

## The year of Bangladesh

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they were about to embark on.

Those who were fortunate to be there during the World Cup in Australia-New Zealand know how much affection and love the Tigers gained from the supporters of two well-known cricket nations because of the brand of cricket they had played in the mega event.

This incredible success story could not be written without mentioning a certain name, who is none other than the man from Narail. Mashrafe exemplified what a captain can do for his team. It all began in late 2014 when Mashrafe took charge and brought a breath of fresh air into an otherwise dismal year as the Tigers whitewashed Zimbabwe 5-0.

Then, after all the hard work under the leadership of Mashrafe and coach Chandika Hathurusingha -- who gave the players much-needed self-belief -- Bangladesh made headlines in the World Cup before losing the much-talked about game against India in the World Cup quarterfinal in Melbourne.

There were doubts whether the World Cup success was a flash in the pan, but again it was the brave-heart, Mashrafe, who took his team to new



PHOTO: STAR

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heights and showed the world that his team was hungry for more success. The result was that Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim slammed hundreds in the first ODI against Pakistan in the first home series after the World Cup; which was also Bangladesh's first win over Pakistan in 16 years. The rest, as they say, is history with Bangladesh winning series against the three giants of Pakistan, India and South Africa in a row.

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Bangladesh became a hard nut to crack, especially in their own den and by beating three top sides in the space of four months they secured direct entry to 2017 ICC Champions Trophy in England. Bangladesh had proved beyond any doubt that they know the craft of how to win 50-over matches against any team in the world.

How did they perform in five-day cricket? Since they began their journey in 2000, Bangladesh is yet to gain respect from their opponents like they garnered in the 50-over version. Still the past year was not at all barren for them and it could have been much better if Australia had decided to go on

with their scheduled tour. It's true that rain affected most of the season but drawing four Tests out of five boosted their morale and there were some positives from individual performances also. A record 312-run opening partnership between Tamim Iqbal and Imrul Kayes in the drawn Test against Pakistan in Khulna cannot be forgotten anytime soon. In another format where they are still searching to find their footing, Bangladesh won two T20I matches out of five.

In the end, the most important thing on the battlefield is whether you can earn the respect of your peers and without any doubt Bangladesh garnered the

most valuable success through their exciting brand of cricket.

Whether it's about an individual or team performance, a discussion cannot be completed with the names of Bangladeshi cricketers and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led Bangladesh team. The mystery cutters of 20-year old Mustafizur is a mystery for world cricket; if you have doubts simply ask stalwarts like MS Dhoni, Kumar Sangakkara and Chris Gayle, who all fell prey to his deliveries.

In the year 2015, the Tigers roared and it was heard all over the world.

*The writer is a senior reporter for the sports section of The Daily Star.*

**“SUCCESS CONSISTS OF GOING FROM FAILURE TO FAILURE WITHOUT LOSS OF ENTHUSIASM”**

Winston Churchill

