

It was just by a small amount. If someone can break that, I'll come back and do it again. This tops off the season. It was a long kick, a bit difficult, the wind didn't help, but yes, it's the cherry on top of an amazing year with Manchester City.

Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson after breaking the record for longest football drop kick in 2018. He recorded 75.35 m (247 ft 2 in).



What began in the 1950s as an idea about a book of facts to aid in settling casual arguments in pubs or tongs, over time the Guinness World Records (GWR), formerly known as the Guinness Book of World Records, became a global brand that showcases the ever-expanding limit of human capabilities. Although GWR verifies and documents all kinds of incredible records from the sporting sphere, others are often amusing. Take for example the most hugs in a minute (87) by Satoru Shibata of Japan or the most paper planes caught by mouth in a minute (17) by Ashrita Furman of the USA. However, each title demands a strict set of criteria that an aspiring record-holder must fulfil before preparing and executing to break an established record or to introduce a brand new one. In any case, the attempted record has to be universal in nature, i.e. not being country specific, from being verifiable through extensive review process to being breakable, i.e. being open to challenge. With GWR continuing to positively impact lives all over the world, The Daily Star's Mostafa Shabuj and Ashfaq Ul Mushfiq spoke to five Bangladeshis who made their mark in recent times.

Amateur cyclists make the grade

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Bangladeshi cyclists Drabir Alam, Tanvir Ahmed, Mohammad Alauddin and Rakibul Islam, better known as Team BDC, claimed the Guinness World Record greatest distance cycled in 48 hours by a relay team by cycling 1670.334 km last month.

The event was held in sub-par conditions in the aftermath of cyclone Jawad in Dhaka's Purbachal area from December 8-10 in collaboration with Dabur Bangladesh.

Drabir, one of the four cyclists said: "We were preparing for this event for the past year-and-a-half. When we applied for the record, the Guinness authorities gave us very strict instructions. But the problem was finding a safe road where we could cycle for 48 hours."

"We selected a block in Purbachal (length more than 1,000 meters) and arranged food and

accommodation for the 150 people who were involved in the event."

Rakib expanded on the technicalities: "We had to take video footage of the entire 48 hours from six cameras. We had certificates signed by thirteen witnesses, a surveyor's report, numerous photos, GPS data and more and sent it to the Guinness authorities which they scrutinised for a month before finalising the record."



Skipping towards the next hurdle

Bozlor Rahman was perplexed, failing to fathom what special attention his teenage son hoped to garner by skipping rope all day. His confusion turned to joy on January 2, 2021, when Rasel Islam claimed two Guinness World Records.

The first record was for most skips in 30 seconds on one foot (145 skips) and the other for most skips in one minute (258 skips). That second record has already fallen, but the former still stands.

Rasel, who has been skipping rope since 2017, was undeterred by the attitude of locals, who saw it as a 'girl's sport' and was determined to correct their presumption.

But the journey was not smooth. After disqualification from a national skipping competition in 2017, Rasel trained for six months to improve his hand-eye coordination and muscle endurance before going for the records.

"Since I started practicing for 2-4 hours a day across categories, I grew more determined to do something worthy, but I was unsure of my goals. I found out through the internet that I could attempt to go for a Guinness World Record," Rasel said.

"I ran into problems when I went to their website to fill up the application. Their criteria and language confused me. Fortunately, I found another person who holds a skipping record. He helped me complete the procedures."

Rasel has now set a new goal: to participate in the Junior Olympics, which is going to be held in USA this year.



'I break records for fun'



Ashraful Islam, commonly known as "Jhohan Freestyle", is a young boy from Chattogram who broke four Guinness World Records in freestyle football. He spoke to The Daily Star about how he got started on his record-setting journey and his ambitions for the future.

The Daily Star (DS): When did you first start practicing freestyle?

Jhohan Freestyle (JF): I could do a lot of football tricks, but I never knew there was something called freestyle in 2013. I saw Super Syed [Muktasid] and reached out to him and he has inspired me ever since. Finally, I started freestyle in March 2016.

DS: In a world where most people are into football, what made you devote yourself to freestyle?

JF: Sunshine, rain or even in a storm, I would always be on the field playing football.

It was surreal. However, football requires you to be physically fit and strong, which was a big challenge for me as a skinny person. But in freestyle football,

you can be skinny and still be really good at it. All you need is consistency and willpower to go out every day and train your heart out.

DS: Did you ever think you would be a record holder? Let alone hold four?

JF: No! One day I was scrolling through social media and saw a video of an Indian freestyler, Archis Patel. He did a 101 side head stalls in one minute. So I gave it a try and I did 105 in one minute on my first attempt. So I reached out to Archis, he helped me with the application process, and I finally had my first world record.

DS: What challenges and obstacles have you faced on the path to these world records?

JF: Getting injured and overcoming it was the toughest challenge as well as one of my biggest fears.

DS: What inspires you and keeps you going for one record after the other?

JF: Honestly, I never had the drive to break records. My dream was to develop my freestyle. I try to set a high standard and then work hard consistently to reach that level. People like Syed Muktasid and Tom Folan drive me to develop. I break records for fun.

Muntakim makes a mark 'around the moon'

"The walls in our living room turned white because he would practice football there," Shahinur Akter said as she reflected on Muntakim Ul Islam's dedication after her son forged another freestyle world record on June 21.

The official record is for 'most 'around the moon' football control tricks in 30 seconds', of which he recorded 27. That means he moved a football around his neck 27 times in 30 second, breaking the previous record of 25 times in 30 seconds.

"I have been practicing since 2020. I learned from YouTube. I learned from Facebook later that there was a chance for a world record in the 'around the moon' category. Before applying, I practiced for six months, two to three hours a day," 16-year-old Muntakim said.

"I applied in June last year and the Guinness authorities scrutinised my videos and photographic evidence before informing me about my record in November last year," the teenager, who lives in Chattogram's Agrabad locality, added.

Shahinur also shared how her son's passion had given them relief amid lockdowns and the fear of Covid-19.

"When Covid-19 started and educational institutions were getting shut down, we were worried about Muntakim. But he proved he could utilise his time by studying and practicing football. We have no playground near our house, my son used to practice in the drawing room, his bedroom and on the roof. I wish my son will prove a good human being too in the near future," she added.



Recognition through balancing act

Monirul Islam, a 22-year-old student at the Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, holds two Guinness World Records for balancing objects on the back of his hand.

On June 3, 2021, Monirul secured the record for most pencils balanced on the back of the hand for 30 seconds, by steadying an impressive 50 pencils, four more than the previous record. He then secured another record on October 15, 2021, this time for balancing 13 tennis balls on the back of the hand.

"I always wanted people to recognise me for my achievements. So I searched online for something worthy that I could do," Monirul said.

"I represented my country to the rest of the world through these two records and people in my village in Bhairab hung big posters around with my photo. Now I am preparing for some new records."

