


## What ails Nahid Rana?

**SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN**



With the emergence Nahid Rana, for the first time, Bangladesh had a pacer in their arsenal who could breathe fire.

The speedster from Chapainawabganj breached the 150kmph mark consistently from the very start of his international career and became an instant sensation by taking five wickets on his Test debut against Sri Lanka last year.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) adopted a cautious approach in the first few months in handling the raw talent they were blessed with almost out of nowhere, managing his workload to keep him physically fit and mentally refreshed.

Bangladesh reaped the benefits of this decision as the bowler played a key role in two big triumphs last year – maiden Test series victory over Pakistan and the first Test win in Caribbean soil in nearly 15 years – by claiming five wickets in the decisive second Test against Pakistan and striking six times in the Jamaica Test against the West Indies respectively.

Rana's success in red ball cricket made the team management over-ambitious as only eight months into his international debut, he made his ODI debut against Afghanistan in Sharjah and in the following West Indies tour, he got picked in all three formats.

It was learnt that the selectors were not keen to include him in the T20 side but conceded to the insistence of head coach Phil Simmons which was endorsed by the board.

Rana didn't feature in that T20 series, but made it into the playing XI during the T20I series against the UAE in May this year. By then, he had also featured in the ICC Champions Trophy.

By May, Rana had played four ODIs and one T20I and was also selected for the three-match T20I series in Pakistan in May-June.

The steady progression of Rana's white-ball career hit its first speed bump when the pacer opted out of the Pakistan tour due to personal reasons.

After that, he was selected in the three-match ODI series at home against Sri Lanka, but didn't get a game. He was not named in the T20 part of that series and was overlooked in the following three T20Is against Pakistan as well, as the think-tank seemingly abandoned their white-ball experiment of Rana.

Worryingly, Rana's form with the red-ball also dipped as he claimed only one wicket in two Tests against Sri Lanka in Sri Lanka, looking a shadow of his former self from just a few months ago.

Rana's non-selection in the Asia Cup squad raised no eye-brows and chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu, although praised the pacer for his work ethic, said he has to find a way to regain some lost pace.

"What I have noticed is that he lost a few things. Firstly, he lost control of line and length. Secondly, he has struggled to adapt to different situations," Lipu told The Daily Star.

"My observation is that he is thinking that to play for a longer period, he needs to sacrifice pace. He is now bowling at a pace of 139-142 kmph. That's why he is not threatening the batters like he used to," said Lipu.

"He has an issue with his leg bone. I think it was scanned and if the report is good, it will motivate him mentally. He is a good listener and works really hard. I think he needs to pick the right person and work with him personally to completely remedy his problems," he added.

However, according to the 22-year-old's childhood coach Alamgir Kabir, personal issues are affecting his performance, not physical ones.

"I was not impressed with his performance in his last Test. He couldn't showcase his pace. We talked over the phone and he met me after returning home," Alamgir said.

"I felt that he couldn't bowl at a high pace because of some mental disturbances. I think he is okay now... He did not lose his pace due to getting overworked.

"I think we will get to see the same old Nahid Rana in the coming days," he added.

## Kings rope in an Argentine coach

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Bashundhara Kings are set to rope in high profile Argentine coach Mario Gomez as their new head coach, said a club official.

Gomez, who was last the head coach of Argentine second division club CA Talleres, has a rich coaching profile, having worked as an assistant coach for Italian giants Inter Milan and Spanish top-flight club Valencia, head coach of Mallorca and won the AFC Cup with Malaysian outfits Johor Darul Ta'zim in 2015.

Kings president Imrul Hassan confirmed the news to local media. The 68-year-old is expected to land in Dhaka next week and sign the contract.

Earlier in July, Kings had announced that Brazil's Sergio Farias would be their next head coach, replacing Oscar Bruzon. He was supposed to join the club before their AFC Challenge Cup playoff tie against Syria's Al-Karamah on August 12 in Doha.

But at the eleventh hour, the Brazilian joined Iraq's Duhok FC.

Kings played the knockout game without a head coach but still prevailed against the Syrian outfit, winning 1-0 to move on to the next stage of the competition.



## Medvedev exits US Open with chaotic flourish

**REUTERS, New York**

The opening day of the US Open descended into chaos late on Sunday when Daniil Medvedev launched a tirade at the match umpire and fans disrupted his opponent's service game.

New York's famously rowdy fans caused a six-minute delay by refusing to stop jeering and booing midway through Medvedev's 6-3, 7-5, 6-7(5), 0-6, 6-4 defeat by Benjamin Bonzi on Louis Armstrong Stadium.

The controversy began when a photographer entered the court prematurely after Bonzi missed his first serve on match point at 5-4 in the third set, prompting chair umpire Greg Allensworth to award the Frenchman another first serve for the disturbance.

An incensed Medvedev exploded at the official and whipped up the crowd, preventing a rattled Bonzi from serving.

Medvedev, the 2021 champion at Flushing Meadows, fought off the match point and took the set in a tie break before bageling Bonzi in the fourth to set up a decider.

It was not to be his day, however, as Bonzi composed himself to secure a dramatic win.

## Fixing in DPL: ACU wants Minhazul banned

**SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN**

The Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) has recommended a minimum five-year ban on Shinepukur Cricket Club's wicketkeeper-batter Minhazul Abedin Sabbir after he was found guilty of corrupt conduct during his side's Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League match earlier this year.

According to a 10 page investigation report seen by The Daily Star, which was presented to the board president Aminul Islam Bulbul yesterday by the ACU after a detailed four-and-a-half-month investigation, the 27-year-old was found guilty of breaching BCB Anti-Corruption Code Article 2.1.1 (Corruption – Match Fixing), BCB Code Article 2.4.2 (Failure to Disclose Approaches) and ICC Code Article 2.4.7 / BCB equivalent (Obstructing an Investigation).

"The evidence conclusively shows he engaged in behaviour that compromised the integrity of the match," the ACU stated in their investigation report.

"Given the evidence... a minimum five-year ban from all cricket is recommended," added the investigation report which, however, contains no evidence of involvement by team management or officials in the wrongdoing.

On April 9, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur, Sabbir displayed suspicious behaviour with Shinepukur needing only a few runs to win against Gulshan Cricket Club. In the 44th over, he stepped out to a wide delivery, missed the ball, and failed to ground his bat despite ample time, resulting in an easy stumping that sealed a five-run defeat. This unnatural dismissal, at a crucial stage, immediately raised suspicions of deliberate underperformance.

The BCB issued a statement reaffirming its zero-tolerance stance on corruption and launched an immediate investigation. Sabbir, along with others, was summoned by the ACU the following day.

## ANSAR REIGN SUPREME IN WOMEN'S HANDBALL



**Bangladesh Ansar's Alpona Akter soars mid-air to fire off a shot in the 36th National Handball Championship final at Shaheed Monsur Ali Stadium yesterday. Ansar stormed past Bangladesh Police 35-29 to bag their 24th national title. Police, however, salvaged some pride as Rubina Islam clinched the tournament's Best Player award.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Govt, BFF push for grassroots football 'revival'

**SPORTS REPORTER**

The National Football Championship, jointly organised by the Youth and Sports Ministry and the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), will return this month after a four-year break, featuring all 64 districts across the country.

Held under the banner of the government's Festival of Youth, the tournament will follow a home-and-away format, though concerns remain over the availability of some district stadiums being used as temporary army camps.

The competition will kick off on August 30 with Munshiganj facing Madaripur, while matches at other venues will get underway in mid-September. The final is scheduled for November 24 or 25 at the National Stadium, where AFC president Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa is expected as chief guest.

The 64 districts, divided into eight zones and named after the July Uprising martyrs, will feature in two-legged ties. Winners will advance to the round of 32, also contested

on aggregate, before reaching the round of 16 – from which point the competition will shift to a direct knockout format.

"This championship is an initiative to revive sports at the district level," Youth and Sports Ministry secretary Mahubul-Ul-Alam said at a press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

He added that the National Sports Council has allocated Tk 5 crore to the BFF, while the ministry will provide another Tk 5 crore to support district participation.

District Football Associations (DFAs) have struggled for years to hold local leagues due to financial constraints, limiting the pipeline of emerging players. While some districts have benefited from recent upazila-level tournaments, others face difficulties either in assembling teams or in securing suitable grounds.

"A football tournament just concluded at an upazila, and we picked our players from there to start training a couple of days ago. Our district stadium is fine, but places

like Kurigram and Lalmonirhat may need alternative venues due to army camps at their stadiums," Rangpur DFA president Shamim Khan Miskin told The Daily Star yesterday.

Faridpur DFA general secretary and former footballer Abul Kashem added, "We are preparing Rajendrapur College's ground for our home match because the Faridpur Stadium is occupied by the army. We managed to form a squad, but training has been difficult due to the poor condition of the ground."

Committee chairman and BFF vice-president Wahid Uddin Ahmed informed the estimated cost for three ongoing tournaments – the National Football Championship, the JFA U-14 Women's Tournament, and the BFF U-17 Tournament – is Tk 18 crore. Of this, Tk 10 crore comes from government funds, while the BFF expects to raise another Tk 8 crore.

Meanwhile, the Youth and Sports secretary confirmed that the government has earmarked Tk 20 crore for the Festival of Youth, with Tk 10 crore set aside for football and the remainder distributed to districts and upazilas to host events nationwide.

## Shakib's in a league of his own

Records tend to follow Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan whenever he takes the field. The 38-year-old has often elevated himself into distinguished company, and on Sunday, he added another accolade to his career, becoming the first cricketer to complete the double of 7500 runs and 500 wickets in T20 cricket, while playing for Antigua and Barbuda Falcons in their Caribbean Premier League.

Shakib entered the game one wicket shy of 500 and dismissed Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan to join the exclusive 500-wicket club, finishing with 3-11 to take his career tally to 502.

Before him, only Rashid Khan (660), Dwayne Bravo (631), Sunil Narine (590) and Imran Tahir (554) had reached 500 wickets, but none combined it with 7000 runs. Shakib's 7574 runs make him the only cricketer with this double.

Bravo came closest with 6970 runs and 631 wickets, while Andre Russell is inching toward the feat at 9361 runs and 487 wickets.

Shakib's all-round show restricted St Kitts and Nevis Patriots to 133-9 before Antigua chased it down in 19.4 overs. He contributed 25 off 18 balls, featuring two sixes and a four, with the bat.

The performance earned him his 44th Player of the Match award in T20s, the joint-fifth with Russell on the all-time list.

He also became the first left-arm bowler to take 500 T20 wickets.

