

THE PERENNIAL NO. 1

There's a very informative videographic on ESPNcricinfo's video features section, posted in March this year, celebrating Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan's record run at the top of the ICC all-rounders' rankings. The 1min 2sec video, full of stats regarding the ace all-rounder, brings into focus the fact that the left-hander is the only person in cricketing history to have topped all the three formats of the game at the same time. And he has done it not once or twice, but three times. The video also informs that Shakib's total stay at the top of ODI rankings, 324 months, is far longer than any other all-rounder in cricket, and for a small matter of perspective, is longer than the No. 1 stays of both Roger Federer and Serena Williams.

While this mind-boggling feat speaks volumes of the quality and capability of Shakib, the ever unmentioned fact that no other Bangladeshi cricketer has ever topped any of ICC's rankings, either as a bowler or batsman or an all-rounder, probably signifies the relative importance of the Magura-born cricketer in the side. The ICC rankings may not be quite the be-all and end-all of cricketing excellence, but Shakib's figures that helped him stay on top for so long — 4815 runs in 173 ODI innings — second highest for Bangladesh — 224 wickets — second highest here too by a of six signi that

matter wickets — do the massive role the 30-year-old has played since his international debut in 2006. He may have had his ups and downs in form, and he may have had his fair share of transgressions and occasional fits of whim, but even to this day, as Bangladesh embark on ICC Champions Trophy in England with the old guard delivering and a new brigade standing up to the task, it is undeniable that Shakib remains the leading light for the Bangladesh cricket team.



CHAMPIONS TROPHY 2017

FIZZING TO GLORY

It is safe to say that no other Bangladeshi player, past or present, carries the burden of reputation that Mustafizur Rahman bears whenever he embarks upon an international assignment. This left-arm pace oddity from

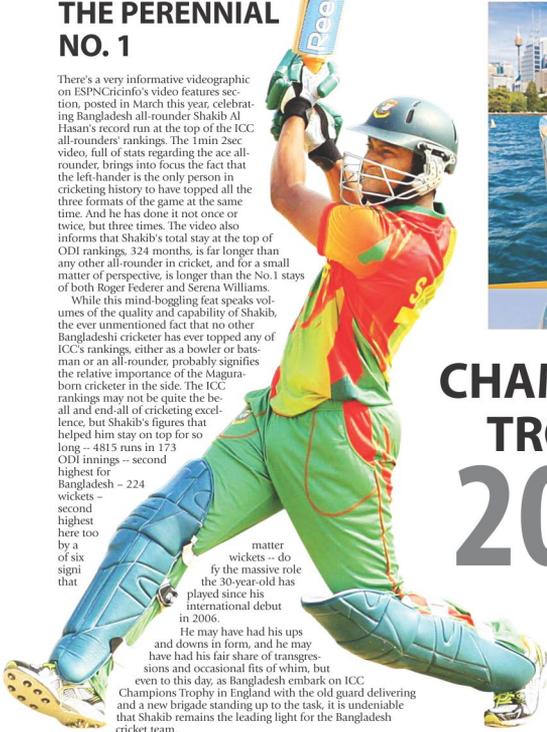
Salkhira has been operating at top gear from the word go. In his debut ODI series in 2015 he cut the mighty Indians down to size and helped bring about a historic series victory. In his debut Indian Premier League he was named the emerging player of the tournament.

In his debut ICC World Twenty20 in India last year, he recorded the best bowling figures of the edition, taking five for 22 in a league game against New Zealand.

So it is hardly surprising that when he plays his debut Champions Trophy, the cricketing world will have their eyes on the wrist and shoulder of the 21-year-old who has flummoxed the best batsmen in the world with his slower cutters and his indiscernible fluctuations in pace.

The Fizz story, however, has not been all rosy. Following his IPL 2016 exploits he sustained a shoulder injury, for which he had to go under the knife in August 2016, and it has subsequently taken the youngster a long time to work himself back to form. There has been speculation surrounding whether he is able to bowl the most deceptive of his cutters post-surgery, and concerns were also fuelled during some ordinary outings on the Sri Lanka tour in March-April and an expensive 2.3 overs in his sole match for the Sunrisers Hyderabad in this year's IPL.

Happily for Bangladesh, the Fizz has never been too far off the boil. He took seven wickets in the tri-series in Ireland and there were encouraging signs that he was close to his wildest. At a very young age, he has become the centrepiece of the Bangladesh attack, and in seam-friendly conditions in England, he may well be the ace up the Tigers' sleeve.




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