

Beyond the boundaries of cricket



Shaheda Akter Ripa attributes her success to her supportive family and peers.

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Be it with the swing of a bat or the hiss of an arrow as it pierces the wind – sports demands undaunted dedication, strenuous physical fitness, and unparalleled solidarity.

Alongside cricket, the most popular sport in Bangladesh bar none, young sportspersons in other disciplines have made strides with their noticeable achievements and praiseworthy performances on both national and international platforms.

Celebrating their journeys, we talked to some of the most prominent athletes in the country about their unconventional choices, struggles, and how they carved their path to glory.

“Now, people only see my profession and not my gender” - Shaheda Akter Ripa, Footballer

When the Bangladesh women's football team defeated Sri Lanka in the final group match of the SAFF U-19 Women's Championship last year, Shaheda Akter Ripa was at the forefront. Her hat-tricks in the tournament compelled all spectators to take their hats off to her talent.

Starting her journey with football at a young age, Ripa was always supported by her loved ones. “Growing up, I never felt the urge to succumb to gender roles that are created by our society. I was treated as an individual who loved football, by my family and friends,” she smiles.

Ripa believes in achievements but also tends to avoid the pride that comes with success. “Achievements are always empowering, but we often forget that one victory does not last for a lifetime,” she asserts.



▲ Fatima Mujib urges organisations like BKSP to come forward and support fencing.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

She believes in keeping up when it comes to performance, while also treasuring qualities like modesty, humility, and honesty. “While on our way up, we often forget the strenuous effort we had to put in to reach this stage. However, we should never forsake qualities that make us humane,” she mentions.

Ripa also spoke about how stereotypical views on women's dress

code for football are now altering with time. “My seniors were subjected to a lot of criticism for playing in shorts, as many seem to think it is culturally inappropriate for women to dress in such a manner. Nevertheless, with time, much awareness was raised in this regard and now, people only see my profession and not my gender,” shares a content and confident Ripa. “We should be thanking our predecessors for bringing about this positive change.”

“The more promising players we train, the more honour we bring to our country” - Fatima Mujib, Fencer

“I always wanted to pursue a career in sports and fencing, being an indoor game, very much appealed to me as I found it to be more suitable for my persona.”

Fatima Mujib's family always motivated her, as she started to look towards practising fencing professionally. “After losing my mother at a tender age, followed by my sister's marriage, I grew up under the loving guidance of my father and brothers,” she shares. “My brother inspired me and guided me, as I started fencing.”

Growing up with the sword, Fatima started to fall in love with the sport. “Gradually, my training started to grow intense,” mentions Fatima, who won the first-ever gold medal for Bangladesh at the 13th SA Games, which took place in Kathmandu. “The win at this event brought about more attention towards us fencers.”

Alongside physical fitness, Fatima also believes that fencing helps improve one's thinking capacity, and makes them more prompt and alert.

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