



# UNRELENTING PASSION



**KRISHNA RANI SARKAR** (C)  
**POSITION: CENTRE-FORWARD**  
**DOB: JAN 1, 2001**  
**HOMETOWN: TANGAIL**  
**SIBLINGS: 1**  
**FATHER'S OCCUPATION: FARMER**

She is the talent that pushes the team forward, the captain who is always front and centre. Her eight goals in the AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers is staggering. Coming from an underprivileged family in Gopalpur, she was 10 years old when she ventured into the world of school football in 2011 with the Bangamata Gold Cup under threat of censure from her mother.

"The main obstacle in my decision to play was my mother," said the best player among all six teams in the qualifiers. She found encouragement from her paternal uncle, Nitai Chandra Sarkar, who saw beyond social constraints and urged his niece to follow her heart. She thanks coaches Golam Raihan Bapon, Chhoton and Litu.

The 15-year-old is a student of class-IX at Shuti BM Pilot High School.

“Football is always on my mind; when I am eating, when I am sleeping. I can't think of anything other than football.”

*While we celebrated the under-16 women's football team's success over the last two months, here is a look into the background of these girls who took up the beautiful game and came so far in just three to four years. The common thread for most of these girls, aged between 13 and 15, is that all of them are from poor families of remote villages. Another common factor is that many of the girls faced obstacles in pursuing their passion, and that obstacle did not come from the neighbours or local people, rather they came mostly from within their own families as their parents did not like the idea of the 'girls wasting time playing football' rather than helping their families with household chores or studying. But as success came, the hurdles started to fall, and the families began to play a more encouraging role helping these girls flourish. Here we look at the profiles of each of those 23 girls, and hear the stories of their journey.*



**MARZIA**  
**POSITION: MIDFIELDER**  
**DOB: OCT 15, 2002**  
**HOMETOWN: MYMENSINGH**  
**SIBLINGS: 5**  
**FATHER'S OCCUPATION: FARMER**

In 2013, during the BFF training camp ahead of the AFC U-14 Women's Qualifier Playoffs in Sri Lanka, this 11-year-old girl from Mymensingh caught the eye of the coaches and after a three-day trial, was fast-tracked into the national team.

Her rise was similar to other girls from Kalsindur Government Primary School under the supervision of Mohammad Mofizuddin. She had faced societal pressure from her neighbours who asked why girls should play football. However, she got support from her father Abdul Motaleb, a farmer, and her brother Rashidul Islam and started out in football by playing for her school in the Bangamata Gold Cup in 2011. She is studying in class-IX at Kalsindur High School and College.

“I want to be like [national footballers] Sabina Khatun and Mainu Marma and I want to do well in the final round. If I can't practise I feel very bad and I get angry at the coach if there is no training.”



**SHAMSUNNAHAR**  
**POSITION: RIGHT-BACK**  
**DOB: JAN 31, 2003**  
**HOMETOWN: MYMENSINGH**  
**SIBLINGS: 4**  
**FATHER'S OCCUPATION: FISH VENDOR**

One among five children and a daughter of a fish vendor in Mymensingh, Shamsunnahar has faced many obstacles to pursue her love of football. Her mother was against her playing sports and according to the right-back, is still against it even after the success that has shot her into the national limelight.

She found support from her father Mirazuddin, and the influential coach at Kalsindur Government Primary School Mohammad Mofizuddin and started her foray into football in the 2012 Bangamata Gold Cup.

The turning point in her career came during the Plan U-15 football tournament in 2013, playing which she caught the eye of the national age-group team. She is currently studying in class-VII at Kalsindur High School and College.

“I like to play and watch football and feel bad when I can't play. I want to play well and bring honour to my country.”



**MAHMUDA AKTER**  
**POSITION: GOALKEEPER**  
**DOB: FEB 15, 2003**  
**HOMETOWN: MYMENSINGH**  
**SIBLINGS: 4**  
**FATHER'S OCCUPATION: FARMER**

She is the custodian of Bangladesh's fortunes, and how well she lived up to that role during their victorious campaign in the just-concluded AFC U-14 Women's Championship Qualifiers. Only one shot on target passed Mahmuda's vigil in five matches, and she has Mahmudur Rahman Litu, the goalkeeping coach of the team, to thank for it.

A Kalsindur Government Primary School girl, she made her entry into the world of football in 2012 playing in the Bangamata Gold Cup. She did face obstacles, mainly from the villagers in Mymensingh who

asked her to leave the game. She persisted doggedly and used the opposition from the villagers, and to a lesser extent her parents, to spur her on to greater things.

The turning point in her career came in the JFA U-14 national Women's Football Championship in 2015.

“I want to hold on to my place by playing well. We want a league for girls so that we can gain financially.”



**SANJIDA AKTER**  
**POSITION: RIGHT WING**  
**DOB: MAR 20, 2001**  
**HOMETOWN: MYMENSINGH**  
**SIBLINGS: 5**  
**FATHER'S OCCUPATION: FARMER**

A daughter of a farmer, Sanjida had to battle the odds to get to where she is today – a 15-year-old playing the game she loves. In what is a common thread in the stories of these girls, the main obstacle to her pursuing her interest and dream were the females in her life – her mothers, her elder sisters and the neighbourhood women. They tried to bar her from playing football as it was deemed unseemly for a girl to play sports, but she sneaked out at evening time and played anyway.

She found encouragement from her father Liakot Ali and the teachers at her school, Kalsindur Government Primary School, who urged her to follow her calling. She started out under Mohammad Mofizuddin, the primary school coach, in 2011 and participated in the Bangamata Gold Cup.

“All I can think of is football; it is a part of my life like studies. We want regular training camps as it is not possible to train and practise at home. I want to be a world-class player and uphold the country's image on the world stage.”



**ANUCHING MOGINI**  
**POSITION: CENTRE-FORWARD**  
**DOB: MAR 1, 2003**  
**HOMETOWN: KHAGRACHARI**  
**SIBLINGS: 6**  
**FATHER'S OCCUPATION: FARMER**

Unlike many others in her group of champion age-level footballers, Anuching Mogini did not face any social obstacles when she started playing football in 2011. Playing for Khagrachari's Mogochori Primary School in the Bangamata Gold Cup under the guidance of Shila Mong, Anuching's side emerged inaugural champions of the competition.

She was encouraged to play by her parents and neighbours, a veritable boon considering the difficulties faced by the others in this regard. The turning point in her fledgling career came during the KFC national women's championship in 2014, when she played for Narayananj.

She was selected and has not looked back since. She is studying in class-IX in Chagra Bohumukhi High School.

“I came to football because it felt good to play it. I want to grow through football, and through football I want to help my parents financially.”



**MARIA MANDA**  
**POSITION: MIDFIELDER**  
**DOB: MAY 10, 2003**  
**HOMETOWN: MYMENSINGH**  
**SIBLINGS: 3**  
**MOTHER'S OCCUPATION: LABOURER**

Having lost her father, Maria Manda watched her mother do farm work on other people's land for the subsistence of the family of five. That may easily have seen her towing the line and putting her dreams on the back-burner. But unlike many of her team mates, she found unwavering support from her mother Enota Manda in her foray into football. The neighbours however, gave her a tough time, but once she and the school team started doing well, those barriers fell apart.

She first started football in 2011, playing for the Kalsindur Government Primary School in the Bangamata Gold Cup. Her big break came right after playing the 2013 Plan Under-15 football tournament.

“I want to become a big player like Ronaldo and Messi. I want financial assistance so that I can carry on football and my studies simultaneously.”



**MISHRAT JAHAN MOUSUMI**  
**POSITION: MIDFIELDER**  
**DOB: JUN 8, 2001**  
**HOMETOWN: RANGPUR**  
**SIBLINGS: 5**  
**FATHER'S OCCUPATION: CARPENTER**

Mousumi is an ambitious midfielder hailing from Rangpur. She faced acute pressure from some villagers when she expressed interest in playing football. Ever the fighter, that did not stop her. Inspired by her teachers at Palichara Primary Govt High School to pursue her dreams, she started her career in the 2011 Bangamata Gold Cup and helped her team finish runners-up.

Coached by Harunur Rashid at school, she moved up in footballing circles and impressed all and sundry with her growing skills on the pitch. Like many others on this list her big break came through the Plan Under-15 football tournament in 2013, after which she entered the national limelight and has continued there since.

“I enjoy football very much and dream of playing in a World Cup. I hope to get a government job through football.”