



## 'Mushy can do even better'

The usually challenging task of identifying Bangladesh's outstanding sportsperson of the year was a much easier one this year. The Daily Star Sport team reached a unanimous decision that it should be Bangladesh's middle-order supremo Mushfiqur Rahim, who has left the rest behind in 2018, playing arguably Bangladesh's best knock of the year in each of the three formats. The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin caught up with Mushfiqur's teammate Tamim Iqbal to get an insight into what has propelled Bangladesh's little big man to the next level. The following are excerpts from the interview:

On the mindset changes in Mushfiqur this year

Tamim Iqbal (TI): To be honest I have not seen any changes in Mushfiqur this year. Mushfiqur has changed over the past three-four years, especially since 2014. I have observed since then that he changed as a batsman and started to train differently. I was not surprised at all with the type of performance he had this year because he was among the top 10 batsman in world cricket in Tests last year and also the previous year. I am sure whatever he has achieved, somewhere in his heart he should be disappointed, because I believe and am sure he also believes that he could have done even better.

Watching Mushfiqur score 144 against Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup when Tamim came to bat with a fractured hand

TI: You have to be mentally very strong and skilful to play an innings like that. I think he should have gotten the credit I got. His performance was overshadowed because of the one ball I faced with one hand. The innings he played and the 32 runs he scored, knowing that there was no support at the other end, is something exceptional. I have seen a lot of Bangladeshi and international cricketers' innings live -- one of the best innings I have witnessed was Shakib Al Hasan's 97 against West Indies [in the first ODI in July] this year. That hundred from Mushfiqur will stand alongside Shakib's innings to me.

The competition within the team now that Mushfiqur is challenging for the 'best batsman' title generally reserved for Tamim

TI: To be honest it does not matter between us as we are all friends but I think there was never a big gap between me and Mushfiqur. Last year [2017] he had an incredible time in Tests while I had a good time in ODIs. Especially with Mushfiqur and Shakib, I always want to do better and I am sure they also want to do better than me. It's just professional hunger. There is obviously a competition among us about who will become the highest run getter for the year. We are not very vocal about it but in our hearts we always want to do our best.



### SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR

## The cross-format master

### MAZHAR UDDIN

Cricket has remained the dominant sport in Bangladesh and once again, a cricketer emerged as The Daily Star's Sportsman of the Year 2018.

There were quite a few candidates in the list such as Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Taijul Islam. But it was Mushfiqur who stood above in terms of his performances in all three formats and more importantly his match-winning contributions for Bangladesh in 2018.

Mushfiqur finished as the top run-getter for the Tigers in ODIs -- a format Bangladesh performed brilliantly in 2018, winning 13 out of 20 games. The experienced cricketer compiled 770 runs in 19 matches at a staggering average of 55. More important was the impact each of his innings had.

His only ODI hundred of the year came against Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup in September in Dubai, where Mushfiqur

### MUSHFIQUR RAHIM IN 2018

TESTS	MTS	INNS	RUNS	AVE	HS	50	100
ODIs	8	15	490	35	219*	1	1
T20Is	19	770	55	82.35	144	5	1
MTS	16	397	30.53	132.33	72*	3	0

single-handedly guided the Tigers to a challenging total of 261 with an innings of 144.

The Tigers eventually won the game by a huge 137-run margin. Mushfiqur was instrumental throughout a tournament that the Tigers finished as runners-up, adding a 99 in the do-or-die game against Pakistan in Abu Dhabi.

The 31-year-old also stood out in Tests, even though Bangladesh did not have a great time in the format in 2018. Mushfiqur was the second-highest run-getter with 490 runs in eight Tests at an

average of 35.

It was a true master-class from Mushfiqur when he became the only wicketkeeper-batsman in history to hit two double-centuries when he hit the unbeaten 219 -- Bangladesh's highest Test score -- in the 217-run win over Zimbabwe in Mirpur. The patience and concentration displayed in the flawless innings made it one of the best Test knocks by a Bangladeshi batsman.

In T20Is, Mushfiqur scored 397 runs in 16 games -- the second-highest for Bangladesh in 2018 -- at an average of 30.53 with three fifties. It was his unbeaten 35-ball 72 that helped the Tigers to post their highest ever T20I total by successfully chasing down the huge target of 215 against Sri Lanka in the Nidahas Trophy in Colombo in March.

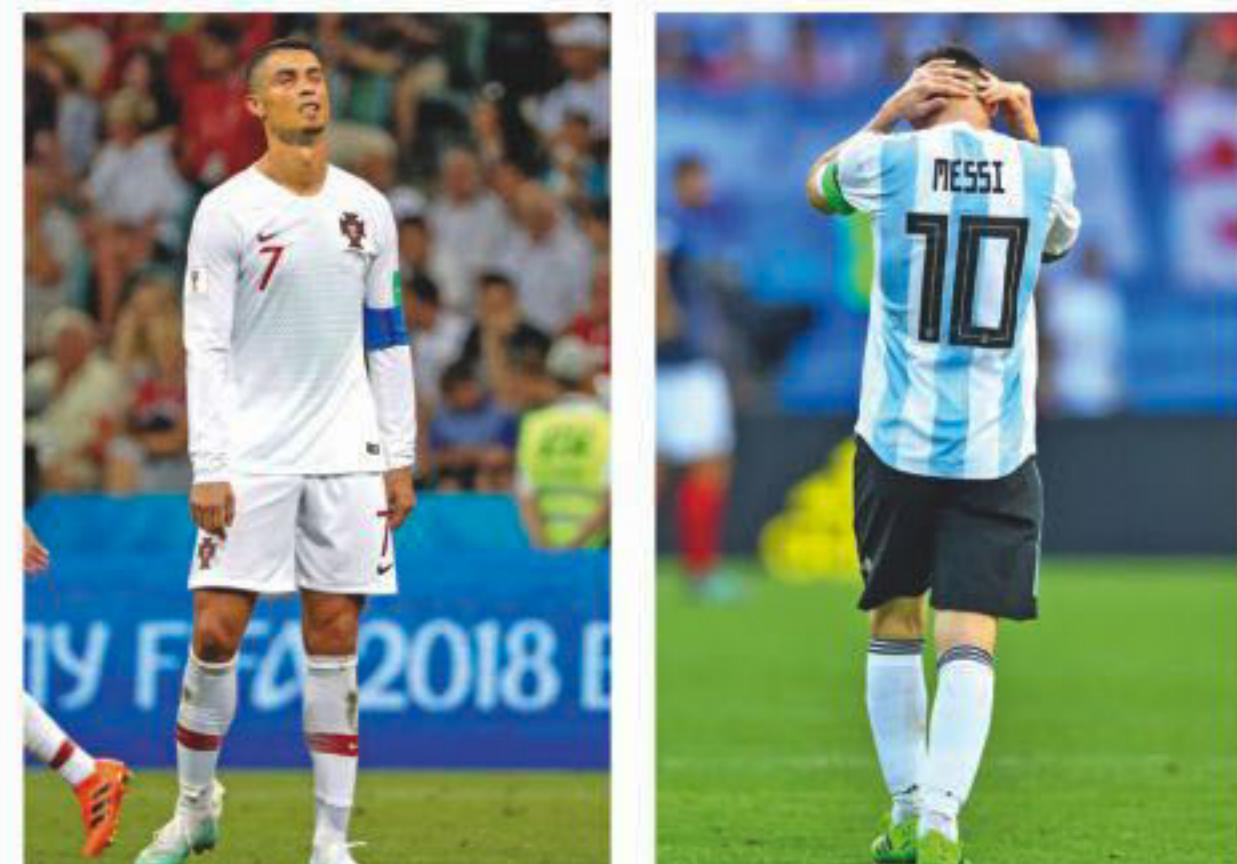
In a year that Bangladesh excelled in ODIs but left a bit to be desired in Tests and T20Is, Mushfiqur's cross-format mastery is the example to follow and propelled him to the top of the list of Bangladeshi sporting achievements in 2018.



The Bangladesh women's team (L) became the first cricket team from the country to win a major trophy when they won the Women's T20 Asia Cup on June 10. The lowest point of the year was Australia's ball-tampering scandal in South Africa in March, which led to then captain Steve Smith -- who was slapped with a 1-year ban -- breaking down in a press conference.



Brazil superstar Neymar's theatrics drew ire the world over as he spent nearly 17 minutes on the ground.



Cristiano Ronaldo (L) and Lionel Messi both exited in the second round, disappointing their fans worldwide.

## 2018 WORLD CUP REWIND



(TOP) Les Blues added a second star to their crest after 20 years of wait, stifling oppositions with their rock-solid game plan and a plethora of firepower up front. After making a fairytale run to the final, underdogs Croatia were denied at the final hurdle. Meanwhile, reigning champions Germany were shockingly knocked out in the opening stage after finishing in last place in their group.



France's Kylian Mbappe took the World Cup by storm, finishing with four goals and outstanding performances which he capped by becoming the second teenager, after Pele, to score in a World Cup Final.

## Lessons from England and India

SAKEB SUBHAN

"If you look around the world, you will see that no one really wins abroad these days." A variation of this quote has become a common excuse pressers after Bangladesh lose Tests abroad, as they did in abject fashion in the two-Test series in the West Indies in July. There is a ring of truth to it as overseas wins have become a rare commodity, but instead of accepting this failure Bangladesh and other Test nations will do well to take a cue from England and India.

It is no coincidence that these two teams are at the top of the Test rankings ladder and also have the most away wins in 2018. When most teams are losing away matches, the ones that win in their oppositions' backyards will separate themselves from the pack.

It is also no coincidence that England and India have the best all-round attacks in the world. The former boast pacers like James Anderson, Stuart Broad, Chris Woakes and Sam Curran and a diverse array of spinners like leg-spinner Adil Rashid and left-arm spinners Moeen Ali and Jack Leach -- all of whom were instrumental in a 3-0 series whitewash of Sri Lanka in Sri Lanka this year.

While England have been the best away performers with three wins from six games, India's example (three wins out of 10) is more relevant in terms of a sea change in mindset. They were similar



Boosted by a varied bowling attack, England notched the most away wins in 2018, with all three coming in the spin-friendly conditions of Sri Lanka.

to Bangladesh not too long ago -- the focus was on winning home matches on under-prepared wickets with an army of spinners. Under-prepared pitches and spin-dominated lineups at home led to under-prepared pacers abroad. That changed in the last five years as the focus in domestic cricket shifted to more pacer-friendly pitches.

Followers of cricket in the 1990s will know how significant it is that India now have four bowlers -- Jaspit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma, Umesh Yadav and Mohammad Shami -- who can consistently clock 140kph. During the ongoing Test series in Australia, it is debatable whether it is the hosts or the tourists who get the bigger advantage from pace-friendly wickets.

Well-rounded bowling attacks have another consequence that is not often highlighted -- facing the variety and quality in the nets gives batsmen practice for challenges abroad.

That is the lesson Bangladesh can draw from the two outstanding teams of 2018. The sordid spectacle of a team without a pacer was seen in a Test against West Indies in November, and skipper Shakib Al Hasan said pacers could play a lot when they tour New Zealand in 2019. But given their lack of match preparedness and the scarcity of quality pacers the batsmen get to face because of the spin-first policy, that quote about other teams also losing abroad is fated to be on a loop.



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