

Our own
LITTLE MASTERGood on the field,
bad and ugly off it

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Cricket has now become a game of hope and a source of pure entertainment in a troubled country. Fortunately in 2013, the fans were given enough occasions to celebrate the success of their beloved Tigers. Under the motivational leadership of Mushfiqur Rahim, the Tigers not only increased their rate of improvement on the international stage, but also came up with performances that momentarily alleviated their countrymen's pain of living in a politically and economically chaotic climate.

The last 12 months have provided many reasons to smile and take pride in the team, and they take some listing --

Mushfiqur's double-century -- the first

by a Bangladeshi; a drawn Test in Sri

Lanka and a drawn ODI series to follow

that; Mominul Haque's back-to-back

Test hundreds; the unique Test record of

a hundred and a hattrick in the same

match by Shohag Gazi; the drawn Test

series against New Zealand followed by

a second consecutive ODI whitewash of

the Kiwis and Rubel Hossain's six wickets, which included a hattrick, in the first

ODI of the whitewash.

The only real cricketing disappointment

was the tour of Zimbabwe, where

the Tigers lost the first Test embarrassingly before drawing the rubber, but

went on to lose the ODI series 2-1. Regardless, 2013 was a year witness to Bangladesh's journey on the right track -- on the field, that is.

But Alas! All was not rosy in 2013 as Mohammad Ashraful -- Bangladesh cricket's first superstar -- opened the darkest chapter in June by confessing to having indulged in corruption over a 12-year career.

Later in August, the International Cricket Council (ICC) charged seven individuals for involvement in fixing in the second edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) and two others for not reporting corrupt

ent inquiry can discover the whole truth behind the BPL's wrongdoings. Can BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon show the courage to form this committee in the New Year as he showed when bringing the ICC's Anti-corruption and Security Unit (ACSU) to unearth the corruption on the field?

Another highly discussed issue over the last year was the election of the BCB. The long-cherished desire of getting an elected president was fulfilled but not without controversy.

Many had termed it a 'selection through an election' and thus a true election in sport remains a distant

approaches. The tribunals formed by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) are still conducting the trials of the accused.

The Bangladesh Premier League was supposed to be a golden goose for Bangladesh cricket but it became a disease. Many details behind its failure and reported financial irregularities remain unknown. Only an independ-

ent reality. Former BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury was in the running for the president's post but he suddenly withdrew from the race to make it a one-sided affair.

Mushfiqur's men however ensured that unpalatable events off the field would not remain in the minds of the fans with a stunning show against New Zealand in the home series, their last

international engagement of the year.

Bangladesh had shared the honours in the two-match Test series against the Kiwis with two fully fleshed out draws, underpinning their growing prowess in the longer version.

In the ODI series that followed, the possibility of another whitewash was in the air once the Black Caps arrived in the capital but the way the 3-0 result

panned out simply reinforced the Tigers' reputation as a dangerous team in the 50-over format.

It was a series in which no one could predict who would be the ultimate hero -- a new match-winner emerged in every game, which has been the real beauty about this Bangladesh team, and indeed the defining legacy of the team's performances in 2013.

This new dawn became visible on March 12, when history was made at the picturesque Galle International Cricket Stadium in Sri Lanka. Touring Sri Lanka or playing against them had till then been an unpleasant experience for the Tigers. But this year they scripted a new history, drawing the first Test and sharing the honours in the one-day series.

Expectations were high about their tour to Zimbabwe but Bangladesh possibly played their worst cricket of the year as they surrendered the ODI series to the home side after drawing the two-match Test series. The worst consequence was that an emotional Mushfiqur announced his decision to quit the captaincy in the aftermath of the ODI series loss. Fortunately however, he soon realised the error of his impulsive move and has now been appointed the skipper till the 2015 World Cup.

Success in Zimbabwe and learning the craft of T20 cricket would have made 2013 a perfect year but still there was a lot to cheer in the past year.

But uncertainty lies ahead as at the end of the year the country's dysfunctional politics has started to rear its ugly head. It has not only seen the visiting West Indies Under-19s withdraw from a tour but also placed the New Year's sporting extravaganzas in the country in danger.



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