



## 'If Bangladesh win a tournament, it will be in T20 format'

**Bangladesh's cricket has come a long way since the country featured in its first Asia Cup 36 years ago in Sri Lanka. As the Tigers prepare for yet another Asia Cup, the 15th edition of the continental tournament which is set to be held in the UAE, The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin got in touch with former Bangladesh captain and member of the Tigers' first Asia Cup squad Roquibul Hassan. During an exclusive interview, Roquibul shared his Asia Cup memories and also talked about Bangladesh's chances in the upcoming edition of the tournament. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:**

**The Daily Star (DS):** You were part of Bangladesh's maiden Asia Cup campaign in 1986. Can you share your experience?

**Roquibul Hassan (RH):** There are two big turning points in Bangladesh cricket. One is when we won the ICC Trophy in 1997 and the other is our first Asia Cup campaign in 1986 in Sri Lanka. As a cricketing nation, playing the Asia Cup was a big moment for our cricket as we were playing against top sides from the subcontinent. It was also a big opportunity for the players to play in a major event. To be honest, nobody expected us to win in that tournament since there were teams like Pakistan, led by Imran Khan, and Arjuna Ranatunga's Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, India did not play in that tournament due to some political issues. Interestingly, I also retired from cricket the same year.

**DS:** There must have been a lot of limitations when Bangladesh went to Sri Lanka to take part in the Asia Cup in 1986. Can you shed light on those?

**RH:** Talking about tactical limitations, I must say we had no experience of playing against top teams. We did play in the ICC Trophy but that was against associate nations. But, I must admit that we lacked the experience of playing



against top Test-playing nations, and that too in a tournament like Asia Cup where the stakes were sky-high. When it comes to the financial aspect, we were in a hand-to-mouth situation as we used to get a small daily allowance. I remember we had to travel to Sri Lanka via Mumbai where we had to stay a night during transit.

**DS:** Any interesting stories that you can share from that tournament?

**RH:** There is one that I must tell. It's about the great Javed Miandad who was known for creating controversies back then. Before the start of the Asia Cup, Pakistan were playing a Test series against Sri Lanka and Miandad got involved in a controversy. Someone from the stand may have said something to him during that Test match and Miandad, after being dismissed, went straight to the gallery to hit that supporter. The incident got

picked up by TV broadcasters and since then, Miandad received a lot of stick from supporters every time he went out in public in Sri Lanka. The situation escalated to a level that he couldn't even leave the team hotel. After he had asked me to help him out, I advised him to do something that could work as damage control. I told him what he could do is to apologise to the fans the next time he went out to bat. Interestingly, he did it during the game

between Bangladesh and Pakistan and the supporters cheered for us because of Miandad's incident. He did just as I asked him to as he removed his gloves and held his hands out together in a gesture of apology to the fans. Miandad's gesture was praised by the media the next day and it was something memorable.

**DS:** What do you think are Bangladesh's chances in the upcoming tournament?

**RH:** As this edition of the Asia Cup will be played in the T20 format, I think Bangladesh will be the underdogs considering the strength of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and even Afghanistan, who have been doing so well in this format. The Sharjah Cricket Stadium is relatively small and even though many people say that we do not have power hitters in our squad, it is not just about generating power as skills is equally important to clear the ground. If you look at Afif Hossain or Liton Das -- they have the ability to hit the ball miles. It's all about timing and technique and I think our main disadvantage is the inability to rotate strike in the middle overs.

**DS:** Are you disappointed that the Bangladesh men's cricket team are yet to clinch the Asia Cup title?

**RH:** Actually, I am [disappointed]. We should have won at least one title. I believe, if Bangladesh win a cricket tournament, it will be in T20 format. It is such a format in which any team can emerge as the winner on a given day. Our Under-19 team have won the World Cup and our women's team also clinched the Asia Cup [in 2018], so we do have some achievements. But it is time for the men's team to bring one [trophy] for us.

**VENUES**



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Sharjah Cricket Stadium has undergone numerous upgrades since it was built in the early 1980s to become the modern facility it is now. The first international matches played here were part of the Asia Cup in April 1984.  
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**ESTABLISHED:** 1982  
**CAPACITY:** 27000  
**FIRST T20I:** Afghanistan vs Scotland (Mar 3, 2013)

**DUBAI INTERNATIONAL STADIUM**  
Dubai Sports City is now well-known internationally for sports thanks to the Dubai International Stadium.  
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**ESTABLISHED:** 2009  
**CAPACITY:** 25000  
**FIRST T20I:** Australia vs Pakistan (May 7, 2009)

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