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From the President's Desk



For the first time since men's field hockey was introduced in the Asian Games in 1958 in Tokyo (Japan), India finished a poor fifth in the Doha Asian Games. The loss to outsiders China and the subsequent failure to qualify for the semi-finals for the first time ever at the Asian Games, will probably go down as the lowest of lows till now for Indian hockey. Korea, China and Pakistan won the gold, silver and bronze respectively while Japan finished fourth.

Even as the national team was putting up poor performances the Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society was religiously conducting its chain of five popular annual tournaments in an effort to keep the national game alive. The national teams frequent drubbings at international level have, in no way, demoralised the Society organisers.

The Nehru Girls under - 17 tournament is one such competition, which has been gaining in popularity in the last 12 years. This year, SGNP College from Shahabad won the tournament which had attracted 16 teams from all over the country. In the final, they beat Hissar's Blooming Dales School 7-1.

The Junior Boys Tournament saw the emergence of a new champion team in the shape of Guru Harkishan Public School (Punjabi Bagh), New Delhi, who defeated Town High School, Sundergarh (Orissa) 3-2 in the final. As many as 32 leading teams participated in this 35th edition of the tournament. Bangladesh Inst. of Sports was the foreign participant.

The Sub-Junior Tournament, too, had a surprise winner. Govt. High School, Harnamdaspora, Jalandhar made a dream debut by toppling defending champions, Town High School, Sundergarh (Orissa) 3-2 in the final. The 24th edition had seen the participation of 23 leading teams in this under-15 age group competition.

The much awaited tournament is the senior men's tournament. This year the Indian Oil emerged champions by beating the Namdhari XI 2-1 to regain the title they had won six years ago.

The Society's role in the promotion of the national game came in for high praise from an official of the International Hockey Federation (FIH), Bob Davidzon. Bob has written to the Society's Secretary that he was "highly impressed to see the Nehru Hockey tournament which had incorporated girls event", and was also "impressed by the standard of play". The Dutch official added that the Society "should be very proud of the contribution that it delivers to Indian Hockey".

Delhi's dream of winning the men's Senior National Championships for the coveted Rangaswamy Cup after sixty-four years was shattered when they were outplayed by defending champions Punjab & Sind Bank in the final.

At the end of the year 2006, I, on behalf of the Society, take this opportunity to sincerely wish each and every hockey lovers of the country all the best and also wish them a happy and prosperous life in 2007.

Ram Niwas Mirdha

11th WOMEN'S WORLD CUP 2006

India finish eleventh

Indian hockey is obviously going through its worst phase at the moment. Following the men team's 11th place finish in the September 2006 World Cup in Germany, India's women's squad, too finished an identical 11th in the Women's World Cup held in Madrid (Spain) during Sept 27 – 8 Oct. The 11th edition had 12 teams, four less than the last edition held at Perth. They were divided into two pools with India in Pool-A.

The Indian women paid the penalty for their lethargic start as the six-time champions, the Netherlands sneaked home 3-2 in the opening game. India then went down to Germany 2-3 despite taking a 2-1 lead. Later they were held to a 1-1 draw by England. With 3-2 defeat to hosts Spain, India went out of the semi-finals reckoning. India's run in the competition touched a new low as they lost 0-1 to China in their last league match. A lacklustre Indian team finished their league fixtures with just one point only. Korea then added to India's agony by thrashing them 4-1 in the 9-12 play-off. The team, however, managed their solitary win defeating South Africa 1-0 to finish 11th, exactly in a way as their men did in a classification match. Here again, the defeated team, in question, was South Africa! Thus, both men and women teams just managed to avoid the "wooden spoon".

The Netherlands won the coveted title for a record sixth time defeating two-time champions Australia 3-1 in the final. Earlier in the semi-finals, the Netherlands beat defending champions Argentina 3-1 and Australia beat hosts Spain 1-0. Argentina claimed the bronze with a 5 goal thrashing of hosts Spain.

FINAL RANKING : 1. Netherlands, 2. Australia, 3. Argentina, 4. Spain, 5. USA, 7. England, 8. Germany, 9. Korea, 10. China, 11. India, 12. South Africa.

15th ASIAN GAMES, 2006

The Doha Disaster

The shock defeat at the hands of China in the group league phase and the subsequent failure to qualify for the semi-finals for the first time ever at the 15th edition of the Asian Games held at the Qatari capital of Doha during the fortnight ending on December 15, will probably go down as the lowest of lows till now for Indian hockey. This was China's first ever win over India in ten encounters, including three in Asian Games.

India began their Asiad campaign with a comfortable 6-0 win over minnows Bangladesh. After the Bangladesh win immediately came the 'China Shocker'. That result (2-3) was in a way, a confirmation of degeneration of Indian hockey. A 9-0 victory over Oman in the next game notwithstanding, India needed a win against the defending champions Korea in their concluding group encounter for a semi-final berth. But a 1-1 draw against Korea shut

India's chances and China made its first entry into the semi-finals along with Korea from this pool. The draw, thus was the final nail in India's coffin as they went out of a medal contention in the history of the Games for the first time. That India crushed Malaysia 4-0 to finish fifth among the ten teams was a poor consolation.

India needed form and defiance of history in their quest for the coveted gold medal. The team has won the gold medal only twice ever since the game was introduced in the Asian Games in 1958 at Tokyo. Despite the fall from grace on the World Cup this year and also failing to make the semi-finals of the Commonwealth Games, we had at least managed to save face at the Asian level. Now, that honour too has been snatched away from us. For the record, South Korea retained the title beating a spirited China 3-1 in the final. Pakistan finished third with a hard earned 4-2 win over Japan.

The irony is that India will have to win at least one of the three qualifying tournaments to be held in Auckland (New Zealand), Santiago (Chile) and Kakamigahara (Japan) during the period Feb. 2-13 April, 2008, to qualify for a berth in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Even Van Breda Vriesman, President, International Hockey Federation (FIH), who spared quite some time from her busy schedule to intently watch some of the matches played by both India's men's and women's teams during her stay at Doha, admitted that "the present administration of the IHF needs to put in more efforts in grassroots development, umpire programmes, have more turfs. It is not in sync with the times".

India, however, did not return home without a hockey medal. Indian eves ensured that with a bronze medal after a pulsating 1-0 win over Korea. They began with a 7-0 win over Chinese Taipei but capitulated to defending champions China 1-3, making things difficult for them. India then managed a 4-2 win over Malaysia and then went down 0-2 to Japan and 2-3 to Korea in a crucial game of the 7-team round-robin tournament. Finally, Japan with 16 points and China with 15 points topped the league table, followed by Korea (13 points) and India (13 points) earning third and fourth positions respectively. In the summit clash, China beat Japan 1-0 and retained the title. India beat Korea 1-0 to win the bronze medal. All said and done, like their men counterparts the Indian women's team also will have to win any of the three qualifying tournaments to take place in Baku (Azerbaijan), Kazan (Russia) and Vancouver (Canada) during the period April 12-May 4, 2008 for a berth in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The next Games will take place at Guangzhou in China in 2010. "EVER ONWARD".

FINAL RANKINGS :

MEN : 1. Korea, 2. China, 3. Pakistan, 4. Japan, 5. India, 6. Malaysia, 7. Bangladesh, 8. Chinese Taipei, 9. Hong Kong, 10. Oman.

WOMEN : 1. China, 2. Japan, 3. India, 4. Korea, 5. Malaysia, 6. Chinese Taipei, 7. Hong Kong.

Nehru Girls Tournament

Shahabad Eves Win Girls title

With every passing year, the Nehru Hockey Tournament for Girls (Under-17), which was launched in 1994, has been gaining immense popularity at each session. Promoted by the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), the 13th edition of the tournament, the first of the Nehru Hockey's annual series of the five age-group tournaments, was ceremoniously inaugurated on October 10 at the national capital's Shivaji Stadium by Shri Keshav Chandra, Secretary of the NDMC. The final was presided over by Smt. Sindhusree Khullar, Chairperson, NDMC.

This year, the tournament had 16 State School champions participating, including last year's four semi-finalists. Five of the teams were directly seeded into the knock-out phase. They were Birsa Munda Vidyalaya, Rourkela, Govt. Girls High School, Ranchi, SGNP Girls Sr. Sec. School Shahabad, Thenzawl Hr. Sec. School, Mizoram and the Blooming Dales School, Hissar. In the first semi-final, the Shahabad girls thrashed the Mizoram team 8-1 to prove their all-round superiority. The Second semi-final saw the Hissar team defeating Ranchi girls 3-1. The girls from Shahabad proved their superiority once again by winning the final for the sixth time in this tournament's 13-year history. They beat Blooming Dales girls 7-1 in the summit clash. The Mizo girls won the third place beating Ranchi girls 4-3 Via tie breaker.

The winners SGNP girls received Rs. 96,000 while the runners-up Blooming Dales girls got Rs. 64,000 as prize money. The third placed team Thenzawl School were richer by Rs. 32,000. The PEPSI P. C. Award of Rs. 20,000 was won by the Padma Raja Vidyalaya. Gwalior. Kreeda Probodhini, Pune became the Promising Team of the Tournament and received a cash award of Rs. 25,000. the coach of the winning team Baldev Singh and his counterpart of the runners-up and third position Teams namely, Sunder Singh and Ms F. Vanlalveni got Rs. 8,000, Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 3,000 respectively.

Nehru Junior Hockey

GHPS (Delhi) emerge junior champions

'Catch 'em young' has remained a mere slogan for many sports administrators in the country. But for the Nehru Hockey Society it is 'Service with a Smile'. For over 35 years, the Society has been doing yeomen's service to improve the national game and spot talent at grassroots level. Year after year, the Society has been unearthing fresh talent through the five age-group tournaments. And all this without seeking any reward for themselves. The Junior Nehru Hockey Tournament for boys in the under - 17, age-group is one such platform that the Society has been offering to the country's young and talented boys.

As many as 32 leading teams participated in the 35th edition (Oct. 31 - Nov. 14) held at the Union Capital's Shivaji Stadium. In the first phase, 23 teams played on league basis after being divided into eight groups. Four top teams qualified to join the teams in phase-II where nine teams were seeded directly. Out of them the

four semi-finalists were Guru Harkishan Public School (Punjabi Bagh) New Delhi, Govt. Model High School, Chandigarh, Town High School, Sundergarh (Orissa) and Union Academy Sr. Sec. School, New Delhi. In the first semi-final, Guru Harkishan School beat Chandigarh boys 1-0 while the Sundergarh boys beat the boys from Delhi's Union Academy 1-0 in the other semi-final.

GHPS won the trophy for the first time beating Sundergarh boys 3-2 in the final that earned them a cash award of Rs. 96,000. The Sundergarh team got Rs. 64,000 as runners-up. The Chandigarh boys beat two-time winners Union Academy 4-2 to become richer by Rs 32,000 after finishing third. The Bangladesh Institute of Sports was awarded the PEPSI Penalty-Corner Award along with a cash prize of Rs. 20,000. They also got the Foreign Participation Trophy. Sat Guru Partap Singh Academy from Sri Bhaini Sahib, was voted to be the Promising Team of the Tournament. They received a cash award of Rs. 25,000. The Best Disciplined Team Award went to the Army Boys Sport Coy, BRC, Danapur. The Coach of the winning team N.U. Ansari got Rs. 8,000 while the coach of the runners-up team Abraham Kispotta got Rs. 5,000.

NEHRU SUB-JUNIOR

Harnamdaspora School win Nehru Sub-Jr. Title

It was a dream debut for Govt. High School, Harnamdaspora (Jalandhar). The team defeated defending champions Town High School, Sundergarh (Orissa) 3-2 in the final to emerge surprise winners. Thus, the 24th edition of the ONGC-sponsored Nehru Sub-Junior Hockey tournament (Oct. 18-31) for boys in the under-15 age-group had a new winner after 23 teams had battled it out over a fortnight. They were divided into stages. Twelve of them were placed in the preliminary league and in the super league stage, 11 teams were seeded directly while four teams qualified from the preliminary stage to join them.

It was observed that the super league pool winners were more or less regulars in the competition's semi-finals for the last several years. Harnamdaspora School was the first-timer. Earlier in the first semi-final, they beat GRM Sr. Sec. School, Nangloi (Delhi) 2-0. In the other Semi-final, Town High School, Sundergarh beat Army Boys Sports Co. Danapur 2-1.

The title winners received a cash award of Rs. 96,000 while the runners-up got Rs. 64,000. In the clash for the third place, the Nangloi School stroked out Army Boys 4-1. They were richer by Rs. 32,000. The Nangloi School also got Rs. 25,000 being adjudged the Most Promising Team of the Tournament. Harjinder Singh of the winners team and Ernes Surin of the runners-up team jointly received the Jagdish Sharma Trophy being top scorers and earned Rs. 2,500 each. The PEPSI Penalty - corner Award of Rs. 20,000 has gone to the Motilal Nehru School of Sports, Rai.

Surjit Singh, Coach of the winning team, Tej Kumar Xess of runners-up and Anil Kumar of the third placed team got cash award of Rs 8,000, Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 3,000 respectively.

SENIOR NEHRU TOURNAMENT

Namdhari Slip on Indian Oil

Even as the national team of the country was preparing for a tough task ahead the (Doha Asian Games) one witnessed an exhibition of spectacular display of entertaining hockey artistry as the 43rd edition of the fortnight-long senior Nehru Hockey tournament came to a conclusion in the presence of an overflowing spectators at the Shivaji Stadium in the Union Capital on Nov. 25. Twenty one leading teams of the country had participated this year.

Separated into two phases, 13 teams took part in the first phase played on knock-out basis. The four top teams from this phase joined eight others in the next phase. Further, the dozen teams were divided into four groups of three teams each and played on league basis. Two top teams from each group qualified for the quarter-finals. The top four teams that emerged after an intense battle included Indian Oil, Namdhari XI, Bharat Petroleum and Punjab Police. The last named had the best record in this tournament having finished winners seven times and runners-up five times.

But one can never rely on history was proved beyond doubt by Indian Oil, who ousted favourites Punjab Police 3-2 (via golden goal) in the semi-final before overcoming Namdhari XI 2-1 to regain the title they had won for the first time in 2000. This was their second title win. Indian Oil earned a cash award of Rs. 2 lakh while Namdhari XI got Rs. 1 lakh after making it to the final for the first time. Punjab Police had to be satisfied with a third place finish beating Bharat Petroleum 7-6 via golden goal. The Policemen were richer by Rs. 50,000. They also won the Hero Hardline Trophy. The PEPSI Penalty - Corner award of Rs. 20,000 also went to them. The Best Services Team award (Lt. Gen Harbaksh Singh Trophy) of Rs. 10,000 went to Army XI while Virendra Bahadur earned the Sardar Gian Singh Best Umpire Trophy along with a cash award of Rs. 10,000.

62nd SENIOR MEN'S NATIONAL HOCKEY

PSB defends title; Delhi make history

Delhi's dream of winning the Men's Senior National Hockey Championships for the most coveted Rangaswamy Cup after about six decades of long wait was shattered as they were outplayed by defending Champions Punjab & Sind Bank (PSB) in the final at Jalandhar on November 3. It may be recalled, Delhi first entered the final in 1940 and within the next two years it claimed the coveted Trophy defeating Punjab at Lahore and the last time Delhi made it to the final was in 1946 when they lost to Punjab in Calcutta. With an average team age of under - 25 and having just one player who had played at the senior level - Ajitesh Rai- Delhi proved to be the surprise team in the competition, which was held from October 20 onward till November 3 at various centres - Delhi, Ludhiana and Jalandhar. Delhi lost 1-3 in the summit clash to PSB who were the most experienced side. Delhi had raised a lot of expectations after beating a strong Namdhari XI 2-1 in the semi-finals to make it to the title round.

This was one tournament which witnessed a lot of surprises and disappointments. In fact, Delhi ousted one of the favourites, Air India 3-1 to enter the semis. IOC was another team that failed to live up to expectations. Last year's runners cup lost 0-1 to PSB in the semis. The 12-team super league phase in Jalandhar provided some keen fare. More than the triumph of PSB the attention was on Delhi and the Namdhari XI. The latter lowered the colours of former Champions Punjab and the Indian Airlines on successive days. IOC beat Namdhari XI 7-2 to finish third.

SHRI OM PATHAK TAKES OVER AS TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

The Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society got a boost to its endeavour in the promotion of the national game of hockey in the country when Shri Om Pathak took over as Chairman of its Tournament Committee. The 60-year-old distinguished educationist and able administrator, Shri Om Pathak, born at Lahore in 1947, completed his Masters in Economics and joined the Indian Army and fought a war in 1971. He later joined IAS and worked in various capacities and was always at the decision-making levels.



An avid follower of the game of hockey, Shri Om Pathak organised the Indira Gandhi Gold Cup International Tournament in 1995, which till date is remembered as a landmark in Indian hockey. His taking over as Chairman, Tournament Committee in the Nehru Hockey Society will surely add respectability and authority to the game.

PRAISE FOR NEHRU HOCKEY SOCIETY

The Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society's role in promoting the national game of hockey in the country recently came in for high praise from an official of the International Hockey Federation (FIH). Bob Davidzon was in the national capital to look after the part of a project that the FIH and the International Olympic Council (IOC) have envisaged to give a boost to hockey in India. He said, he was "highly impressed to see the Nehru Hockey Tournament, which had incorporated girls event in the tournament. He was also "impressed by the standard of play". The Dutch official also said that the Society "should be very proud of the contribution that it delivers to Indian hockey". In a letter to the Society, he wrote "I had the chance to read through your impressive Year Book 2005 with a complete and upto date information on your Society as well as the history of Indian Hockey at International level". Incidentally, Bob Davidzon is a former International hockey umpire. ■