

Marufa nominated for 2023 Emerging Cricketer award

ICC

Bangladesh women's cricket team pacer, Marufa Akter, was a breakout cricketer in the previous year and her impressive efforts saw her making it among the nominees for the ICC Women's Emerging Cricketer of the Year award.

Marufa had only played a handful of international matches prior to February's ICC Women's T20 World Cup, but the teenager made an instant impression in her first major ICC tournament.

The right-arter caused a major scare in Sri Lanka's batting order as she picked up two wickets in consecutive balls and three for the match.

Marufa then got the prized scalp of Beth Mooney in her next match at the T20 World Cup when taking on powerhouse Australia, before finishing the tournament with a total of four wickets and a tidy economy rate of 6.31.

The 19-year-old seamer produced an even more impressive performance when bowling her team to victory with a career best figures of 4/29 in the first ODI against India in Mirpur in July.

Alongside Marufa, the other nominees for the Emerging Cricketer's award are Australia's Phoebe Litchfield, England's Lauren Bell, and Darcey Carter of Scotland.



India pacer Mohammed Siraj celebrates after dismissing South Africa's Kyle Verreynne during his career-best figures of 15 for six as the hosts were bundled out for 55 runs in the first innings of the first Test at Newlands in Cape Town yesterday. Siraj, however, did not have a memorable outing with the bat as he was run out for a duck, with India being all out for 153 runs. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ancelotti keen to stay at Real beyond 2026

REUTERS

Carlo Ancelotti said he wanted to remain at Real Madrid beyond 2026 after the Italian inked a two-year contract extension with the club.

The 64-year-old's previous contract was due to expire at the end of June.

"My contract was up on June 30. The club has decided to do it now because they're happy with our work," Ancelotti told reporters on Tuesday ahead of a home game against Mallorca.

"I don't know if it will be my last spell as a coach. I don't know what will happen once I finish here. I might still be here in 2026, depending on how successful I am.

"I'd like to be Madrid coach until 2026, and hopefully I can continue to be here in 2027 and 2028 because I want to stay here."

Prior to signing the extension, Ancelotti had been linked with a move to Brazil's national team, with ex-Brazilian FA (CBF) president Ednaldo Rodrigues having said he was the preferred candidate.

'Important to utilise opportunities provided'

The arrival of **Rishad Hossain** may as well provide the Bangladesh team management, which has been longing for a regular leg-spinner for decades, a sigh of relief after the 21-year-old was able to show promise in the recently-concluded white ball series against New Zealand. Rishad's knack for chipping in with crucial wickets, complimented only by his ability to contain runs, was on display against the Kiwis. During a candid conversation with **Mazhar Uddin of The Daily Star**, the shy leggie spoke about his bowling, future plans among other topics. The excerpts of the interview are given below:



The Daily Star (DS): How do you think things went for you in the New Zealand series?

Rishad Hossain (RH): Alhamdulillah, it went very well for me as I was able to play with freedom which was very important. This tour will give me a lot of confidence going forward and I have realised how to cope with pressure situations. I will not say I did really well but this tour will certainly help me as a cricketer.

DS: Does the team management and coach provide you the freedom?

RH: Absolutely, I got a lot of support from the team management and also from the coach. The coach [Chandika Hathurusingha] motivated me a lot and always provided me the confidence and said that I should express myself out there in the middle. He told me not to worry about anything else. Our teammates and captain also backed me and I always felt

like a vital member of the team which allowed me to play freely.

DS: What is the strength of your bowling?

RH: I think my main strength is to bowl at the right line and length and remain consistent, which, at times, can be difficult for a legspinner. I do not want the tag of a bowler who could only contain runs or pick wickets, so, I always try to bowl according to the plan of the team and fulfill the role given by the team. I think I have an advantage as my height allows me to get that extra purchase from the surface. At the same time, I am also working on my googly, flipper, and how to get the turn when it's offered by the surface.

DS: Leg spinners usually do not get enough opportunities to play matches in domestic circuits in Bangladesh. Do you think things will change for you after this

tour?

RH: Definitely, but I have previously said that it is the player who needs to create opportunities for himself whether you are a leg spinner, batter, or a pacer as no one will spoon-feed you. So, it is important how you utilise the opportunity whenever it is there and I am ready to take the challenge. Yes, if I play more matches in domestic cricket, it will certainly help me gain experience and match sense.

DS: Since leg-spin is a tough art, can you share your story of becoming a leg-spinner?

RH: I liked spinning the ball since childhood and from then on, I always wanted to become a leg spinner. As you mentioned leg-spin is a tough art, so, it has always been a learning process for me. I was always fascinated whenever I saw leg-spinners in international cricket. I started

bowling under my childhood coach [Arman Ali] Monu bhai and nowadays I am working with [Abu Sayem] Mehedi sir who is a coach in the BKSP. Whenever I am mentally down or face any problem, I can share everything with them.

DS: Do you want to become an all-format bowler?

RH: As a cricketer, it is a dream to represent your country in all forms of cricket whether it is T20, ODI, or Test. But since we have the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) coming up, I would want to focus on that for now and perform.

DS: How did it go for you after the age-level days?

RH: When I was dropped from the Bangladesh Under-19 World Cup squad (2020), I felt that if I got disappointed now then it would only pull me downwards. Yes, it was tough but I kept my composure and waited for the opportunities.

DS: Who is your favourite bowler?

RH: I like Ish Sodhi. But it is not that I follow him or copy him. It's just that I like his style of bowling.

DS: Did things change after you returned to your hometown in Nilphamari after this tour compared to how things were before?

RH: Yes, now I can not roam around like I used to in the past as people gather around me, especially after this tour. I was felicitated at the airport [by Nazrul Sriti Cricket Academy, Niphamari] when I returned home and it feels good.

Int'l standard pitches expected in BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

The grounds committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) intends to prepare ICC-event standard playing surfaces for the upcoming 10th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), beginning January 19.

Mahbub Anam, BCB director and ground committee chairman, is confident that BCB's current team under Tony Hemming's guidance is capable enough to prepare pitches in line with ICC standards ahead of the T20 World Cup, to be staged in the Caribbean islands and the USA in June.

"T20 is a game for batters, so we would want a lot of runs. We will try to prepare wickets similar to the ones that are prepared at ICC events, keeping in mind the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup," Anam told reporters yesterday.

Anam and Roquibul Hasan, BPL technical committee chairman, met with the venue managers and curators at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday to convey their demand regarding batting friendly pitches for the country's lone franchise-based T20 tournament.

"We have got this BPL in the right time as players will be able to hone their skills ahead of the World Cup. We have tried to relay that information to them [venue managers and curators], so that the wickets are maximum batting-friendly this time around, resulting in big totals," said Roquibul.

"We saw runs scored in the last tournament but in one or two instances when runs weren't being scored, we had questions. It was because of three different reasons – wickets, batters' failures, and bowlers doing well. We have addressed this," the former national captain added, further informing that there will be a full-fledged Decision Review System (DRS) from the tournament's onset.



PHOTO: AFP

Australia batter David Warner walks into the Sydney Cricket Ground with his children prior to the start of play on Day 1 of the third Test, the final match in the format for the veteran batter, against Pakistan yesterday. (Inset) The limelight on the day was, however, snatched by Pakistan all-rounder Aamer Jamal whose 97-ball 82 helped the visitors recover from a precarious situation and put 313 on the board. Australia, in reply, were none for six at Stumps, with Warner taking all six of those runs.

Shooters vying for rare Olympic quotas

SPORTS REPORTER

In order to secure direct entry at this year's Paris Olympic Games, nine shooters from Bangladesh have been training in Jakarta for the Asian Olympic shooting qualifiers, which will take place from January 5 to 18 in Indonesia.

A total of 24 quota spots will be on offer in which Bangladeshi shooters will compete for seven places – two each for men's and women's 10m rifle events, two for men's 10m pistol event and one for women's 10m pistol event.

Despite the fact that the country's shooting has always been regarded as the most promising discipline at the international level, the shooters have never won a single medal on larger stages such as the Asian Games or the Olympics, with the exception of the South Asian Games and the Commonwealth Games.

Rather than achieving a quota, Bangladeshi shooters had always competed in the Olympic Games, courtesy of a wild-card entry. In the country's sporting history, only golfer Siddiqur Rahman and archer Ruman Sana have competed in the Olympics on their own merits.

"We arrived in Jakarta a bit early, on December 29, in an attempt to acclimatise and ensure better preparation as well. The shooters are facing a bit of

a problem in the warm conditions here, after having experienced cold weather in Bangladesh of late," assistant coach Golam Shaifuddin Khan Shiplu told The Daily Star from Jakarta yesterday.

Pistol shooters – Noor Hossain Alif, Pias Hossain and Anjila Ahmed Antu – will begin their campaign on January 8 while the rifle shooters – Shaira Arefin, Kamrun Nahar Koly, Jafirah Khanom Chowdhury, Robiul Islam, Arnab Sharar and younger Jidan Hossain – will play their respective 10m rifle events on January 10.

Among the nine competitors, Shaira, Koly, and Robiul have generated the most optimism due to their recent training performance and potential for an Olympic quota.

"The shooting trio has been performing well in training under Iranian coach Zaer Rezaei, scoring more than 630 points. Shaira once scored 632.9, Koly 632.2, and Robiul 631.6," informed Bangladesh camp commandant and BSSF joint secretary Mustaque Waiz.

He continued, "If they can transform their training performance into the main competition, then there is a good possibility to qualify for the final.

"Anything can happen in the final. Even if they finish third or fourth, they will have a chance to secure Olympic quota spots, as shooters from India, China, and Japan have already done."

