

Parenting: the upside of downtime for cricketers

Mazhar Uddin

The coronavirus pandemic has forced everyone to remain at home with the hope of avoiding the spread of the deadly virus, which had already accounted for thousands of lives worldwide, with the number of fatalities growing by thousands every day.

Much like every other field, the sporting arena has been hit hard as all sporting events have been suspended.

Normally cricketers remain busy with their international and domestic commitments round-the-year, not getting much time to spend with their families. However, despite it not being an ideal situation, the downtime from the coronavirus outbreak has allowed national cricketers like Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah Riyad and Taijul Islam concentrate more on parenting.

Bangladesh's ODI skipper Tamim, who recently became father for the second time, informed that staying at home is allowing the bond with his family get firmer.

"Being a professional cricketer, we have to sacrifice a lot, especially in issues related to family. When things were normal, I personally did not have enough time to spend with the kids and others at home. Though the situation now [due to coronavirus] is not ideal, staying at home is giving me enough time to spend with the family and allowing the bond to get firmer," Tamim told The Daily Star.

"The day starts with running on the treadmill and then spending



Although they are staying at home, cricketers such as Mahmudullah Riyad (T), Mushfiqur Rahim and Taijul Islam are making the most of the unexpected break by spending time with their families, something that they rarely have a chance to do during their hectic daily routines and tours away from home.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

the rest of the day with family. A lot of time is also being spent watching Netflix. But having said that, this is not a normal life for any of us and I hope that the situation normalises soon and we

can get back to our usual life," the left-handed opener added.

T20 captain Mahmudullah is utilising the time by helping his son Raed with homework and other creative things.

"We are going through a very critical situation due to the coronavirus as we have to remain very careful and follow safety instructions strictly. But still life has been good in a sense that I am getting to spend a lot of time with my family, especially with my kid, doing a lot of things with him. I'm helping him with his homework and studies.

"I have not spent enough time since he started going to school. His mother always looks after those things, but now since I am home I am trying to look after those things. Drawing, painting are the other things that I am keeping my son busy with. I'm also playing games with my family members," said Mahmudullah, who also suggested everyone to read books during this idle time at home.

Taijul, too, has taken his parenting responsibilities very seriously. The left-arm spinner now plays the role of a teacher when is he not busy changing nappies of his two-year-old son Taif Zawad Bin Islam.

"To be honest I have never spent so much time with my family and kid before, so I am enjoying every bit of it. Obviously, the situation is not normal and we have to be very careful about our health and safety. But during my stay at home these days, I have decided to help my wife by looking after my son.

"Normally she is the one who looks after my child and everything else at home when I am away for cricket. My new responsibility is to look after my son's studies and also have to be a horse as my son loves to ride one. I have just started changing nappies of my son, something which I have never done before," said Taijul.

FIFA cancels all June fixtures

AFP, Paris

All international football matches scheduled for June were postponed on Friday following the first meeting of FIFA's coronavirus working group.

It was also decided to hold discussions with confederations to draw up a revised schedule for the 2022 World Cup qualifiers which have been shelved.

"The FIFA-Confederations working group... has unanimously approved a series of recommendations following its first meeting, which was organised via conference call today," said a FIFA statement.

It was also decided by the group to postpone all planned women's internationals in June.

In the aftermath of the decision to postpone the Tokyo Olympics by a year, the FIFA group proposed keeping the age eligibility rule of players born on or after January 1, 1997 and three additional players.

Lara recalls Tendulkar's 241

AGENCIES



Former West Indies batsman Brian Lara said that Sachin Tendulkar's unbeaten 241-run knock against Australia was the most disciplined and determined innings of

his Test career.

Tendulkar, who made his debut in the longest format of the game as a 16-year-old, finished his 24-year-long career as Test cricket's highest-run scorer.

"Can you imagine playing Test cricket at the age of 16 until the next 24 years. That is just unbelievable. Sachin has played some amazing innings throughout his career but none with more discipline and determination like his 241 not out against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG)," Lara said in an Instagram post.

Citing the example of Tendulkar's innings, Lara asked everyone to show discipline as the world battles COVID-19.

Sachin Tendulkar's unbeaten 241 off 436 balls at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 2004, which enabled India to post a mammoth score of 705 for seven in their first innings, was a testimony to what's another great mentioned above.

The match ended in a draw but the concentration and dedication Tendulkar showed will remain alive in the minds of the cricketing fans. In that series, Tendulkar



was struggling for form, and he decided to not play cover drive in the final Test of the series.

Sachin was determined that he won't play a single cover drive during the Sydney Test. Moreover, the Aussies had identified Sachin's shortcoming too. The bowlers tried to bowl outside the off-stump consistently to get Tendulkar. So he decided to leave all those deliveries.

The then Australia captain Steve Waugh, his bowlers, and even the commentators were left stunned as Sachin's innings displayed immense mental strength.

"To me, it was a show of incredible fortitude, mental strength discipline," Waugh said last year in an interview.

"He actually followed through and didn't play a cover-drive although he scored a double hundred," Waugh added.

Sporting activities to remain suspended

SPORTS REPORTER

State Minister for Youth and Sports Zahid Ahsan Russel yesterday issued a directive to keep the country's sporting activities suspended until the situation improves in view of the evolving coronavirus pandemic.

This directive indefinitely extends the suspension which was initially issued on March 16 with the deadline of March 31.

Following the initial directive, sporting events including top-tier football league, the Bangladesh Premier League, women's football league and cricket's 50-over domestic event, Dhaka Premier League, were suspended.

The latest directive also requested everyone to abide by the preventive measures that are being followed in Bangladesh as well as the rest of the world as the outbreak continues unabated.

Reminiscence: My first match

In these times of social distancing, we must be safe while remembering that we do not get too used to the world being at a standstill.

We were meant to go watch matches together, agree with a few of our neighbours and disagree with the rest. So, we are taking turns at The Daily Star Sport talking about our first live experience at a sports venue.

Sabbir Hossain from Mirpur, 2010



Once I sat myself down to write, I was a bit perplexed to realise I could not recall any memories of the day I watched a match live from the stadium for the very first time!

Interestingly, I grew up within the three-kilometre-radius of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. I did go to watch matches -- both ODIs and Tests, but for some mysterious reason, I could not recollect any of those memories even going deep down the memory lane. Or maybe I just cannot pull out any of those memories buried so deep down under a huge pile of dust in my mind!

However, I do remember, vividly, the memories of catching a live match on TV for the first time even though I was just a five-year-old kid at that time.



We (my family) had just moved to Dhaka, thanks to my father's job transfer. We had bought a brand new black and white TV to watch the 1998 FIFA World Cup, which was taking place in France. The match in question was between Brazil and Morocco. My father woke me up at midnight and it was then that I was first introduced to Ronaldo, 'the phenomenon'. The legendary Number 9 scored a goal at the very beginning of that game. That part is so vivid in my memory that I can still see it every time I close my eyes. It was also that night that I fell in love with sports.

Going back to what I had intended to write -- my experience of catching a live match from a sports venue. I went to watch many matches but maybe nothing extraordinary happened in those matches that could leave a lasting print in my memory. But let me share the story of the match that had increased my eagerness tenfold to keep going to the stadium repeatedly.

The year was 2010 and I was a college student back then. New Zealand were touring Bangladesh.

Rubel Hossain, in particular, was in magnificent form.

The Kiwis required eight from the final over and the Tigers needed to scalp the visitors' final wicket. You could cut the tension with a knife seeing Rubel stepping up to bowl the final over, with Kyle Mills on strike. My friends and I were silent, just praying for Bangladesh to win.

It did not take long for the Almighty to heed to our prayers. Rubel uprooted Mills' stumps with an inch-perfect yorker off the third delivery of the over and the whole stadium erupted with joy. Only one word could be heard -- 'Banglawash' -- as well all joined in the chants.

What I witnessed that day was something indescribable. I remember how we jumped with joy the moment Mills was dismissed. Everyone in the crowd, who had just seen each other for the first time and spent a day watching the game, hugged one another and celebrated the victory. On my way back, I found myself to be a part of the celebratory procession. Such a scenic celebration it was!

Tajikistan's season starts despite fears

AFP, Dushanbe



Tajikistan's domestic football season kicked off Saturday, as leagues around the world remained suspended to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The Super Cup game heralding the beginning of the football season took place behind closed doors, and saw perennial domestic champions FC Istiklol come from behind to beat FC Khujand 2-1 in the capital Dushanbe.

Tajikistan, a poor Central Asian state of 9 million people, has yet to declare a single infection from COVID-19.

Strongman leader Emomali Rakhmon was seen posing with dozens of young women clad in traditional garb at a time when leaders the world over were advocating social distancing.

Belarus, another ex-Soviet country, remains the outlier in Europe, and its league

has attracted unprecedented international attention since it began with fans attending games last month.

The game itself threatened to return an upset before Istiklol, a club founded by Rakhmon's son Rustam Emomali, the current mayor of the capital Dushanbe, converted their dominance into goals and overturned an early Khujand lead.

It ended in hugs and handshakes all round as FC Istiklol players collected their winners' medals and lifted the Super Cup trophy in an otherwise empty stadium.

Tajikistan is one of just two former Soviet countries that have not reported a single case of the coronavirus.

The other, reclusive Turkmenistan, has already announced the suspension of its domestic league.

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov made his first mention of the coronavirus in comments reported Saturday by state media.



Tajikistan began its domestic season with the Super Cup yesterday despite concerns about coronavirus and domestic champions FC Istiklol came from behind to beat FC Khujand 2-1 in a closed-doors encounter in Dushanbe.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Women booters make COVID-19 appeal

SPORTS REPORTER

Three star players of the Bangladesh women's national team -- Sabina Khatun, Maria Manda and Akhi Khatun -- yesterday urged people worldwide to take measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 through video messages. The messages are supposed to be put on media platform of Asian Football Confederation.

In her message, Sabina, the long-serving captain and prolific striker of the national team, said: "Please join us on our mission to break the chain."

Coronavirus is spreading around the world and we must stop this together. The steps are simple: wash your hands, maintain social distance, and if necessary, stay at home. Let's do this to keep our family and friends safe and healthy."

Maria, captain of the under-16 team and a key midfielder of the senior team, and Akhi, another important player of both teams, made the same appeal through different video messages.