

Nawaz wants to take positives back to SL

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka's assistant coach Naved Nawaz said his team wants to bring good tidings from Bangladesh to his country, which is going through severe economic and political crisis.

The former head coach of Bangladesh's U-19 World Cup winning team is currently touring Bangladesh for a two-match Test series between the two nations.

When asked about the political and economic turmoil in Sri Lanka, Nawaz said he hoped they could take some good news back.

"You can't see many positives at the moment. It will be very good for us to take some positives back home. We want to keep inspiring the young generation of the country."

"I think it is a great opportunity to put our name in international news. Playing at home, we have a good white-ball team as well. So hopefully the boys will do well and bring



Bangladesh batter Tamim Iqbal (L) has a friendly chat with batting coach Jamie Siddons after they walk back following a training session at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday ahead of the two-match Test series against Sri Lanka.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



Shanto looking to 'set a high standard'

Having witnessed the ups and downs at the budding stage of his career, Najmul Hossain Shanto has been able to show a fair bit of consistency for Bangladesh in Test format recently. The 23-year-old, who is expected to play a vital role on the Tigers' batting front in the upcoming two-match Test series against Sri Lanka, shared how he views his game as he spoke to The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin during an exclusive interview, the excerpts of which are as follows:

DS: You have managed to come back and showed glimpses of your potential in Tests recently despite the early setbacks. How do you see your role as a batter?

Najmul Hossain (NH): Alhamdulillah, I'm enjoying my cricket. But initially in my career, I struggled since I could only play just three Tests in the first three years. Since then, I recovered and was able to perform in the last ten to twelve Tests consistently.

I won't say that I'm playing really well but I feel that I can play a lot better, considering my ability to score big knocks. I hope to get the opportunity to regularly play more matches in the coming days, so that my performance graph improves.

DS: What areas have you worked on as a batter after being dropped from the national team?

NH: Well, my main challenge was to remain mentally strong. I used to visualise my batting and tried to remain honest to rectify my mistakes. Also, I repeatedly worked on both the technical and mental side of it. I never took it as pressure but thought of utilising my next opportunity to the fullest.

I've worked with our coach Sohel Islam after I was unable to perform in the T20 format and had a tough time in the first two or three editions of the BPL. He motivated me and [Khaled Mahmud] Sujon sir was



always there to guide me as a player.

DS: Do you favour the Test format or do you aim to evolve as a cross-format batter?

NH: Obviously my focus at the moment is completely on the upcoming Sri Lanka Test series. The best thing is that I'm also in the ODI squad although I'm yet to get an opportunity to play.

However, when I do, I think my confidence in the longest format would help me to flourish in the white-ball cricket. Fortunately, I've been among runs

consistently in the domestic circuit of late.

DS: As a number three batter, how do you plan to readjust to conditions at home against Sri Lanka following the seaming and bouncy tracks in South Africa?

NH: Test cricket is tough cricket, where you need to be on your toes and keep improving every day. As a number three batter, it's important to quickly adapt to different conditions.

During training sessions, we try to simulate scenarios while keeping the conditions and the nature of surfaces in mind. Against Sri Lanka, I think spin could be a big challenge, so I've begun working on it already. Since I'm playing Tests regularly, it's now gradually becoming easier for me to cope.

DS: A question mark always hovers over the temperament of our batters, especially in Test cricket.

NH: Since I bat at number three, there are occasions where we lose a few early wickets but I generally don't come out of my natural game. I stick to my game plan but yes, at times you need to be patient and buy your time as a batter according to what situation demands.

They say the best batter on the team should bat at number three so I'm looking to set such a high standard for myself.

Haaland Man City-bound?

REUTERS, Berlin

Borussia Dortmund top striker Erling Haaland is close to sealing a transfer deal with Manchester City and a move to the lucrative Premier League, several German media reported on Monday.

Haaland is among the hottest transfer prospects this summer with the Norwegian 21-year-old having scored 61 goals in 66 league games for the Ruhr valley club since joining them in early 2020.

Several top clubs including Real Madrid, Paris St Germain and City, among others, have been linked with the player at times.

Sky Germany, which holds the rights to the Bundesliga, reported on Monday the player had informed the club of his wish to leave and that Manchester City had contacted the club over the player's release clause.

Several other media, including Bild newspaper and Kicker magazine, citing unnamed sources, also said a deal could be finalised in the coming days.

The club did not comment on the matter on Monday.



Ruman back in form

SPORTS REPORTER

Ruman Sana moved into the final of men's recurve individual event for the first time in nearly three years and after nine international tournaments when the ace archer beat Sadikov Amir Khan of Uzbekistan in the semifinal of Asia Cup Stage-2 in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq yesterday.

Though Ruman dropped sets in the third round and the quarterfinals, the archer from Khulna did not give Amir Khan no space in the semifinal, beating the Uzbek opponent 28-27, 29-28 and 28-26 to set up the final clash against Chauhan Mrinal of India on May 11.

Ruman, who also qualified for men's recurve team event in the ongoing tournament, last played in a recurve individual final in Archery Asia Cup Stage-3 in September, 2019 where he eventually won gold with a 7-3 sets victory over Zhenqi Shi of China in the Philippines.

"I feel really happy and can't express myself in word as I have advanced to the final after a long time," Ruman said. "Though I have played in final of team events a few times, this is the first time I reached individual final after two years [actually 33 months] and it is a big achievement for me."

"I think my experience is better than the other finalist [Chouhan Mrinal] and it depends how I perform on the day, but I will try to give my best to win the gold medal," Ruman said.



The future of tennis is here

REUTERS

Men's tennis has waited more than a decade for a player to emerge with the game and mental fortitude to shake up the 'Big Three' establishment.

On Sunday, Carlos Alcaraz signalled the wait may finally be over as he captured his fourth ATP title of the season at the Madrid Open and affirmed himself as a genuine threat for the French Open title.

The 19-year-old Spaniard thrashed Alex Zverev 6-3, 6-1 in the claycourt final, having already toppled 'Big Three' titans Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic in a watershed week.

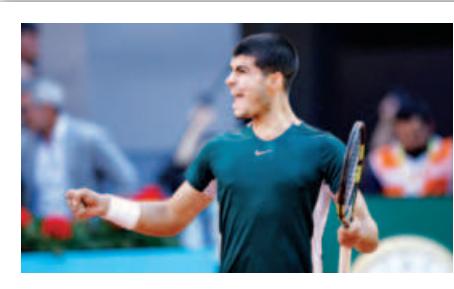
If Alcaraz is the future of men's tennis, the future is already here.

"Right now I'm trying to just assimilate everything that I am going through," Alcaraz told reporters.

"This year ... people are going to think that I'm going to be one of the favourites to win Roland Garros. I don't have it as tension, I have it as a motivation."

"I really look forward to going to Paris, to fight for the Grand Slam, and I am really looking forward to show my great level in a Grand Slam, too."

Outside the top 100 a year ago, Alcaraz is now ranked sixth, having torn up the record books this season. In a few dizzying days in



Madrid, he set another slew of benchmarks.

He became the tournament's youngest champion and the first player to beat both 21-times Grand Slam champion Nadal and world number one Djokovic at the same claycourt event.

Having won at Miami a month ago, Alcaraz is now the second youngest player to win two ATP 1000 titles, headed only by compatriot Nadal, who was 18 when he captured his second.

While Alcaraz would appear a natural successor to his countryman Nadal he regards his game more closely aligned with that of Roger Federer, the other member of the 'Big Three'.

It means a commitment to his attacking weapons

but also a faith in his defence and ability to problem-solve through tricky situations.

The world's top players have bought into the Alcaraz hype, with a string of them, including Zverev, describing him as "the best player in the world right now", less than two weeks out from the French Open.

Alcaraz, however, has shown only humility and stuck to a mantra of learning from his defeats. "Look at Rafa, Djokovic, Federer, all of them improve and they have things to improve," said Alcaraz.

"That's why they are so good, and that's why they are so much time up there, because they don't stop. That's what I want to do."



AC Milan midfielder Sandro Tonali races in celebration after scoring one of his two goals during a 3-1 win against Hellas Verona in their Serie A fixture at the Stadio Marc'Antonio Bentegodi on Sunday. The brace from the birthday boy moved Milan one step closer to their first Serie A title in 11 years as they lead city rivals Inter Milan by two points, with two rounds of matches left.

PHOTO: REUTERS