time as far as I remember we needed six runs out of two balls. Dressed up in all GM gears (marified from a not-too-close friend), I entered the field with the guys waiting for a miracle and the girls cheering for the opposition! Yeah talk about bad luck... none seemed to be on our side! "Keep the faith," as I triggered the last words to my captain. However, that didn't release the tension rather it mounted! The first ball I missed, obviously. I never saw the ball anyway, just heard a 's-e-e-s-h' going. The last ball, six runs were needed. Just when the bowler was about to throw the cannon ball traveling at mach three speed I realized that I had one thing missing. And that was the abdominal guard! GOD ALMIGHTY! Believe it or not, I had done the same mistake few months earlier, which by the way was my school-level-first-class debut. Well, history repeats itself and fools endure the consequences. And this time, God was too busy to pay heed to my prayers. For those who never saw a man becoming a statue, saw me. For those who never knew what an ice-blast of Sub-Zero could do to a man... noticed me. Through the pain, I gained one thing. Cricket is NOT for me.

Now back to what I started with at the first place. I sometimes wonder, 'Is this wild fascination for cricket truly desirable?' I mean the way we actually get so hooked with the cricket matches on TV makes me feel sometimes that we are nothing but the deceived ones since Cary Pecker and the 'channel gang' taking away our time, money leaving us behind to gulp some of the by-products of the commercial world. "What exactly do we get?" You see it is they, the players who get everything. They get name, fame, money even the OPEL or the FORD and saddest of all, the beautiful girls. What's left for us? Just **ENTERTAINMENT!** Hmmm... I guess only this word drives us to the stadium, only this word makes me download the pics of the players. Only Cricket defines cricket, nothing else!

PS: Dedicated to all our cricket players, past present future.

football meant to us back then. People dreamt of becoming footballers like Maradona. Gary Linekar had all the teenagers captivated. Even local players like Shabbir, Kaiser Hamid, Chunno... Bal Das had a cult following... cricketers in those days were unheard of to the general mass. But NO... the footballers could not or should I say **did not** live up to the high expectation the people had set for them. Our success in the football did not even cross the national boundary; international success was a mere far-fetched dream. Over and over again, despite being the best team by the books Bangladesh failed to win a single SAARC gold medal, a competition not even recognized by the world football governing body, FIFA. Our one single consolation came when

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By the Lizard King

CRICKET ER JANAI!