



Members of the Bangladesh women's team pose for an official photograph at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur yesterday, prior to their departure for South Africa, where the Tigresses will play five ODIs and three T20Is against their South African counterparts in the month-long tour. PHOTO: BCB

From paddy fields to national team

MAZHAR UDDIN



Twelve years ago a girl from the Kamalapur village in Magura used to watch Khaled Mashud's wicketkeeping on her neighbours' television after helping her father in the paddy field.

Bangladesh women's national team second-choice wicketkeeper Shamima Sultana's journey from cultivating those fields to boarding a flight for South Africa yesterday night to take part in an international series is nothing but the story of a woman who has overcome every struggle and obstacle in her life.

Well before she began playing for the national team in 2010, Shamima -- the second daughter among four sisters and an elder brother in the family -- had always desired to help her father and contribute to her family much like a son is expected to.

Her life had never been easy, but for Shamima cricket was always the source of happiness for her family and despite their immense financial crisis, her family's support never waned.

"We did not have our own land to cultivate rice on, so we used to grow crops on others' land and we had to give half of the crops to them and keep the other half for

ourselves. I always wanted to help my father in any way possible so I started to go out to the fields and learned how to nurture crops," the right-hander, who idolises Australia's Adam Gilchrist, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"At the same time my father always encouraged us to study and also play various sports. There was a time when my father bought less food so he could buy books for



SHAMIMA SULTANA

us as he wanted us to be educated."

Time went by and the hard-hitting wicketkeeper, who had completed her HSC, took the next step when she was admitted to the Rajendra College in Faridpur, where she was looking for one big opportunity to play cricket, this time with a proper ball.

"I used to play cricket and football with boys and I always wanted to play cricket but did not know where to go and play. There was a stadium just beside our college in Faridpur and in 2008 I played a game with a cricket ball for Dhaka Division in the National Cricket League. They needed a player after someone got injured and I was selected among 80 cricketers. I played all five games and afterwards I realised that if I could play this game well then I would be able to earn money," continued the 30-year-old.

Eventually Shamima made it to the national team, where she was selected for a tour of India in 2010 before going on to play in the ICC Women's World Cup Qualifiers the next year.

However, her smooth life was derailed by a ligament injury in 2014, a period she describes as one of the toughest in her career.

"I faced a lot of problems after my surgery as I did not have enough money to survive in Dhaka. But then I thought that if I could overcome so many hurdles in my life, this is nothing

difficult for me and eventually I regained fitness and returned to the national team," Shamima said, the confidence still in her eyes.

Although she had endured financial hardships from a very early age, Shamima's vision was not constricted to earning money. She also wanted to become an educated person and she has worked towards that goal and completed her post-graduation.

With her financial help, Shamima's father has already retired from farming but already there is a new challenge for her family.

"I need money badly as my brother wants to expand his recently-established dairy farm [to which Shamima contributed significantly]. We did manage to start with two cows. One cow gives 10 litres of milk every day and the other one will give birth soon," she added.

Of all the examples and anecdotes, one perhaps is the best representation of Shamima's character and unbending will.

"I remember playing a T20 game in Lalmonirhat where I got hit on the face while playing a sweep shot. I was taken to the hospital immediately and given seven stitches. But I returned again and kept wickets. At one point I realised that I was bleeding and after the game I went to the hospital and heard that one of my stitches had been removed," Shamima said with a smile before adding that nothing could stop her in life.

'It's going to be challenging'

SPORTS REPORTER



1992 was a time when the Bangladesh cricket fraternity were dreaming of World Cup qualification; a time when the current national team's star batsman Tamim Iqbal was only a three-year-old boy. So naturally the memories of that event hardly create any buzz for Bangladesh cricket or within Tamim. But the format from that trip down memory lane certainly means a lot to them these days.

Tamim is now one of the stalwarts of a Bangladesh cricket and the Tigers have proven themselves a strong force in ODI cricket, which is why they have reason to think about the format -- 10 teams in a round robin league from where the top four finishers will advance to the semifinals.

Tamim was excited as Bangladesh would get the chance to play against all the teams in the tournament, but he reminded everyone of the challenge of this format -- which was last featured in the 1992 World Cup.

"Personally, I am very excited. If any team wants to win the trophy then they have to play good cricket throughout the tournament. This format will be very challenging. It's possible to qualify by winning one or two matches in a group system, but here you may have to win five or six to qualify. So it's very challenging for us. You have to play good cricket for a long period of time," observed Tamim



when speaking to reporters at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur yesterday.

However, the left-hander also emphasised on the requirement for more focus on international assignments before the 2019 ICC World Cup, to be held in England, as he believes good performances in those series will give the Tigers the much-needed confidence to play good cricket in the mega-event.

"If we actually want to make the 2019 World Cup a memorable one then the most important thing is to play good cricket in the coming series as the World Cup is still one year away. If we win those series and play good cricket then we will go [into the World Cup] with confidence. I don't think it's important to talk about the World Cup at this moment although the ultimate goal is the World Cup," he said.

He was also happy with the Bangladesh Cricket Board's go-slow policy regarding the appointment of a new head coach.

"It's really nice that they [the BCB] are not hurrying. It's very important to take time in getting a suitable coach," said Tamim, who started running yesterday and hopes to be fit before the start of the national camp on May 13.

Bangladesh's hopes dashed

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh under-18 hockey team failed to make it through to the Youth Olympics after suffering a 2-9 defeat against favourites India in the first semifinal in Bangkok yesterday.

The boys in red and green, who held Pakistan to a 3-3 draw on Friday to make it through to the last four, failed to put up any resistance against a strong Indian side, ably led by their captain Shivam Anan, who scored a hat-trick within the first 15 minutes of this 30-minute encounter.

Sohanur Rahman, the Bangladesh skipper, scored two goals in the 23rd and 29th minute to salvage some pride.

Bangladesh will take on Korea in the third-place deciding match today. The champions and runners-up from Asia will qualify for the Youth Olympics which will be held later this year in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

24-year-old in league of U-18s!

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation declared Abahani 3-0 winners against Farashganj SC after it was found that the latter had fielded an overage player in the opening match of the Walton U-18 Football Tournament on Thursday.

Abahani had lost that match by 1-0. However, after protest from the Dhanmondi-based club, the disciplinary committee looked into the matter and found that Farashganj's Angkan Mandal alias Sabuj Roy had used two different birth certificates in two tournaments he played this year. In this

tournament, his documents stated that he was born on June 1, 2001, making him just eligible for participation. However, the same person had played in the third division league where his birth date was May 18, 1994.

The committee also decided to suspend the player from the whole tournament.

Despite the defeat, Farashganj kept their chances of qualifying for the last four alive with a 3-1 win over Muktiyoddha Sangsad in their second match of Group D yesterday. Elsewhere, Saif Sporting Club moved into the semifinals after inflicting a 2-1 defeat on Sheikh Russel KC in their Group A fixture.



Asaduzzaman Noor, Minister for Cultural Affairs, takes aim at the target during the opening of the Nilphamari district phase of Teer Archery Talent Hunt programme at the Nilphamari District Sports Association premises yesterday. The 10-day programme will select two archers from among 400 hopefuls for the final round of training in Tongi. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Rohit keeps Mumbai alive

AGENCIES

Rohit Sharma hit an unbeaten 55 as the Mumbai Indians secured just their second victory of the IPL this season as they beat table-toppers Chennai Super Kings by eight wickets in Pune yesterday.

Indian batsman Suresh Raina score an unbeaten 75 to help set holders Mumbai 170 to win - with the visitors needing a win to keep them in with a chance of reaching the next stages of the tournament.

Mumbai stuttered in the response but captain Sharma promoted himself up the order and struck four boundaries in the penultimate over to bring up his half-century and help see his side home with two balls to spare.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Chennai: 169 for 5 in 20 overs (Rayudu 46, Raina 75; McClenaghan 2-26)

Mumbai: 170 for 2 in 19.4 overs (Yadav 44, Lewis 47, Rohit 56 not out)

Result: Mumbai won by 8 wks
Player of the match: Rohit Sharma

ERRATUM

On yesterday's issue of The Daily Star, the lead picture on page 14 inadvertently covered the Asian Volleyball Championship's third-place finishers Kyrgyzstan instead of champions Turkmenistan. We regret the mistake.

--Sports Editor



PHOTO: STAR

Defending champions Mariner Young's striker Moinul Islam Kowshik (grounded) scores the fourth goal against Victoria Sporting Club in the Premier Division Hockey League opener at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Scrappy start for holders

SPORTS REPORTER



Champions Mariner Young's Club made an unconvincing start to their title defence with a 4-0 win over Victoria Sporting as the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division

League got underway at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. Oliver Kurtz's charges, who finished runners-up in the season-opening Club Cup hockey tournament after losing the final against Abahani, were undone by a lot of missed opportunities, especially from set-pieces.

The defending champions took the lead in the third minute of the game, with Hasin Arman Rup turning in Pushkor Khisha Mimo's powerful strike from outside the circle. The Arambagh-based outfit doubled their lead from a penalty corner (PC) in the

20th minute after having failed to convert five PCs. Veteran defender and PC specialist Mamunur Rahman Chayan doubled the lead from their sixth PC while Moinul Islam Koushik made it 3-0 from another PC in the 30th minute.

The second half was more of the same story for the star-studded side as they wasted six more penalty corners. However, skipper Hasan Jubayer Niloy converted the last one in the 68th minute as Mariner Young's left the field with a 4-0 victory.

Club Cup champions Abahani will take on Police AC while Bangladesh SC will play against Shadharan Bima in today's matches.

The 12-team league, which is being held after two years, lost some of its charm after Usha KC declined to take part in the inter-club players' transfer. The federation waited for their inclusion till the eleventh hour, but to no avail.