

# SPORT



## Mushy climbs up rankings

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim climbed 13 steps up the ICC Test batting ranking ladder after becoming the first wicketkeeper to score two double centuries -- the last of which came in the second Test against Zimbabwe earlier this month. The Tigers' main man behind the stumps is currently 18th on the list, his career-best position in rankings. Mushfiqur was also the first Bangladesh batsman to reach the magic double hundred landmark when he scored his first double ton against Sri Lanka away from home in 2013. However, Test and T20I captain Shakib Al Hasan dropped to the 25th position on the list.



MUSHY PRACTISES PERFECTION SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE VIDEO

## A FATHER'S unspoken dream

MAZHAR UDDIN



During the early days after Bangladesh had received Test status back in 2000, there were a few Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials who were close to young age-level cricketers and guided them during training camps and tours.

Among them was Shohidul Islam, who was then the co-ordinator of the BCB's game development committee and co-ordinated age-level training camps. He shared a friendly relationship with young cricketers and has seen the transformation of players such as Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal from age-level cricketers into icons of Bangladesh cricket.

However, the father of two sons also harboured the dream that one day his sons would also make it into the national side but because he was a BCB official, Shohidul kept his identity in the dark and silently led his elder son on the dream of playing for the national team through his own merits.

Almost two decades later, Shohidul's dream finally came true as his elder son, Shadman Islam Anik, was named in the Tigers' 14-member Test squad for the first of the two-match Test series against the West Indies, starting on November 22.

Many may assume that Shadman had the luxury of taking an easier path due to his father's position, but for Shohidul casting his identity aside and urging his son to earn a place was the hardest thing.

"I have seen Shakib, Tamim, Mushfiqur, Mahmudullah [Riyad] and many more cricketers since their age-level days and I feel proud to see them as the heroes of Bangladesh now. As a father I always wanted my sons to also represent the country," Shohidul, a proud father and now assistant manager of the BCB's game development committee, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"But being a BCB official, I have always kept out of his way and left him to struggle and earn a place like the others."

He went on to add that perhaps Shadman had to work even harder than most owing to his father's position.

"I am not only saying this because Shadman is my son, but as a cricketer he has earned a place everywhere through performances. Whether it was the 406 runs he scored in the Under-19 World Cup in 2014 -- or being the top scorer in the National Cricket League this season to get a maiden call-up to the national team," he said.

Now Shadman is on the doorsteps of his dreams, but if the left-hander does debut against the West Indies, it will also fulfil a long-standing dream for a father, Shohidul.

When Bangladesh take on West Indies in the first of a two-match Test series in Chattogram from tomorrow, the Tigers will surely bank on Mushfiqur Rahim for the big runs. The wicketkeeper-batsman, who has been in exceptional form lately, was hard at work in the nets at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday, batting for over an hour against off-spinner Nayeem Hasan.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## A natural elevation

SAKEB SUBHAN from Chattogram



Bangladesh Test skipper Shakib Al Hasan was batting in his Bangladesh jersey at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium nets yesterday afternoon ahead of tomorrow's first Test against West Indies, but the eye was drawn to the adjoining net. That the left-hander facing throwdowns from head coach Steve Rhodes in the net beside Shakib was wearing a light green jersey with 'High Performance' printed on the back said a bit about how sudden the nature of Shadman Islam's maiden call-up to the Bangladesh Test squad was.

The 23-year-old opener was drafted into the squad as the 14th member after scoring a patient 73 for BCB XI in the warm-up match against West Indians on Monday. Although his last step to the top flight may seem sudden, his progression up the ranks has been as assured as his footwork seemed to be yesterday.

He has been playing first-class cricket for more than four and a half years and topped the National Cricket League run charts this season with

648 runs at an average of 64.8 for Dhaka Metropolis. His first-class average of 45.9 stands as a marker of longer-version pedigree and had given early notice of his talent in the 2014 Under-19 World Cup in the UAE, where he struck 406 runs at an average of 101.5.

Having walked the path to this destination for most of his late childhood and young adult life, Shadman did not cut the figure of the wide-eyed newcomer; instead his words revealed a measure of the quiet confidence and steady expectations that have brought him this far.

"When a batsman goes to play in the national team, it is better that he is mature," Shadman said when asked by a reporter whether the step up had taken more time than he wanted. "I think the way I have been playing, I have matured a bit."

"Although the difference between domestic cricket and international cricket is a big one, I think that having played a lot of first-class cricket, I know how to construct an innings and because of that there is a chance, even if it is a small one, for me to do well in the national team."

Most newcomers want to portray

an image of infallibility in the lead-up to a possible debut, but it was a sign of Shadman's confidence in his own game that he did not feel the need to dress up potential vulnerabilities.

"The coach told me after the match that I played well but I could have made the innings longer, and that I have some issues with my defence that I need to work on. If I listen to his advice on the technical issues then I will play better, last longer and negotiate spin better."

He also plumped for Bangladesh pacers when asked how he negotiated West Indies' feared pace attack.

"We also have bowlers who can bowl quite fast in Bangladesh. I wasn't thinking about who I was playing -- just thinking that the ball will come and I have to play."

"It's everyone's team to play in the national team. I have played at all the levels and everywhere my aim was to score runs and go to the next level."

He has certainly been doing that and if he does get his debut tomorrow, it will be all the more special because he would be vying for a future position to open with the currently injured Tamim Iqbal, who he professed to be his childhood idol.

INFO-ZONE							
BANGLADESH				WEST INDIES			
HEAD TO HEAD IN BANGLADESH							
M	W	L	D	M	W	L	D
6	0	5	1	6	5	0	1
HEAD TO HEAD IN ALL TESTS							
M	W	L	D	M	W	L	D
14	2	10	2	14	10	2	2
Last meeting in Tests: Kingston, July 12, 2018. West Indies won by 166 runs.							
 <b>Mushfiqur Rahim</b> 35.75 Average 120 Innings 3969 Runs 219* HS 46.83 SR 19 50s 6 100s				 <b>Shimron Hetmyer</b> 23.25 Average 16 Innings 372 Runs 86 HS 68.25 SR 2 50s 0 100s			



Shohidul Islam (R), BCB game development committee's assistant manager, realised a long-standing dream as his son, Shadman Islam, was named in the Tigers squad for tomorrow's Test against West Indies. PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Last-gasp Sabuz takes Kings to final BCL kicks off today

SPORTS REPORTER



A 118th-minute strike from substitute Towhidul Alam Sabuz powered Bashundhara Kings into the final of the Walton Federation Cup with a 1-0 over Sheikh Russel KC in the second semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Local striker Sabuz, who came on the pitch in place of midfielder Emon Babu, scored the all-important goal by tapping in a rebound after star midfielder Daniel Colindres saw his powerful drive from 25 yards come off the post, with Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Ashrafur Islam Rana beaten.

The goal late into second half of extra time helped newcomers Bashundhara Kings write their names beside Sheikh Jamal DC and Team BJMC, who also qualified for the Federation Cup final on their respective debut seasons after the professional football league was introduced in 2008. Big-spending Bashundhara Kings will play the final

Towhidul Alam Sabuz is hailed by team officials after his 118th-minute goal gave Bashundhara Kings a 1-0 win over Sheikh Russel KC.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON



out conceding a single goal while Bashundhara Kings boasted to 12 goals against five conceded. In a sense, this was a clash between Kings' forwards and Sheikh Russel's defenders.

The Kings, who enjoyed lion's share of possession and created more chances than their opponents right from the word go. Coach Oscar Bruzon sent forward Matin Mia reducing his four-man defence to three just after 35 minutes while sending Sabuz in pace of Emon after 70 minutes. The forwards, though, could not break Sheikh Russel's defence marshalled by Alison Udoka, Yeasin Khan, Yeamin Munna and Bishwanath Ghosh before Sabuz made the difference.

Sheikh Russel, who beat Abahani 1-0 in the group stages, were mostly busy thwarting Bashundhara Kings' attacks rather than putting any pressure on the opponents. The former champions could only muster three shots on target but those hardly troubled Bashundhara Kings goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico.

"I'm happy to have scored the match winner but I was not sure about playing this match even yesterday [Tuesday]," Sabuz said after the match. "As I did not practise for the last two days due to a thigh injury, the coach asked me yesterday whether I could play the semifinal. I told him that I would take the field only if the team is on the backfoot."

SPORTS REPORTER



The seventh edition of the franchise-based Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) will kick-off today.

In the first round, defending champions Prime Bank South Zone will take on Walton Central Zone at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium while Islami Bank East Zone will face BCB North Zone at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi.

The tournament returned to the double-league format after the last three editions were played in the single-league system. The intention is to provide more opportunities for players to adapt to the longer version of the game.

The players' draft was held on November 17, where each team formed their squads with 20 cricketers.

The previous edition saw run-fests with four double hundreds being struck while Liton Das finished as the highest run-getter with 779 runs from six games.

However, after both Bangladesh head coach Steve Rhodes and bowling coach Courtney Walsh emphasised the need to provide more opportunities to seamers in domestic first-class competitions, it is expected that the pacers may get some help from the wickets this time around.

Veteran left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak finished as the leading wicket-taker with 43 scalps in the previous edition while Abu Jayed's 18 scalps were the most taken by a

seamer as the pitches tended to favour spinners and did not give pacers much to cheer about.

There were even talks of grooming leg-spinners from the domestic first-class circuit but interestingly Juabir Hossain, who notched a five-wicket haul in the National Cricket League last season, was not picked by any team in the BCL players' draft.

The focus from the organisers will be to make this first-class competition more meaningful in order to get the maximum benefit from the BCL this season.



PHOTO: PRIME BANK

With the BCL set to begin today, South Zone coach Imran Sarwar (L) was seen giving a few tips to pacer Kamrul Islam at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

SHEIKH RUSSEL 0-1 BASHUNDHARA KINGS  
SABUZ 118'