

## Great waste of immense potential

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For a few good years in the last decade, two young players were regarded as the next big things in Bangladesh cricket's white-ball formats: Nasir Hossain and Sabbir Rahman.

Street-smart batting, swift fielding and shrewd bowling made Nasir a great all-round package, and it was not long before he captured the imagination of the fans.

Sabbir, on the other hand, impressed everyone with his natural ability to take on fast bowlers and muscle the ball over the ropes. His fielding and part-time leg-spin bowling was an added plus.

But those days are long gone, as Nasir and Sabbir have joined the long list of promising prospects in Bangladesh cricket who could not live up to their potential.

On Tuesday, Nasir was on the lips of the country's sports fans after a long while, albeit for the wrong reasons.

The ICC handed the 32-year-old a two-year ban with six-month suspension for breaching the ICC Anti-Corruption Code while playing in the Abu Dhabi T10 League in 2021.

Nasir was found guilty for accepting the gift of an iPhone 12 and not disclosing it to ICC's Anti-Corruption Unit. The all-rounder will be able to return to the game from April 7, 2025.

Nasir's ban, although disheartening, was hardly a shock as the all-rounder has long made it a habit of getting himself tangled in off-field scandals.

From Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon publicly criticising his cavalier lifestyle to embarrassing call recordings of him being leaked, and having to appear in court for an adultery case in 2022, Nasir has made more headlines for his personal



## Allen storms into record books

New Zealand opener Finn Allen toyed with the entire Pakistan attack to secure his team's series-clinching 45-run victory in the third T20 International in Dunedin yesterday. The 24-year-old clobbered 16 sixes – the joint-most in an innings in men's T20 Internationals; also the joint-second best if ODIs are taken into account – during his 137 off 62 balls to power New Zealand to an imposing 224 for seven at the University Oval.

In the process, Allen amassed the highest T20I score by a New Zealand batsman, surpassing Brendon McCullum's 123 off 58 balls against Bangladesh in Pallekele, 2012.

"I'm not so personal milestone-driven. I suppose it's just good to get across the line and put up a competitive score and take the series," Player of the Match Allen said after the match.

PHOTO: AFP

### MOST SIXES IN AN INDIVIDUAL T20I INNINGS

Player (Country)	Sixes and Fours	Opposition	Year
Hazratullah Zai (Afghanistan)	16 sixes and 11 fours during 162	Ireland	2019
Finn Allen (New Zealand)	16 sixes and 5 fours during 137	Pakistan	2024
Zeeshan Kukikhel (Hungary)	15 sixes and 7 fours during 99	Austria	2022
Aaron Finch (Australia)	14 sixes and 11 fours during 156	England	2013
George Munsey (Scotland)	14 sixes and 5 fours during 56	Netherlands	2019



## Captaincy confusion continues

SPORTS REPORTER

"I am not sure yet if I have been made captain," a player told The Daily Star recently when asked to clarify if he has been assigned captaincy of his Bangladesh Premier League side.

The news of his captaincy had already been conveyed to the media but not the player himself which is a prime example of the tentativeness of the teams in assigning captaincy this season.

With the tournament set to begin tomorrow, a pre-tournament photo session with the BPL trophy took place yesterday, where the captains of the seven participating teams should've been present, but that wasn't the case.

However, when the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief executive Nizamuddin Chowdhury was asked about it during a press conference yesterday after the board unveiled the title sponsor of this year's BPL, he played down the issue.

"It's not a violation [of tournament guidelines] maybe they had limitations in announcing the name of the captain," the BCB CEO said yesterday.

Amidst the indecisiveness about captaincy of the franchises, a few surprising names have emerged as captains in this year's BPL.

Mossaddek Hossain will lead Dudanto Dhaka, Anamul Haque will captain Khulna Tigers while Nurul Hasan Sohan will lead the

Rangpur Riders, who chose him as skipper over Shakib Al Hasan.

Liton Das, who was part of the 2012 U19 World Cup batch alongside Mossaddek, Anamul and Sohan, will captain the defending champions Comilla Victorians while Shuvagata Hom will lead Chattogram Challengers.

Mashrafe had not attended the training session earlier on the day.

Later it was clarified in a press release that Mashrafe will lead.

Although confusion over captaincy is nothing new in BPL, as Mehedi Hasan Miraz had once been dropped from captaincy by



While most teams have put their faith on new faces to lead their teams, Sylhet Strikers and Fortune Barishal have icked Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Tamim Iqbal as their respective captains.

Mashrafe, however, wasn't part of yesterday's photoshoot, as Mohammad Mithun stood in his place, which raised some speculation regarding who would be Sylhet captain, given that

Chattogram just before a match, this time the problem was more pronounced.

Given the captaincy assignments, this season could be the start of change in the captaincy picture in BPL.

However, only time will tell how long will it take before a franchise makes changes in the captaincy hot seat, which won't be anything new in BPL.

## BCB not yet ready for revenue-sharing model in BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

The sharing of revenue in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) has always led to awkward conversations between Bangladesh Cricket Board and the media, and yesterday the BCB said that they were not yet ready to start a revenue-sharing model in the BPL.

Several franchises have claimed over the years that revenue sharing was a necessary component to the continuation of the financial structure and the BPL's overall model. The most recent being Comilla Victorians owner Nafisa Kamal, who reiterated that the BPL's most successful franchise will not continue in the BPL in the coming season without revenue sharing.

"From the beginning we have said that we want to do BPL sustainably. Sustainable BPL is not only for the cricket board, it's about the franchisees as well," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told reporters yesterday.

"The revenue models being discussed as reference, the T20 competitions or franchise tournaments, have a very high financial structure ceiling. Ultimately, we are not going for that model as it won't be sustainable in terms of franchise fees and other financial factors that contribute to taking decisions," he continued.

"Our model is not compatible with other franchise tournament models. We organise the BPL as per our model and market, and we are sticking to our previous stand."

The BCB CEO also reiterated that if franchisees want to move to a different model with revenue sharing, then it can be worked out.

"Of course, if the franchisees are ready to follow that reference model (of revenue sharing), we can work that out," Nizamuddin said.

## Russian schoolgirl living the dream

AFP, Melbourne

Russian 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva put her school work to one side Wednesday and instead underlined her huge potential by crushing sixth seed Ons Jabeur in under an hour at the Australian Open.

Playing her first main draw at Melbourne Park, Andreeva was electric in downing the three-time Grand Slam runner-up 6-0, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena in just 54 minutes.

Ranked 47, it was her first win over a top-10 player, having burst onto the scene when she reached the fourth round at Wimbledon last year as a qualifier.

"I was really nervous before the match, but I saw that she was nervous too. It kind of helped me, because I know I'm not the only one who is nervous before the match," said Andreeva.

"I decided to just enjoy, because it's Rod Laver Arena, I'm playing against the person that I like. I decided just to play, and I think I played OK."

It was her second appearance on Melbourne's centre court after last year losing the girls final to fellow Russian Alina Korneeva.

She admitted it left her "super upset" and drove her forward against Jabeur.



PHOTO: REUTERS

"Today when I saw that I play on Rod Laver, I said that this time I have to take my chance and I have to win on the big court for the first time, and so I did," she said.

Andreeva made her Grand Slam bow at the French Open last year with a run to the third round after coming through qualifying, ahead of her exploits at Wimbledon.

In her only other Grand Slam, she lost in the second round of the US Open to eventual champion Coco Gauff.

She is pursuing her dream of a tennis career while still juggling school.

"I still have to do a lot of school. It actually started two days ago, so I have to do it," she said, adding "I don't like chemistry".

At such a young age, Andreeva

is restricted by the WTA Tour in the number of tournaments she can play and she said it was too early to be thinking about what how far she can climb up the rankings.

"I mean, I'm 16. Why do I have to think about the rankings? I'm going a bit higher, and so my goal is to go higher and higher, maybe for a little bit but still higher," she said.

"So I don't know. I just try not to think about that and just to think about tennis and that's it."

The first set against the Tunisian was a 20-minute demolition job, with 29-year-old Jabeur completely out of touch.

She won only eight points across the six games, and just three from the baseline, while making 10 unforced errors.

Her serve was not firing, with only 38 percent of first serve points won and just 13 percent on second serve.

Jabeur, who has made the final twice at Wimbledon and once at the US Open, finally held serve to get off the mark in the opening game of set two, raising her finger in celebration.

But the teenage Russian kept coming and broke again for a 2-1 lead, then made it 4-1 as Jabeur's shoulders slumped, knowing it was all over.

## Xavi threatens to 'go home'

AFP, Salamanca

Under pressure Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez said on Wednesday he would resign if his squad no longer believed in him following last weekend's heavy Spanish Super Cup final loss to Real Madrid.

Barca were hammered 4-1 by Madrid on Sunday and sit eight points off leaders Girona in the La Liga table.

Defensively the Catalans have struggled this year which is in stark contrast to last season's Liga success.

They have conceded 22 goals at the halfway stage of the league season after shipping only 20 in the whole of the 2022-23 campaign.

"The day my players no longer follow me, I'll pack my bags and leave," Xavi told reporters.

"If I hadn't won La Liga last year I wouldn't be here. When someone tells me there's a problem, I'll leave. I love this club. I'm here to bring something to it. If I don't do it, I'll go home," the former Barca captain added.

The 43-year-old returned to the Spanish champions in 2021 after a spell as Al Sadd boss with Barca in free fall.

"I'm calm, I have three titles to win. I think we're closer to success than failure," the midfielder added.

