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From the President's Desk



Indian hockey is at the crossroads fighting all odds coming on its way. With the active cooperation of the Governments at the Centre, States and Union Territories, the Nehru Hockey Tournament Society has been making concerted efforts to unearth talented juniors at grassroots level by conducting age-group competitions for boys and girls. These efforts are slowly bearing fruits as the national junior teams have started winning titles at international levels. For the junior level tournaments to be held in October-November this year, we have already requested the State Governments to sponsor the best teams for the main competitions at Delhi after holding qualifying competitions at the district and State level. As the State Governments have been helping us in selecting their best teams for these competitions, we are confident that they will continue to do so in future also.

After a long time Indian hockey made it to the podium at senior level by finishing third in the most prestigious Sultan Azlan Shah Cup in Kuala Lumpur. India topped their pool by winning two of their three matches before going down to Holland, the ultimate winners, in the Semi-final. India beat New Zealand in the play-off to finish third. The good performance by the Indians should make them do well in the World Cup to be held in Germany during Sept. 6-17 this year.

The Beighton Cup, instituted by the Bengal Hockey Association, is known to be the oldest tournament of the world, having begun in 1895. The trophy is indeed old but it is still going strong as it regularly attracts the best teams across the country. The Punjab & Sind Bank won the country's 'Heritage' tournament defeating the Border Security Force 1-0 in the final of the trophy's 111th edition at Kolkata.

In another prestigious tournament held at Monchenglad back in Germany, India clinched the third position. Germany beat Spain in the title match. This is the place where the World Cup (Men) will take place during Sept. 6-17 this year.

India's second line of defence, the under-21 team, did the country proud by winning the prestigious six-nation tournament in Gniezno (Poland). The recent months have seen the juniors doing pretty well at international competitions.

The Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society expressed its shock at the untimely demise of India's celebrated Olympian goalkeeper Shankar Laxman, who passed away at Mhow on April 29 at the age of 73. He was afflicted with gangrene. Laxman represented India in three Olympics. He received the Arjuna Award in 1964 and was decorated with Padmashree in 1967. May his noble soul rest in peace!

Ram Niwas Mirdha

WHAT NEHRU HOCKEY MEANS

to

FIH CHIEF

(Extracts from her message on the occasion of 2005 tournaments)



For more than 40 years the tournament has been held with its aim to promote our sport at the grassroots level, an important factor that will help secure the future of hockey in India.

Hockey must be able to attract new participants, spectators, players and administrators to hockey at all levels so that it can develop and withstand the challenges presented by other sports around the world.

The Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament is helping to achieve this aim.

With international teams regularly competing in the past, the tournament has grown into a truly international event.

A significant aspect of the Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament from a global perspective has been the introduction of a girl's competition for players under 17.

If India's women's team hopes to qualify for future editions of the Olympic Games, they will need to be identified at a young age, something this tournament is helping to do.

Women's hockey in India has tremendous room for growth and the performances of the senior team over the past two years have shown the potential is there to challenge the top ranked nations.

I commend the organisers of the Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament for their efforts in working to identify new talent and to strengthen the base level appeal of hockey in India. With hard work at all levels, India can be a dominant force in hockey once again.

I wish everyone involved a successful tournament. Congratulations on your impressive efforts and continue the good work.

Lausanne,
Switzerland

Els van Breda Vriesman
President,
International Hockey Federation
(FIH)

INDIAN HOCKEY'S SECOND LINE OF DEFENCE IN THE MAKING

Process on to Unearth Hidden Talents

The Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society has been deeply engaged in the development and promotion of our national game of hockey in the country. Towards this end, a series of tournaments are held in different age-groups at the National/International level. The Society has been laying special emphasis on the Junior level competitions. The calendar for all the tournaments to be held at the Shivaji Stadium, New Delhi during the year 2006-2007 is as under :-

CALENDAR OF TOURNAMENTS FOR THE YEAR 2006-2007

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| i) 13th Girls Tournament
(under 17 years) | October 10-18, 2006 |
| ii) 24th Sub-Junior Tournament
(Boys under 15 years) | October 18-31, 2006 |
| iii) 35th Junior Tournament
(Boys under 17 years) | Oct. 31 - Nov. 13, 2006 |
| iv) 43rd Main (Senior)
Tournament | November 14-25, 2006 |
| v) 14th Champion Colleges
Tournament | February 8-17, 2007 |

The process of conducting the tournaments has started in right earnest. The President of the Society Mr Ram Niwas Mirdha has already written to the Chief Ministers of the States and Union Territories requesting them to arrange holding qualifying competitions at the district and State level to pick up the best individual school teams in different age-groups and to sponsor them to participate in the main junior level tournaments in Delhi. This communication was followed by another letter written by the Vice-President Maj. Gen. Virendra Singh to the Chief Secretaries to continue to extend their valuable cooperation. He emphasized the importance of exposure to all-India competitions at the formative stage in the career of young players who look forward to these competitions with much eagerness.

Incidentally, in this venture the State and Union Territory Governments render active cooperation in arranging the district and State level competitions. In recognition of the talent on view, the Union Government's Deptt. of Sports has accepted these age-group tournaments as the proving ground to award scholarships.

15TH SULTAN AZLAN SHAH CUP HOCKEY

India Finish Third

While the entire world was engrossed in watching action on football grounds in Germany (World Cup) one thing that went unnoticed was an Indian resurgence in Malaysia's Capital city Kuala Lumpur. After a hiatus of nearly three years, The Indian hockey

team finally landed on the podium to bag a bronze medal in the 15th edition of the prestigious Sultan Azlan Shah Cup (June 18-25). India's last title victory was in 2003 when it won the Afro-Asian Games gold in Hyderabad. The same year they also won the Asia Cup and a four-nation tournament in Australia.

The eight participating teams were divided into two pools. Playing in Pool-A, India got off to a losing start when they lost to the Olympic and Commonwealth Games Champions Australia 1-4. But they soon recovered to hand out two successive wins over hosts Malaysia (5-2) and last year's runners-up South Korea (3-0) and topped the pool with six points. But in the semi-finals, India went down 0-1 to the eventual winners, the Netherlands. India then beat New Zealand 3-2 to finish third. India thus went two steps up the ladder this year.



The Netherlands team, the winners

The Netherlands beat defending Champions Australia 6-2 in the final and annexed the trophy. The Azlan Shah Cup result will surely have a good impact in the forthcoming World Cup to be held at the Warsteiner Park in Monchengladbach (Germany) during Sept. 6-17.

FINAL RANKINGS : Holland, Australia, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Korea, Argentina & Malaysia.

BEIGHTON CUP : INDIA'S 'HERITAGE' TOURNAMENT

PSB Annex 'Heritage' Cup

Old is gold. This famous saying matches with the graceful identify and mass acceptability of the country's century-old Beighton Cup hockey tournament. If field hockey was once considered the national game of India, the Beighton Cup, instituted by the Bengal Hockey Association, is known to be the "oldest tournament of the World" having begun in 1895, according to BHA's livewire Secretary Gurbux Singh. Gurbux Singh was a member of India's gold medal winning team at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. He had also participated in the 1968 Mexico Olympics as Jt. Captain and as Vice-

Captain of the gold medal winning 1966 Bangkok Asian Games team and Coach of the 1976 Montreal Olympic squad.

The trophy is indeed old but it is still going strong as it regularly attracts the best teams across the country knowing as they do the matches are still played on natural grass. This 'heritage' tournament has successfully conducted its 111th edition this year during March 28 - April 10, where an all-time record of 25 teams participated.

Curiously, for the last 18 years a team from Jalandhar has been winning this tournament. This was no different this year too as the Punjab & Sind Bank (PSB) from Jalandhar lifted the century-old trophy for the fourth time beating another outfit from Jalandhar, the Border Security Force (BSF) 1-0 in the final. In the Semi-finals, PSB defeated Army XI 2-1 while BSF ousted Indian Airlines 7-6 via tie-breaker. The winners PSB were richer by Rs. 1.25 lakhs while runners-up BSF earned Rs. 50,000. PSB's Gurbinder Singh Chandi bagged the Best Player Award and along with it Rs. 10,000. The Fair Play Trophy went to the Indian Airlines.

JUNIOR U-21 TOURNAMENT IN POLAND

Indian Juniors Clinch Title

While the Seniors are showing inconsistent performances in recent times, the juniors, the country's second line of defence, are consistently giving matured performances. Their triumph in the just concluded (May 30-June 4) six-nation under-21 tournament in Gniezno (Poland) has once again proved their consistency. It may be recalled that Indian juniors won the 7th World Cup at Hobart (Australia). Also in the 5th Junior Asia Cup at Karachi, India won the tournament defeating Pakistan in the final 5-2.

So with such a solid background, the boys triumph at the Poland tournament was not at all unexpected. They emerged champions by winning all their five matches to log 15 points and kept their 100 per cent win record intact in this tournament. They scored as many as 34 goals in the five matches while conceding only four goals! However, the team could convert only one of their 14 penalty-corners in their final league match against hosts Poland, whom they beat 3-0 to clinch the title. India had earlier defeated Pakistan (4-0), Czech Republic (12-0), Russia (12-2) and Germany (3-2) to show their overall domination.

INDIA IN FOUR-NATION TOURNAMENT IN GERMANY

India Secures Third Position

A four-nation invitational men's hockey tournament was held at Monchengladbach in Germany during April 15-17. The four participants were Spain, India, Argentina and hosts Germany. India started its campaign on a none-too-happy note as they went down 1-4 to the hosts. India's performance in their second match against Spain was also no better as they conceded two late goals to lose 3-5

after fighting back from 0-3 down to level 3-3. India ultimately managed to beat Argentina 3-2 in their last match and ended the tournament securing the third position with three points while the South Americans finished last without any point. Germany beat Spain 1-0 in the title match.

INDIA'S CELEBRATED GOALKEEPER LAXMAN PASSES AWAY

The Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society was shocked to learn the untimely demise of India's celebrated goalkeeper Shankar Laxman, who breathed his last at his native place at Mhow (Indore) on the morning of Saturday, April 29 at the age of 73. He was afflicted with gangrene.

Some of Shankar Laxman's feats under the bar are unique and unsurpassable. Representing the country in the three Olympic finals (1956, 1960 & 1964) incidentally all against the country's arch-rivals Pakistan, he had conceded just one goal and also against the same opponents in three Asian Games finals (1958, 1962 & 1966) conceded only two goals.



So, in all the six finals against Pakistan, he conceded just three goals! Laxman was the first goalkeeper-Captain in the world of hockey when leadership used to be the preserve of goal-scorers only. He led India at the 5th Asian Games at Bangkok in 1966, giving India their maiden Asian Games gold. He received the Arjuna Award in 1964 and was decorated with Padmashree in 1967.

At a condolence meeting held in the Union Capital on May 5 at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, a number of his erstwhile team-mates, contemporaries and media representatives were present. They recounted his invaluable services to enrich Indian hockey and also eulogized his leadership qualities. Besides representatives from the Nehru Hockey Society, a section of Maratha Light Infantry personnel, which Laxman represented, also took active part in the proceedings. May his noble soul rest in peace!