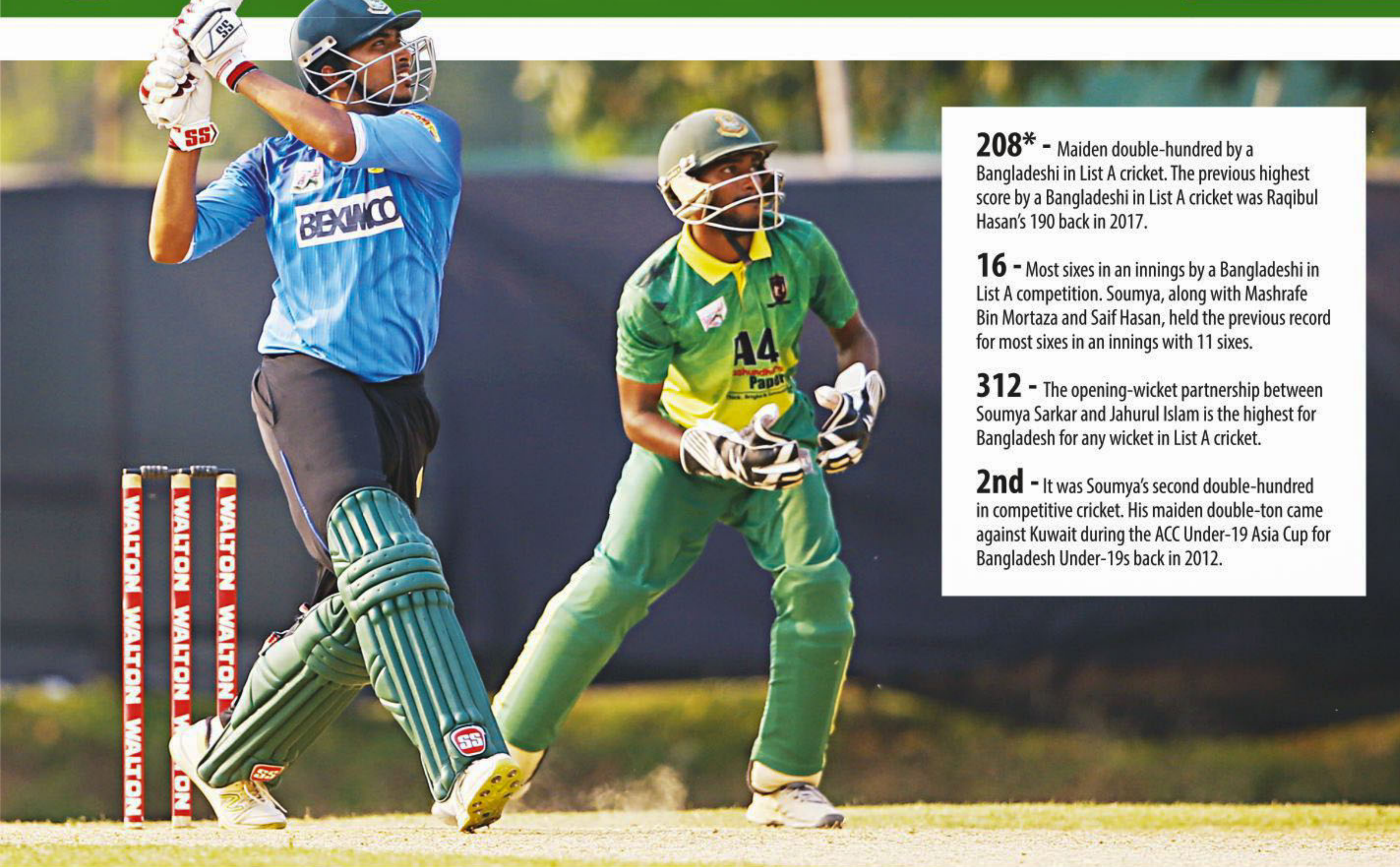


# Star SPORT

e-mail: [sports@thedailystar.net](mailto:sports@thedailystar.net)  
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Ahead of the upcoming World Cup in the United Kingdom, Abahani batsman Soumya Sarkar seems to have quashed the doubts surrounding his consistency with an awe-inspiring 153-ball 208 in a DPL Super League match against Sheikh Jamal, which the Sky Blues won by nine wickets, in Savar yesterday. The win helped Abahani to a record-extending 20th DPL title.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## DPL HIGHLIGHTS

This edition of the DPL has seen a number of national discards and also some youngsters shine throughout.

Prime Bank skipper Anamul Haque became only the second player after Mohammad Ashraful to score three back-to-back hundreds in the DPL when the right-hander smashed 102 off 128 balls in a round-robin fixture against Abahani. However, he could not continue his good run of form till the end.

Mohammedan's Raqibul Hasan was third on the run-getters' list with his 781 runs that saw one century and eight fifties. Raqibul, who scored at an impressive average of 60.07, also remained unbeaten on a few occasions to see his side through.

Abahani's Jahurul Islam scored his third century of the tournament in the final and has been in stellar form throughout, scoring 735 runs in 15 matches.

Doleshwar skipper Forhad Reza's 38 wickets in 16 matches earned him the top spot in the wicket-takers' list. He remained just two shy of beating Masrafe Bin Mortaza's record of most wickets in one season of DPL.

Youngster Saif Hassan's 814 runs in 16 matches makes him the highest run-getter for any season of the DPL. Doleshwar's Saif scored three centuries and four fifties at an impressive average of 62.61, with a top score of 148 not out against Sheikh Jamal.

Another young prospect, Rugganj's Mohammad Naim Sheikh, was second on the run charts with 807 runs, which included three centuries and five fifties. However, his season-best score of 136 against Prime Bank in the last round could not make Rugganj champions.

Despite playing with a tennis elbow, Abahani's Mohammad Saifuddin did not let injury affect his performances as he scalped 25 wickets from 13 matches and ended third on the wicket-takers' list.

## 'I've kept batting in my own way'

SPORTS REPORTER

14, 1, 2, 17 and 0 were Soumya Sarkar scores in a five-innings stretch in the Dhaka Premier League for Abahani and questions started to arise about the poor form of the elegant left-hander, who was named in the Bangladesh World Cup squad recently.

The 26-year-old however came back with a vengeance with a blistering, match-winning hundred in a crucial encounter against Legends of Rugganj, but still concerns were there about whether Soumya could remain consistent in the final and title-deciding game against Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club yesterday.

And the cricketer from Satkhira silenced all his critics by striking not just another hundred while chasing a huge target of 318 runs at the BKSP-3 ground, but Soumya also went on to register the maiden List A double hundred by a Bangladeshi to clinch the title for Abahani with a nine-wicket win.

Soumya, who finished on an unbeaten 208 off 158 balls, made and broke a few other records. The left-hander, who previously jointly held the record for the most sixes in a List A innings by a Bangladeshi with 11 sixes alongside Bangladesh ODI skipper Masrafe Bin Mortaza and Saif Hasan, yesterday broke his own record by striking 16 sixes alongside 14 fours.

Along with Jahurul Islam, who also struck a hundred, Soumya added 312 runs for the opening wicket -- also a record partnership for any wicket in Bangladesh List A cricket.

Soumya had not thought of scoring a double until he reached 190, and that is when the nervous yet stylish batsman told himself to not let go of the opportunity.

"I hadn't thought about the double ton until I reached 190, but later I realised that I should not let go of the opportunity at any cost. I was a bit nervous as if there was an extra, Omi [Jahurul Islam] bhai would not be able to reach his hundred and neither would I make my double century. So we worked together and looked for singles," Soumya told reporters yesterday.

When asked what actually changed for an off-form Soumya's batting, the left-hander backed himself by saying nothing had changed apart from the mindset.

"There is no difference. I have kept batting in my own style. I was unable to score in the previous games, which I am able to do now. There was regret as I was getting dismissed on 30-40 while I also got out on scores of 1, 2 and 0. Later I realised that it's better to reach 30-40 first as it's better than getting out on 1 or 2. When I reached 30-40 today [on Tuesday] I thought I should not get out on that score as I have to score a fifty and planned accordingly in the middle," a relieved Soumya told reporters yesterday.

SPORTS REPORTER

Even halfway through the final-round matches of the Dhaka Premier League (DPL), the Legends of Rugganj dugout looked happy and hopeful of clinching the title for the first time. Rugganj posted a mammoth 327 for four and looked all set to register a big win over Prime Bank Cricket Club at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Meanwhile, Abahani -- the only thorn in the path of Rugganj's maiden title -- had a mountain to climb after Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club posted 317 for nine.

However, perhaps no one had imagined that Rugganj's bright day would turn bleak because of one player named Soumya Sarkar, who became the first Bangladeshi to score a double-century in List A cricket to help Abahani win by nine wickets in the title decider against Sheikh Jamal. Abahani's win meant that even an 88-run victory by Rugganj would only produce two points and not the title.

Even after hitting a century in Abahani's last match on Sunday against Rugganj, many doubted whether Soumya could continue his good work as the left-hander has a history of inconsistency. However, it was truly his day as in chase of a mammoth total, Soumya's unbeaten 208 off 153 balls was perfectly paced according to the requirement of the game. Soumya smashed 16 sixes -- the highest by any batsman in DPL history -- and 14 boundaries on way to scripting the epic.

The left-hander was well supported by Jahurul Islam at the other end, as the duo strung together a record 312-run opening stand -- the highest partnership for any wicket in DPL history. By the time Jahurul was dismissed in the 46th over after scoring 100 off 128 balls, it was all too late for Sheikh Jamal, as well as Rugganj, who were hoping for Abahani to fail. Soumya remained unbeaten and it was fitting that the winning runs also came from the 26-year-old's bat as he struck Taijul Islam for a six off the first ball of the 48th over and ensured the title defenders ended up as title holders.

**208\*** - Maiden double-hundred by a Bangladeshi in List A cricket. The previous highest score by a Bangladeshi in List A cricket was Raqibul Hasan's 190 back in 2017.

**16** - Most sixes in an innings by a Bangladeshi in List A competition. Soumya, along with Masrafe Bin Mortaza and Saif Hasan, held the previous record for most sixes in an innings with 11 sixes.

**312** - The opening-wicket partnership between Soumya Sarkar and Jahurul Islam is the highest for Bangladesh for any wicket in List A cricket.

**2nd** - It was Soumya's second double-hundred in competitive cricket. His maiden double-ton came against Kuwait during the ACC Under-19 Asia Cup for Bangladesh Under-19s back in 2012.

# Super Soumya delivers Abahani's 20th



Due to a better net run rate, Abahani beat Legends of Rugganj to the DPL title following a nine-wicket win over Sheikh Jamal in Savar yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Earlier, Tanbir Hayder's praiseworthy unbeaten 132 off 115 balls helped Sheikh Jamal to the mammoth total.

Before Soumya had shattered Rugganj's titled dreams, the Legends started off brilliantly against Prime Bank. The two Rugganj openers -- Mehedi Maruf and Mohammad Naim -- put on a 129-run opening partnership in just 18.4 overs before Mehedi was dismissed following his 54. Naim kept on building on the good work as he scripted another 114-run

second-wicket partnership with Mominul Haque. Although both Naim (136 off 130 balls) and Mominul (52 off 59) were dismissed later, their contributions helped Rugganj finish on a high. Rugganj did their part with the ball too. Medium pacer Mohammad Shahid returned figures of four for 22 to help restrict Prime Bank to 239.

In the other game, which was an academic affair as it had no bearing on the title, Abahani picked up a three-run victory over

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**Sheikh Jamal v Abahani**  
**Sheikh Jamal:** 317 for 9 in 50 overs (Tanbir 132 not out, Elias 45; Masrafe 4-56, Mehedi 1-32)  
**Abahani:** 319 for 1 in 47.1 overs (Soumya 208 not out, Jahurul 100; Imtiaz 1-10)  
**Result:** Abahani won by 9 wickets.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Soumya Sarkar.  
**Legends of Rugganj v Prime Bank**  
**Rugganj:** 327 for 4 in 50 overs (Naim 136, Mehedi 54; Nahidul 1-52, Mohor 1-53)  
**Prime Bank:** 239 all out in 42.1 overs (Nahidul 74, Rubel 37; Shahid 4-22, Nabil 2-41)  
**Result:** Rugganj won by 88 runs.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Mohammad Naim.  
**Prime Doleshwar v Mohammedan**  
**Doleshwar:** 274 for 6 in 50 overs (Forhad H 89, Shykat 65; Shaiful 2-39, Saqlain 1-44)  
**Mohammedan:** 271 for 9 in 50 overs (Ashraful 76, Rahatul 37; Taibur 3-34, Forhad R 2-51)  
**Result:** Doleshwar won by 3 runs.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Forhad Hossain.

Mohammedan Sporting Club in Fatullah. Farhad Hossain's 89 off 76 balls helped Doleshwar post a challenging 274 for six, which proved enough on the day as Mohammedan could only manage 271 for nine despite Mohammad Ashraful's 76.

## POINTS TABLE

Team	M	W	L	PT	NRR
Abahani	16	13	3	26	0.866
Legends of Rugganj	16	13	3	26	0.517
Prime Doleshwar	16	10	6	20	-0.033
Sheikh Jamal	16	9	7	18	0
Prime Bank	16	8	8	16	0
Mohammedan	16	7	9	14	0.064

## ROLL OF HONOUR

Year	Champions
2013-14	Gazi Tank Cricketers
2014-15	Prime Bank
2015-16	Abahani
2016-17	Gazi Group Cricketers
2017-18	Abahani
2018-19	Abahani

## TOP FIVE BATSMEN

PLAYER	Mat	Runs	HS	Ave	50	100
Saif Hassan (Doleshwar)	16	814	148*	62.61	4	3
Mohammad Naim (Rugganj)	16	807	136	53.80	5	3
Raqibul Hasan (Mohammedan)	16	781	102	60.07	8	1
Jahurul Islam (Abahani)	15	735	130	56.53	3	3
Fazle Mahmud (Brothers Union)	13	603	149*	75.37	2	3



## TOP FIVE BOWLERS

PLAYER	Mat	Wkts	BBI	SR	5-wkt
Farhad Reza (Doleshwar)	16	38	5/40	21.6	1
Mohammad Shahid (Rugganj)	15	27	4/22	29.3	0
Mohammad Saifuddin (Abahani)	13	25	5/9	25.9	2
Hasan Murad (BKSP)	13	22	4/30	33.8	0
Robiul Haque (Khelaghar)	11	22	5/41	28.4	2



## ICC World Cup 2019 Bites: 'MS will be a vital cog'

ICC

Kiran More, the former India wicketkeeper, has said that MS Dhoni will be a vital cog for the Indian team at the upcoming ICC World Cup 2019.

Dhoni played one of the most remarkable innings of the 2019 Indian Premier League, nearly chasing down 26 runs off the last over against Royal Challengers Bangalore on Sunday.

Chennai eventually fell short by a run, but Dhoni's 48-ball 84\* showed More that he continued to be a lynchpin in every team he played for, despite his age.

"He was brilliant. It was an outstanding innings and only goes to show age is never a criteria," More said. "Dhoni is in top form and age is just a number. Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid all played till late in their career and with distinction."

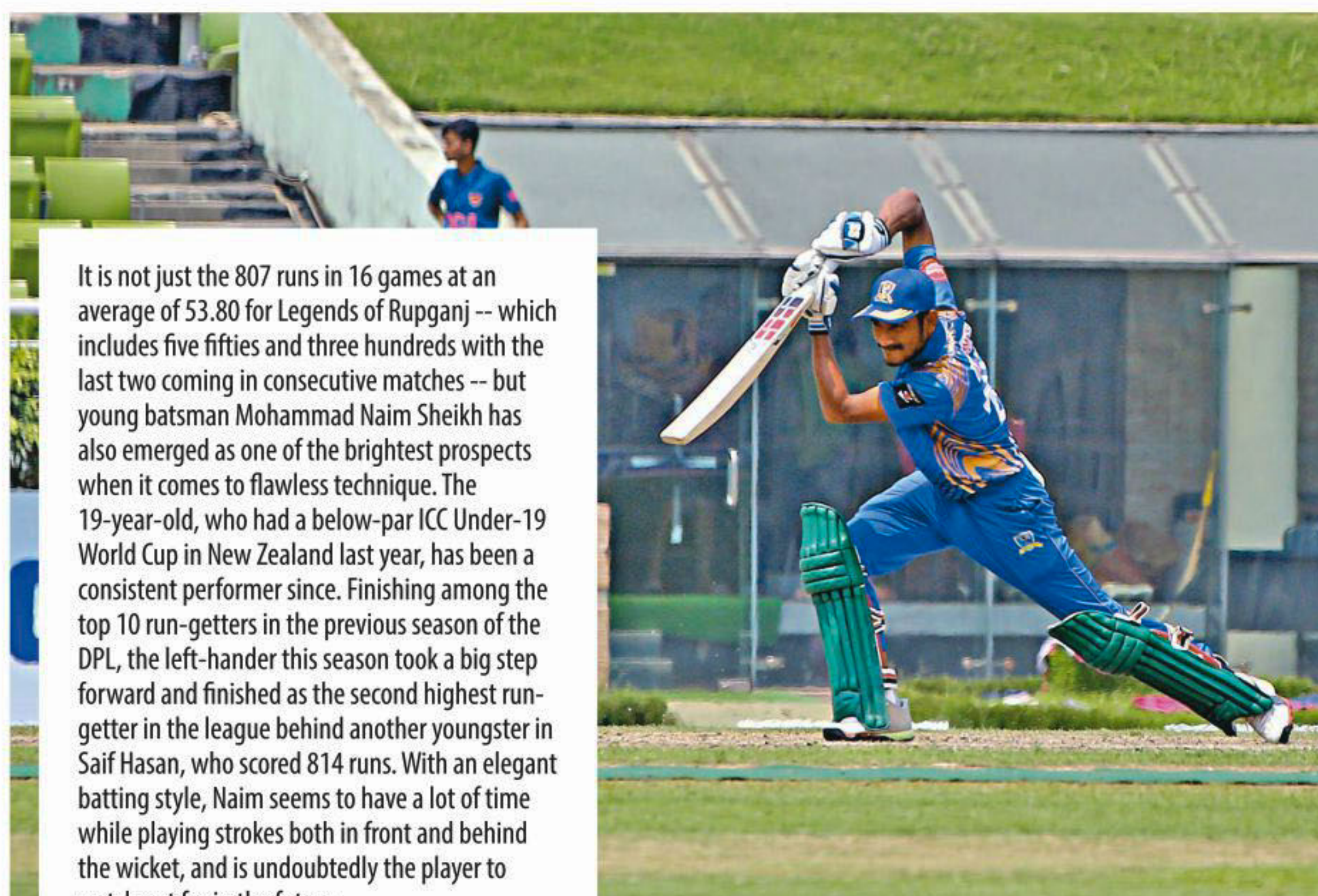
Dhoni is Chennai's top-scorer this season, with 314 runs at 104.66, striking them at a little over 137.

"The innings took me back to 2006, and maybe around that time when a young Dhoni took the scene by storm," More said. "He will definitely be a vital cog for the Indian team at the World Cup."



This is a very big tournament for us. We have got a chance to play against all the top teams in the World Cup and that is a great opportunity for Afghanistan. We have the skills to compete against the top teams as we showed in the Asia Cup. I hope we can win the big moments and who knows we could do really well. We don't have a lot of experience against the top teams but we have the talent to compete with them.

RASHID KHAN  
 On his team's chances in the World Cup while talking to the Hindustan Times.



It is not just the 807 runs in 16 games at an average of 53.80 for Legends of Rugganj -- which includes five fifties and three hundreds with the last two coming in consecutive matches -- but young batsman Mohammad Naim Sheikh has also emerged as one of the brightest prospects when it comes to flawless technique. The 19-year-old, who had a below-par ICC Under-19 World Cup in New Zealand last year, has been a consistent performer since. Finishing among the top 10 run-getters in the previous season of the DPL, the left-hander this season took a big step forward and finished as the second highest run-getter in the league behind another youngster in Saif Hasan, who scored 814 runs. With an elegant batting style, Naim seems to have a lot of time while playing strokes both in front and behind the wicket, and is undoubtedly the player to watch out for in the future.