

# For the love of football

FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA

December 20, 2015. History was made at the Nepal Army Physical Training Centre in Kathmandu when the referee blew the final whistle, his hands pointing toward the mighty team in red and green.

While throughout 2015, mostly undesirable incidents made breaking news on TV channels and newspapers, a bunch of young Bangladeshi girls made the U-14 football team. In these days of turmoil, these youngsters brought in glory and victory to the country after they beat host nation Nepal by 1-nil at the AFC U-14 Girls' Regional Championship.

"Going home can wait, practice can't," states Krishna, the little captain of the winning team, with firm determination etched on her face.

What made the young women, aged 13 to 14 years, so confident about their victory?

History was made the moment they clinched their first international title for Bangladesh at any level of women's football.

If Nepal's team was strong, our team turned out to be the strongest. The kind of atmosphere surrounding the stadium—thousands of fans chanting and jumping for Nepal—however, was not quite conducive for the visiting team. But nothing could break their spirit. They were in the finals and they had to win the game; that was the only mantra they kept repeating to themselves and to each other.



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

"From the very beginning, we took control of the match as we kept the opponent's defence busy with frequent attacks," says Marzia.

These girls, who are still in their teens, are now seen giving interviews and facing the media. However, they are yet to celebrate with their family as many of them have already started

preparing for their upcoming South Asian Women's football league to be held in February.

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victory? Their consistent performance throughout the series against Bhutan (16-0), Iran (2-1), and India (1-1), could be part of the reason, but it was mostly their determination and hard work that did the trick.

2015 also marked the year for footballers like Sabina Khatun, who played for a foreign club, the Maldives Police

Club, at the Club Maldives Women's Futsal Fiesta 2015 in Male. Sabina, the striker of Bangladeshi National Women's Football Team, was the first Bangladeshi woman footballer to play for a foreign club and she made her debut season memorable by scoring 37 goals in just six

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