



A RARE FATHER-SON MOMENT

In a rare sight in cricket, Afghan all-rounder Mohammad Nabi and his son, Hassan Eisakhil, featured for the same team in a Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) match in Sylhet yesterday. In a touching moment, Eisakhil was handed his cap before the game as he made his BPL debut. Playing for Noakhali Express against Dhaka Capitals, he immediately stamped his authority with a 60-ball 92 while sharing a 53-run fourth-wicket stand with his father, who made 17 off 13 deliveries. The 41-year-old Nabi and his 19-year-old son, however, had played against each other in competitive cricket in July last year during the Shpageza Cricket League (SCL), Afghanistan's premier T20 tournament.

PHOTO: STAR

'I actually preferred Trav-ball over Bazball'

For any '90s cricket fan, former England pacer **Darren Gough** remains a figure of pure nostalgia. With a smooth, repeatable action that youngsters loved to imitate, the right-arm quick stood out among his contemporaries – particularly for his success in the subcontinent and in Australia. Since retiring, Gough has taken on a variety of roles – commentator, coach, administrator and television personality – remaining a familiar presence in the game. This year, the 55-year-old is in Bangladesh as part of the commentary panel for the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). In Sylhet on Sunday, Gough spoke to **The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan** about Bangladesh's fast bowlers, Bazball, England's challenges and his own career. Excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): What is your impression of the current Bangladesh pacers?

Darren Gough (DG): Nahid Rana is the one who really took me by surprise with his pace, and I believe he is an unbelievable talent who can bowl over 150 kph. A bowler with that speed is a huge asset in all three formats if managed well. I have been impressed by Tanzid Hasan Sakib. Mustafizur Rahman remains one of the best T20 bowlers globally due to his variations, and Saifuddin has impressed

me too and he can bat as well. The competition for places in the Bangladesh side is very interesting right now.

DS: Have you seen much reverse swing in this tournament?

DG: Not a lot, but Riton Mondol was clever under pressure and managed some reverse swing during a Super Over, especially



against left-handers. Hasan Mahmud is impressive too. Bangladesh are now in a phase similar to where India once were – building a deep pool of fast bowlers. That makes you competitive anywhere, whether in New Zealand or South Africa.

DS: What is your assessment of England's recent Ashes performance?

DG: It was very disappointing. There was

belief this England team had a real chance. If Australia had all their bowlers fit, the series could easily have been 5-0. England's batting technique wasn't good enough on pitches where the ball moved. Only Joe Root, and to some extent Jacob Benthall, showed how sound technique allows you to score runs in Australia.

DS: What do you make of Bazball?

DG: I'm all for positive cricket, but I actually preferred "Trav-ball" – Travis Head's style – over Bazball. Positivity is great, but it must come with intelligence. England will always be judged by how they perform against India and Australia in five-Test series.

DS: You were very successful in the subcontinent. What was the key?

DG: It requires a big heart and variation. I swung the new ball both ways, and when it got old, I used reverse swing. My specific action allowed me to bowl it like a "flying saucer" by lowering my wrist and coming from a sideways angle. That skill got me many wickets in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

DS: You also enjoyed success in Australia. How did you handle the pressure?

DG: I played eight Tests in Australia and took about 42 [41] wickets, including a couple of five-wicket hauls and a hatrick. My nickname was "Box Office Gough" because the bigger the crowd, the better I performed. If you perform with heart, the Australian public respects you, but if you

don't, they will "destroy" you.

DS: Who were the toughest batters you bowled to?

DG: My biggest regret is never playing a Test against India because of injuries. I wanted to bowl to Sachin Tendulkar at my peak. He, along with Brian Lara, Jacques Kallis, Ricky Ponting, Inzamam ul-Haq, and Mohammad Yousuf, were outstanding. But the hardest to bowl to was Adam Gilchrist – he could come in at seven and change the game immediately. Lance Klusener was also very tough to bowl against.

DS: Do you consider Joe Root England's greatest-ever player?

DG: Absolutely. Comparing eras is difficult, but there's no doubt Joe Root is England's greatest. Graham Gooch was exceptional, and Kevin Pietersen could have been up there if he hadn't lost key years of his career, but Root is the best.

DS: What prompted your transition from cricket to reality TV?

DG: People thought I had the right personality for it. I just wanted to test myself in everything. I've done the Tour de France, professional in Mexico, ski and cooking. I had danced in my life, ended up winning Come Dancing after competition.



Ultimately, though, his effort was undone by half centuries from Rajshahi's Muhammad Waseem and Najmul Hossain Shanto. It was not the first time that Hridoy found himself on the losing side despite being the standout performer. In seven BPL innings this season, he has been dismissed for single digits three times, made 29 and 17 in two others, and on the only previous occasion he crossed fifty – a 39-ball 53 – Rangpur still lost, that time in a Super Over against Rajshahi.

The pattern extends to the international arena as well. In the first T20I against Ireland last November, Hridoy struck a career-best 83 not out from 50 balls, but Bangladesh were already reeling at 18 for four while chasing 182, and his innings merely reduced the margin of defeat.

For Hridoy, the runs continue to bring personal relief. For his teams, however, they have yet to deliver the one thing he craves most – victory.

SHORT CORNER

PCB interested to host Bangladesh's T20 World Cup matches: reports

A report by Pakistani news outlet Geo News has claimed that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has expressed interest in hosting Bangladesh's matches in the ICC T20 World Cup 2026. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had earlier stated that it would not send the national team to India for the T20 World Cup due to safety and security concerns and formally requested the International Cricket Council (ICC) to relocate Bangladesh's matches away from India.

BFF plans grassroots events every month

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) on Sunday decided to organise grassroots football events every month this year to inspire young players across the country, alongside staging an expanded BFF Academy Cup involving around 300 football academies. The decisions were taken at the sixth meeting of the BFF Development Committee, with BFF vice-president and committee chairman Nasser Shahrear Zahedee presiding.

Rishad's Hobart first to reach playoffs

Rishad Hossain's Hobart Hurricanes became the first team in the running Big Bash League (BBL) to progress to the playoffs after their match against Sydney Sixers ended in a no result due to incessant rain in Sydney yesterday. Rishad, who is the tournament's most successful spinner right now with 11 wickets in nine games, did not get to bowl.

*Read the full stories on **The Daily Star's website**

BFL's return to National Stadium uncertain

SPORTS REPORTER

The return of the country's top-tier football competition, the Bangladesh Football League (BFL), to the National Stadium has once again been delayed after the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) released the second-phase fixtures on Saturday without scheduling any league matches at the renovated venue.

The top-tier matches have not been held at the National Stadium for more than four years due to extensive renovation work costing Tk 158 crore. As a result, league fixtures were shifted outside Dhaka, depriving many supporters in the capital of the chance to watch top flight football.

The renovation was completed in June last year, and the stadium has since hosted several events, including three Asian Cup qualifiers, preliminary-round matches of the AFC Challenge League, a tri-nation women's football tournament, two Latin Bangla Super Cup matches, and the semifinals and final of the Inter-University Football Tournament. Despite this, the BFF remains reluctant to bring the BFL back to the National Stadium, even though Abahani and Mohomedan – the country's two biggest crowd pullers – have shown interest in using it as their home venue.

Ahead of the current season, Mohomedan formally applied to make the venue their home ground, while Abahani also verbally expressed similar interest. The BFF rejected

both requests, citing plans to plant new grass at the venue after the India-Bangladesh match on November 18, 2025.

However, no initiative has so far been taken to plant new grass. National Sports Council (NSC) assistant director (planning

would return to the country's premier venue, if grass plantation was delayed.

Clubs across the league are keen for matches to return to Dhaka, citing financial strain, playing conditions and the need to maintain growing spectator interest. Most teams, from top to bottom, have struggled financially this season, with travel costs significantly increasing their expenses.

"It is very difficult for smaller teams to play outside Dhaka every week, as it costs around Tk 2 lakh per match," said Arambagh official Yaqub Ali. "If we can play even two matches in Dhaka, we could save Tk 4 lakh, which would help cover camp expenses by about Tk 25,000 per day. Unfortunately, the BFF has ignored our repeated appeals."

PWD SC manager Engineer Iftekharul Islam echoed the concern. "Shifting some BFL matches to the National Stadium would reduce the financial burden on smaller clubs. We have already spent more than Tk 2 lakh playing two matches in Cumilla," he said. "The ground there is also not up to standard, so matches at the National Stadium would improve the quality of play."

Mohamedan manager Imtiaz Ahmed Nakib reiterated his club's stance, saying, "There is no engagement at the National Stadium at the moment. The BFL can return to the home of football in a good environment and amid strong spectator interest."

and development) Md Nasir Uddin told The Daily Star on Sunday that the NSC has no such project in place and that the BFF has not submitted any proposal regarding grass replacement.

Although BFF president Tabith Awal recently told a Bengali daily that BFL matches



Mohamed Salah was among the scorers as Egypt knocked reigning champions Ivory Coast out of the Africa Cup of Nations with a 3-2 win in the quarterfinals in Agadir on Saturday, setting up a semifinal clash with Senegal on Wednesday in Tangiers. Meanwhile, Nigeria beat Algeria 2-0, and they will be facing hosts Morocco in the other semifinal later on the same day in Rabat.

PHOTO: AFP