

Shaken but far from shattered

SABBIR HOSSAIN

Every other day in the country, a horrific road accident ruins a family or any individual's dream, and such an unfortunate incident in 2015 had left Bangladesh cricketer Nihaduzzaman to the point of no return. Although the then 16-year-old was lucky enough to survive, his career was on the brink of being nipped in the bud.

"The first accident happened in 2015. I felt the urge to return to the field once the doctor pulled the stitches off my head," Nihaduzzaman told The Daily Star.

Nihaduzzaman was a member of Bangladesh's ICC U-19 World Cup team in 2014. While the lanky left-arm spinner is still having to prove himself on the domestic circuit, 10 out of 14 players from that squad have already made their international debut for Bangladesh, and the likes of Liton Das, Mustafizur Rahman and Mehedi Hasan Miraz are integral part of the Tigers' setup at present.

"Before the accident, I was called up for the High Performance (HP) camp and was optimistic about the future."

Nihaduzzaman's recovery was always going to be a long, agonising one but shortly after returning to the pitch in 2017, he broke his hand and this time he had feared the worst.

"It proved difficult for me to lift a two-kilo object even three months after the [second] accident. I could not even rotate my wrist, let alone bowl. I felt as if I would never be able to bowl again. The fracture eventually healed but my hand lacked power," he revisited.

Nihaduzzaman's sheer will, however, enabled him to ride past the pessimism surrounding the possibility of ever returning to his former self as playing opportunities got scarcer. This time in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), the cricketer from Rajshahi garnered serious attention.

"I was able to return to the field bit by bit and resumed bowling. But the condition of my hand forced me to change my [bowling] action. It was a struggle that I will not be able to express in words now," the 24-year-old recollected.

Nihaduzzaman with his revamped action had scalped 12 wickets in nine BPL matches this season, boasting an impressive average of 17.66 and an economy of 7.22 for Chattogram Challengers.

He credited Sohel Islam, local spin bowling coach, for his turnaround.



With a spot in the final of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) at stake, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza proved again that he is a big-game player as the Sylhet skipper chose to bat at No. 3 – ahead of the likes of Mushfiqur Rahim, Ryan Burl, Thisara Perera – and scored a vital 16-ball 28 in the do-or-die second Qualifier against Rangpur Riders at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

India to host SAFF C'ship in June

SPORTS REPORTER

India will host the upcoming SAFF Championship in June, it was announced yesterday after the executive committee of the South Asian Football Federation signed over the marketing and commercial rights to Dubai-based marketing company Sports Partner International for the next four editions of the regional football extravaganza.

"We have approved the tender from Sports Partner International for four editions up to 2029. Although Nepal launched a bid to host the next SAFF Championship, the first tournament during will be held in India in line with the

marketing company's conditions," SAFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal told The Daily Star after a virtual meeting.

Helal also informed that All Indian Football Federation (AIFF) would apprise them of venues and dates by March 10.

The last edition of SAFF Championship was held in the Maldives in 2021 after India played host in 2015.

The marketing company has also proposed holding the 2025 SAFF Championship on a home-and-away basis, which will see each team play three home matches and three away matches in a one-month period.

"India has objected to the home-and-away format because it will take a long time, but the marketing company believes there is still room for discussion," Helal added. "If we don't reach a consensus in the coming days, the SAFF Championship will be held in a centralised venue like this time."

The SAFF general secretary also informed that the marketing company will provide SAFF with 1 million dollars for the 2023 SAFF Championship and 1.5 million dollars from 2025 edition, subject to the approval of the new format.

Helal also informed that the SAFF Congress would take place on May 6 April 29 in Dhaka.

Sayed attends BHF meeting after three-and-a-half-year hiatus

SPORTS REPORTER

AKM Mominul Haque Sayeed, the general secretary of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF), suddenly appeared at a meeting of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation's (BHF) executive committee today after a three-and-a-half-year hiatus following his alleged involvement in the 'casino scandal' in 2019.

Sayed fled aboard after the crackdown in Motijheel's Club Para in September of 2019 and had not attended any BHF executive committee meetings since. In February, 2022, on the back of a 27-month investigation, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed a charge sheet against the former Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) councillor for amassing about Tk 5.60 crore from undisclosed avenues of income.

Sayed joined the meeting at the last moment. When asked about his sudden appearance, BHF president and Air Chief Marshall Shaikh Abdul Hannan said: "If there is no hindrance, he [Sayeed] will be included in the general process. If there is no restriction in principal, then I there are restrictions from my side. The vice presidents and other members will take the appropriate decision."

The BHF president added in a separate response: "He can assume responsibility as general secretary if there are no barriers."

However, one of BHF executive member, seeking anonymity, informed that the BFF executive committee had released Sayeed from his responsibilities before in line with the constitution due to his continued absence from meetings and had communicated that decision to the National Sports Council.

Another source, preferring to remain unnamed, said that Sayeed was going to manage a sponsor worth Tk 50 lakh for the youth hockey team's training camp ahead of Asian Youth Championship and that Sayeed was likely to represent the BHF in the upcoming Asian Hockey Federation congress.

The meeting also decided to continue the training of the youth team under the guidance of local coach Mamunur Rashid and Hedayetullah Razib.



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