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From the President's Desk



At a time when the Indian hockey has been going through a hard time at the international level, there is at least one moment for all hockey lovers of the country to feel delighted when the 1948 and 1952 gold medal winning team member, Cdr. (Retd) G Nandy Singh was honoured with the Nation's highest prestigious Dhyan Chand Award for the year 2006. This was in recognition of his life-time achievements and contributions to our national game of hockey. The 80-year-old veteran hockey superstar and able administrator has been tirelessly devoting himself for the improvement and further promotion of the game across the country. Viren Rasquinha is the 52nd recipient of the coveted Arjuna Award for the year 2005 in recognition of his outstanding achievements in the field of hockey.

I, on behalf of the Nehru Hockey Society, extend our heart-felt good wishes and congratulations to both Cdr. (Retd) G Nandy Singh and Viren Rasquinha.

On the field. In the 11th edition of the Men's World Cup Hockey held in Germany, the hosts and defending Champions successfully retained the World Crown defeating Olympic and Commonwealth Games Champions, Australia in the final. India, who had won the Cup in 1975 and also finished second and third once earlier, was able to win just one match out of seven they played. The team was placed 11th this time. It appears that the agonizing sequence of conceding goals by India during the dying minutes of matches is not showing any end to it.

The Netherlands annexed the prestigious Champions Trophy. In the final of the 28th edition of this tournament held at Terrassa (Spain), the Netherlands claimed their eighth title defeating world champions Germany. India could not take part in this tournament as it finished sixth and last in the earlier edition at Chennai. India was replaced by Argentina.

India had to settle for the second place in the SAF Games hockey tournament held at Colombo. Pakistan defeated India in the final to win the title. This discipline was reintroduced in this tenth edition. The first time it was held at the seventh edition in 1995 at Chennai where India defeated Pakistan in the final.

In about a few days' time the Nehru Hockey Society will be launching its annual exhibition of much-sought-after series of five age-group prize-money tournaments at the Shivaji Stadium in the Union Capital. I welcome you all to see and enjoy the impressive display of the youth power of our country. It is hoped that many a talent remained hidden in obscure parts of the country will be scouted for potential use in the long run.

Ram Niwas Mirdha

NATIONAL AWARDS

Cdr. Nandy Singh Honoured



Cdr. Nandy Singh receiving the Award from the President, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam

August 29 has been designated as the National Sports Day by the Government of India to honour the nation's greatest-ever sportsman, the late Major Dhyan Chand. To commemorate the legend's birth anniversary on this day, the nation's highest sports awards are presented by none else than the President of India himself. It was on this day, Commander (Retd) G Nandy Singh, VSM was honoured with the prestigious "Dhyan Chand Award for Lifetime Achievements in Sports" for the year 2006. Representing the country in the Olympic Games, he made the country proud by winning two gold medals in 1948 London Olympics and 1952 Helsinki Olympics, carrying the legacy of 'wizard' Dhyan Chand. And true to the citation of the Award, the 80-year-old soft-spoken veteran hockey superstar and able administrator, now based in Delhi, has been tirelessly devoting himself for the promotion and development of India's national game of hockey in the country.

Born on February 18, 1926 at Lyallpur (now Fazalabad) in Pakistan, he had his education at the Government College, Lahore, where he joined in 1941 and soon emerged as an outstanding hockey player of his time. He represented the undivided Punjab University during 1943-46, besides leading his college team in 1945. After partition of the country, he came over to Calcutta and played there during 1947-48. He joined the Indian Navy in 1949. He had the unique distinction of leading both the Navy and the Services teams together during 1952-55 and again in 1957-58. He retired on February 18, 1973 as Commander.

Since 1980 he is the General Secretary of the Nehru Hockey Tournament Society, which successfully runs annually a popular series of five age-group prize-money tournaments having international flavour. Besides devoting himself to hockey, Nandy Singh also takes pleasure in the game of golf and active social work.

Arjun of Indian Hockey

The 52nd recipient of the Arjuna Award, Viren Rasquinha is one of the most outstanding hockey players of the country. He represented the National team, which won the Silver medal in Busan Asian Games in 2002, gold medals in Asia Cup, held at Kuala Lumpur in 2003 and first Afro-Asian



Viren Rasquinha

Games in the same year. Viren Rasquinha also represented the country at the 2004 Athens Olympics. Earlier he was also a member of the gold medal winning Indian Junior hockey team at the World Cup at Hobart (Australia) in 2001. In recognition of such outstanding achievements in the field of hockey, Rasquinha was awarded on 29th August the coveted Arjuna Award, one of the highest sports awards of the country for the year 2005.

11TH MEN'S WORLD CUP HOCKEY

Germany retains World Crown

Germany is on the top of the world. The defending Champions brilliantly overcame Olympic and Commonwealth Games Champions, Australia, to retain the world

crown at the 11th edition of Men's Hockey World Cup tournament held at Monchengladbach in Germany during September 6-17. Unlike the 10th edition at Kuala Lumpur in 2002 where there were 16 entrants, the competition this year was confined to 12 teams: Four from Europe (Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, England), four from Asia (India, Pakistan, Japan, South Korea), two from Oceania (Australia, New Zealand) and one each from Africa (South Africa) and America (Argentina). The 12 teams were equally divided into two pools with six teams each. At the end of the pool matches, while Australia and Spain topped Pool A with 12 and 11 points respectively, Germany and the Asian Games Champions, South Korea, topped Pool B with 11 points each and thus the semi-final formation was complete. In the first semi-final, Australia beat Korea 4-2 and Germany defeated the European Champions, Spain, 5-3 in the other semi-final. In the summit clash, Germany defeated Australia (4-3) to win their second successive World Cup. Spain won the bronze medal defeating Korea 3-2. The Fair Play Trophy has gone to New Zealand.

That India, who had won the Cup once in 1975 and finished second and third once earlier in the last 35 years of the Cup's inception in 1971, was able to win just one match out of seven they played. That too happened against South Africa (1-0) which helped the team avoid the 'wooden spoon'. And the glaring feature of India's performance was the team's agonizing sequence of conceding goals during the dying minutes of the matches!

India conceded a last minute goal to launch their campaign with 2-3 defeat against Germany. They also crashed to an identical 2-3 defeat to England. In this match India squandered a 1-0 lead besides failing to take advantage of the two penalty-strokes missed by England. Bruised and battered with two defeats on the trot, India's misery was compounded when they drew 1-1 with the lowly-placed South Africa, again squandering a 1-0 lead and the equalizer just six minutes before the hooter. In their fourth match, they again frittered away the second half 1-0 lead as Korea struck twice in the last seven minutes to clinch the match (2-1). The team remained winless even after four matches and had to contend for a position between 9th and 12th spots. In the last pool match, the Netherlands slammed as many as six goals as a bunch of hapless Indians meekly surrendered to a humiliating 1-6 defeat. In the bottom classification match against Argentina, India led 1-0, only to lose 2-3 at the end. India finally managed to beat South Africa (1-0) to finish 11th. The lone win over South Africa cannot make up for the terrible blow to our

international standing. In respect of other Asian countries, South Korea are now the standard-bearers for Asia. Pakistan has managed to stay among the top six. Japan also finished ahead of India.

FINAL RANKING: 1. Germany, 2. Australia, 3. Spain, 4. South Korea, 5. England, 6. Pakistan, 7. The Netherlands, 8. New Zealand, 9. Japan, 10. Argentina, 11. India, 12. South Africa.

CHAMPIONS TROPHY

The Netherlands win Champions Trophy Title

The Netherlands claimed their eighth title with a 2-1 win over the world champions Germany in the final of the 28th edition of the prestigious six-nation Champions Trophy hockey tournament held at Terrassa (Spain) during July 22-30. Besides hosts Spain, the other teams in the fray were Germany, Netherlands, Pakistan, Australia and Argentina. India missed the bus to join this tournament as it finished sixth and last in the earlier edition at Chennai. India was replaced by Argentina. Spain won the bronze medal defeating Australia 7-6 via tie-breaker. To decide the 5th-6th position, Pakistan beat Argentina 3-2 to grab the fifth place.

FINAL RANKING: Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Australia, Pakistan and Argentina.

SAF GAMES

Pakistan grabs SAF hockey title

The tenth edition of the South Asia Federation (SAF) Games successfully took place in Colombo during August 18-24. Ever since its inception in 1984 at Kathmandu, India has been enormously leading this sports extravaganza of South East Asia. No exception this time too. However, in the midst of euphoria in the Indian camp this year, what had pricked the country most, was the loss of the hockey gold to Pakistan. Incidentally, hockey was reintroduced in this edition of its 22-year-old history. This discipline was first introduced in the seventh edition in 1995 at Chennai where India won the title defeating Pakistan 1-0 in the final. In this edition also, India remained at the top of the league table with nine points against Pakistan's six. India defeated Pakistan 2-0 in the first match, then beat hosts Sri Lanka 9-1 and Bangladesh 4-0,

while Pakistan beat Bangladesh 5-2 and Sri Lanka 9-1. However, in the end, Pakistan had the last laugh. They took the revenge of their 0-2 loss to India in the league phase by defeating them 3-2 in the final and grabbed the coveted hockey title. Sri Lanka took the bronze defeating Bangladesh 2-0 in the classification play-off match.

FINAL RANKINGS: Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh.

SINGAPORE CHALLENGE SERIES

India's men's team finish second

The third position earned by India's men's team in the prestigious Sultan Azlan Shah Cup, held at Kuala Lumpur in June, brought a hope that this result would inspire the team to finish at the top of the podium in the Singapore Challenge series, which concluded on August 6. The team, however, had belied all expectations. It finished second to our arch-rivals Pakistan in this four-nation series of the tournament, which also had the hosts and Malaysia among the participating countries. Pakistan finished with nine points winning all the three matches and scoring as many as 18 goals in the process. They beat Malaysia 6-0, Singapore 8-0 and India 4-1. India finished runners up with six points defeating Singapore 3-1 and Malaysia 4-3. India scored eight goals and also conceded eight goals.

India's U-18 Boys Team Finish Second

The Singapore Challenge series also did not go India's way. The Under-18 team began their campaign impressively but slipped out at the last post. They had to settle for a runners-up berth in this tournament, which also had the hosts Singapore, Malaysia and Pakistan among the contenders for the title. In their first match, the Indian colts defeated the hosts 3-1 and then entered the final with a hard-fought 4-3 win over Malaysia. The jubilation did not last long. Pakistan defeated India by four goals to one and grabbed the title.

Indian Eves Finish Third

The Indian women's team, the defending champions, had to settle for the third place in this tournament, which also featured hosts Singapore, Malaysia and Japan. The Indian eves

forfeited a 2-0 lead to eventually lose 2-5 to Japan. Defending champions India just needed to beat Japan by one goal only to retain the title but the latter shattered India's hopes by pumping in five goals on a trot in the second half. Malaysia lifted the title with seven points to Japan's Six. India finished third with four points after beating the hosts 6-0 and drawing with Malaysia 1-1.

JAPAN TOURNAMENT

Junior Girls win Japan Tournament

India's junior girls (Under-18) have assured that they are capable of laying foundations for a better tomorrow in respect of the women's hockey in India. They have proved this by annexing the most competitive four-nation U-18 women's Hockey Kagamigahara International Challenge Cup, which was held at Gifu (Japan) during August 13-16. In the league phase, the girls defeated South Korea (1-0) and Malaysia (6-0). They, however, lost to hosts Japan (0-2) but reached the final with six points, where they met Japan once again. Japan had earned seven points winning against Malaysia (1-0), India (2-0) and then drew with South Korea (1-1). In the race to finish atop the podium, India retaliated their pool defeat by beating the hosts 1-0. In the play-off match for the 3rd-4th position, South Korea defeated Malaysia 2-0 to bag the bronze.

TIPS FROM LATE SARDAR GIAN SINGH TO BECOME A GOOD PLAYER

High standard of physical fitness at all times; Good knowledge of the rules; Above average ability in the basic skills; Should be keen to learn the game and discussing it with other players and knowledgeable sports person; Ability to grab and seek advice from and experienced Coach; Ability to study stronger points of opponents and exploitation of their weaknesses, both individually and as a team; Maintain cool temperament - should not be panicky under pressure; Ability to concentrate for full seventy minutes of play; Should be a good team player, and not selfish; Ability to anticipate the trend of play; Should accept the decision of Umpires sportingly and gracefully, even if, in his opinion these are seemingly in favour of opponents; and Maintains his playing gear in clean and good condition.

-(Late Sardar Gian Singh was an International Hockey Coach and Olympic Umpire 1956 & 1960)