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From Captain to Cricket Builder: Paras Khadka's Second Innings

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For years, Paras Khadka was the face people associated with Nepal cricket.

He was the captain in the middle of the field, the all-rounder expected to contribute with bat and ball, and often the public voice explaining what a developing cricket nation still needed.

Then, in 2021, he retired from international cricket.

The second innings was different.

Instead of leaving the sport, Khadka moved toward administration. By 2023 he had become secretary of the Cricket Association of Nepal, shifting from the problems a captain sees inside the boundary rope to the problems an administrator must solve outside it.

Growing with Nepali cricket

Khadka's career and Nepal's cricket development are difficult to separate.

He came through age-group cricket, representing Nepal at multiple Under-19 World Cups before becoming a central figure in the senior side.

In 2009 he was appointed captain.

At the time, Nepal had passionate supporters and talented players but remained far from the highest levels of international cricket.

The national team had to climb through the structure of Associate cricket tournament by tournament.

Leadership before infrastructure

Captaining an emerging cricket nation is not the same job as captaining a wealthy Test side.

The role extends beyond tactics.

Players become advocates for facilities, administration, preparation and professionalism. They may be asked to represent the sport publicly while also worrying about contracts, domestic competitions and selection systems.

Khadka became closely associated with those conversations.

His leadership style was built around ambition: Nepal should not treat participation as enough.

The road to the 2014 World T20

One of the defining achievements of Khadka's captaincy was Nepal's qualification for the 2014 ICC World Twenty20 in Bangladesh.

For supporters, the tournament was a breakthrough moment.

Nepal was no longer only a cricket-loving country trying to be noticed. It was competing on a global stage.

The team's performances in Bangladesh helped create a new generation of fans who saw international cricket as something Nepal could belong to rather than simply watch from elsewhere.

From T20 breakthrough to ODI status

The next major step came with One Day International status.

Nepal earned ODI status in 2018, transforming what had once seemed a distant objective into institutional reality.

Khadka was part of Nepal's first ODI series and contributed to the country's first ODI victory, against the Netherlands.

He later became the first Nepali batter to score centuries in both ODI and T20 international cricket.

Statistics alone do not explain his importance, but they help show how often his individual milestones arrived alongside milestones for the team itself.

Retiring before disappearing

When Khadka announced his retirement in August 2021, he wrote that playing for Nepal had been his greatest achievement.

He also said his long-term dream was to see Nepal develop a better cricketing system.

That sentence turned out to be more than a farewell line.

Retirement became a transition.

From player to administrator

In 2023, Khadka entered formal cricket administration and was elected secretary of the Cricket Association of Nepal.

The move placed him on the other side of problems he had discussed for years as a player.

It is easy for athletes to criticise administrators. It is harder to become one.

Administration requires budgets, scheduling, negotiation, governance, commercial strategy, domestic structures and decisions that will satisfy nobody completely.

Khadka's reputation as a former captain gives him credibility. It also increases expectations.

What a cricket system actually means

A national team can produce occasional success without a strong system.

Sustained success requires more.

Young players need meaningful competition. Domestic cricket needs predictable calendars. Coaches and support staff need development. Grounds need maintenance. Players need contracts and pathways. Sponsors need confidence that competitions will happen when promised.

This is the unglamorous architecture behind a successful national side.

Khadka spent much of his playing career helping Nepal win matches. His administrative career will be judged by whether more players can succeed without depending on extraordinary improvisation.

A changing cricket economy

Nepal cricket now occupies a different commercial landscape from the one Khadka entered as a teenager.

Stadium crowds are larger. Digital audiences are global.

Franchise cricket offers new opportunities. Sponsors see value in the sport. Young players can imagine professional careers in ways earlier generations could not.

Growth creates opportunity but also risk.

Commercial momentum can outpace governance. Short-term tournaments can become more attractive than long-term player development. Popularity can hide structural weakness.

This makes administration more important, not less.

Leadership changes shape

As captain, Khadka's decisions were visible.

Set the field. Change the bowler. Bat higher. Take responsibility.

Administration produces fewer dramatic moments.

A successful policy may take years before a supporter notices the effect. A youth programme may matter more than a press conference. A domestic schedule may do more for cricket than a single famous victory.

This is the challenge of Paras Khadka's second innings.

He spent years helping Nepal prove it belonged in international cricket.

Now the task is harder: helping build a system strong enough that belonging no longer depends on one generation of exceptional players.

The captain once carried Nepal cricket on the field.

The administrator now has to help make sure nobody has to carry it alone.

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