



Bangladeshi cricket fans expect a lot from their heroes.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Cricket is one of the few issues that can unite all Bangladeshis, fending off hundreds of factors constantly working to divide them. From a street child to the Prime Minister, every citizen of Bangladesh celebrates when their beloved cricket team wins an international match against a formidable opponent. In most of these matches we come across a very popular name for his outstanding contribution. It is obviously Shakib Al Hasan, the best all rounder of the world in all the three formats of cricket.

The year 2014 was rather a bleak period for Bangladeshi cricket. A series of defeats, faulty strategy and match fixing scandals against veteran players severely affected the team's performance. Another major blow shattered the team when on July 7, 2014 Shakib was banned from all forms of cricket for six months on the ground of violating team discipline. However, thanks to his apology, on September 2014 Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) finally reduced his penalty and allowed him to participate in the home series against Zimbabwe and finally on December 4 lifted the ban from participating overseas tournaments.

After a long break, there was an apprehension among cricket fans whether Shakib will be able to prove his mettle. Proving his critics wrong, Shakib made his return a *veni vidi vici*. In the series against Zimbabwe, Shakib made history by becoming the third man, apart from Imran Khan and Ian Botham, to have scored a century and claim 10 wickets in a Test match. This outstanding performance actually convinced the BCB to lift the ban against Shakib

The World's Best Cricketer

Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan has become the number one all rounder in all the three formats of cricket

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from participating international matches.

These outstanding performances brought him the most prestigious wreath a cricketer could ever imagine to get. In the latest International Cricket Council (ICC) ranking Shakib has been declared as the number one all rounder in all three formats of cricket. He is the first cricketer in the history to be ranked best in all three formats. It is said in his Wikipedia profile, "Shakib Al Hasan (born 24 March 1987) is a Bangladeshi international cricketer and statistically the most successful player in the Cricket World's history."

But Shakib's beginning is no less remarkable than his current successes. Shakib was born on March 24, 1987 in Magura district of Bangladesh. Popularly



Shakib's consistent bowling performance has been a key to Bangladesh's many victories.

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known as Faisal, Shakib started to show his cricketing talent during his early years. He was regularly hired by different village teams for his extraordinary performances in his early teens. Picked up by a local cricket club of Magura district called Islampur, he first played for a cricket club and in the very first match he took a wicket with his first ball. It was his first delivery with a proper cricket ball. Then Shakib received six months extensive training at Bangladesh Kira Shiksha Pratishthan, the government-run sports institute and graduated with distinguished performance.

Then Shakib showed a mind-blowing performance in the 'under 19' tri-nation tournaments, where he scored a match winning century spending only 86 balls taking three wickets. After this performance, all roads to join the national cricket team laid clear before him. Shakib made his international debut in the next year in 2006. With his impressive performance, Shakib soon set himself as a regular member of the national cricket team. His consistent performance with bat and ball has made him an indispensable part of the team.

In 2009 Shakib became the number one all rounder of one day international cricket. In the same year he got the prestigious recognition of Wisden Cricketer of the year. He also became the first



Bangladesh cricketer Shakib Al Hasan celebrates after scoring a century during the first one day international match between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe on November 21, 2014.

Bangladeshi to play in the English County Cricket League. In 2012 he also became the number one all rounder of test cricket.

Shakib's consistent performance is actually one of the rarest qualities that can be found among Bangladeshi cricketers. Though Shakib Al Hasan is a beacon of Bangladeshi cricket the overall situation is not good at all. After more than a decade of achieving the test status, Bangladesh is still considered a minnow in the cricketing world. It has been ranked 11th among the 12 test playing countries. Defeatism and lack of consistent performance have decisively affected the team Bangladesh's image in the cricket world. Even Bangladesh's lack of cricketing experience with leading countries like Australia, South Africa has affected its players' perfor-

mance.

But the time has come to shrug such negatives off. It is time to show some fire. The World Cup cricket, the largest tournament of international cricket is knocking at the door. Defying all obstacles, Shakib is there to face the challenge with his mates who are acclaimed in Bangladesh as the "Tigers". We hope that this time Bangladesh will live up to the name, given by their admirers at home.

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