



# THE CRADLE OF INDIAN HOCKEY NEWSLETTER

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## *From the President's Desk*



From the dominant powerhouse of world hockey that the country was till 1980 when it won its eighth Olympic gold medal India's fortunes in the field of hockey is steadily coming down. From a team which used to teach lessons in the game of hockey to several Asian and European countries, it has come to be seen as a team which could fall even to minnows like China.

The year 2006 was nonetheless unproductive as far as India's performances were concerned. Finishing Sixth in the Melbourne Commonwealth Games and getting a 4-1 drubbing at the hands of our traditional Asian rivals Pakistan set the trend of poor performances to follow. Despite bagging the bronze medal in the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup in Malaysia, India's fortunes nose-dived once again in the 11th World Cup in Germany where India's men's team finished 11th among the 12 participants. Then came the 'Doha Disaster' where India failed to qualify for an Asian Games Semi-finals for the first time. India had to finish a poor fifth.

Back home, the Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society continued its quest to unearth fresh talent by organising competitions at all age-groups, which has ever been so successful for so many decades now. The Champion Colleges Tournament, sponsored by SAIL, was won by DAV College, Jalandhar.

The first major domestic tournament of the year 2007 was the third edition of the Premier Hockey League, the brain-child of the I.H.F. As many as 26 top grade players from the Netherlands, Spain, Australia, Argentina, Pakistan and Malaysia participated, representing different Indian teams. Orissa Steelers beat Sher-E-Jalandhar in the final in a rough encounter in which umpire Satinder Sharma was manhandled by the Shers' protesting a decision awarding a goal against them. India's worst-ever performance at last year's World Cup has pushed the men's team to the seventh place in World rankings. Indian women, however, maintained their 13th position.

Indian men's team's consistently poor show in the past few months means that the team will have to qualify for the next Olympics in Beijing in 2008.

The Nehru Hockey Society paid its homage to its Assistant Treasurer R. C. Pandey, who breathed his last at his residence in Delhi on March 1. He was 83. May his noble soul rest in peace!

**Ram Niwas Mirdha**



## INDIAN HOCKEY IN 2006

### A balance sheet

Till the late 1970's field hockey was known as the 'National Game' of India. Every other hockey playing country in the world used to envy India's record at the international arena and tried to emulate India's performances. But the scenario suddenly changed after the Moscow Olympics in 1980, despite India winning the gold medal for the eighth time. Today, even minnows like China are beating India in competitions. India is no more considered a powerhouse to reckon with even in Asia. Pakistan, South Korea and even Malaysia have scored victories over India in important tournaments. Some of the European countries have marched well ahead of India in this game.

And the irony of it is that India, which used to provide coaching assistance to several European and Asian countries had to borrow a German coach for its own national team in the recent past! The year 2006 witnessed further downfall of Indian hockey.

**Here is the final Report Card of Indian hockey team's performances in 2006. Not a very encouraging thing when one considers the progress being made by European and Asian countries in the past decade.**

The year began with the 18th Commonwealth Games in Melbourne where the men's team finished sixth, getting 1-4 drubbing at the hands of India's traditional rivals Pakistan being one of the sore points of this competition. Hosts Australia scored a hat-trick by clinching the men's title for the third time in a row, beating Pakistan 3-0 in the final. Indian women, however, provided some consolation by finishing runners-up to Australia. India's Women's team, it may be recalled, had won the gold medal in the previous edition in 2002 at Manchester. Prior to the Commonwealth Games, India and Pakistan played a six-match home-and-away series, which India lost 1-3.

The middle of the year (June 18-25) saw the resurgence of Indian hockey when it bagged a bronze medal in the 15th edition of Sultan Azlan Shah Cup. India lost 0-1 to eventual winners, the Netherlands. But one of the worst performances came in the 11th World Cup at Monchengladbach in Germany (Sept. 6-17) where India finished 11th among 12 participants. India, who won the Cup in 1975 and had also finished second and third once earlier in the past 35 years of the Cup's inception, managed to win just one out of seven matches!

India were conspicuous by their absence in the 28th Champions Trophy in Spain (July 22-30) as they had missed the bus having finished sixth and last in the earlier edition at Chennai. The 10th edition of the SAF Games held in Colombo during August 18-24 once again saw India lose their grip to Pakistan, who beat them 3-2 in the final.

The 'Doha Disaster' came as a final nail in India's coffin in 2006. A fifth position for the men's team was one of the worst performances ever in the Asian Games. And failing to make even the Semi-final came as a big blow. Indian women, however, got some consolation by finishing third behind China and Japan. Ironically, for the first time India failed to qualify for the Semi-finals in the Asiad.

Even as the Indian teams were struggling at international level, there were some encouraging scenes at domestic level where the IHF and the Nehru Hockey Society were engaged religiously in the promotion of the game, via a series of tournaments to unearth fresh talents. IHF successfully conducted the second edition of the Premier Hockey League (PHL) at Chandigarh during January 14-Feb.1. Bangalore Lions won the title. As in the past four decades, the Nehru age-group tournaments were conducted successfully. Indian Oil beat Namdhari-XI 2-1 to win the Senior Nehru title. GHPS (Delhi), Shahabad Girls School, Harnamdaspora School and Jamia Millia won the Nehru Society's juniors, girls, sub-juniors and Champion Colleges titles respectively.

And in between, PSB defended their Senior Men's National title (Rangaswamy Cup) while the Railway girls won the coveted Lady Rattan Tata Cup, the symbol of Women's Hockey in the country.

The Punjab & Sind Bank (PSB) won the country's and world's oldest organised tournament - the Beighton Cup (established in 1895) - for the fourth time beating Border Security Force (BSF) 1-0 in the final.

### DAV COLLEGE, JALANDHAR ANNEX CHAMPION COLLEGES TROPHY

The Nehru Hockey Tournament Society's new season successfully began with the highly competitive SAIL-Nehru Champion Colleges Tournament. Sponsored by the Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL), it was organised jointly by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) and the Nehru Hockey Society.

The Champion Colleges of the Universities securing the first three positions in their respective Inter-University Zonal



Tournaments (2006-07) took part in this mega event. The object of this tournament is to promote the National game in the university sector in order to build up the nation's second line of defence. Interestingly, since its inception 14 years ago, this tournament has been gaining momentum year after year as is evident that as many as 13 champion colleges of the best hockey playing universities across the country - five more than last year - took part this year. It was played at the Union Capital's Shivaji Stadium during February 8-17, 2007.

The competition was played in two phases. In the league phase, the teams were divided into four groups with three teams each except the group - I, which had four teams. The two teams emerging on top in each group qualified for the quarter-finals. In the second phase the four teams which reached the semi-finals were the last year's runners-up DAV College, Jalandhar, the Faculty of Humanity & social Sciences from the Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith, Varanasi, Jawaharlal Nehru PG College, Bhopal and Govt. Mahindra College, Patiala.

The DAV College, Jalandhar and JNPG College, Bhopal, ultimately registered themselves for the summit clash. Earlier the Jalandharians beat the Varanasis 4-0 while the Bhopalans got past the Patialans 3-0 in the Semi-finals. The Jalandharians had the last laugh when they compensated their last year's defeat in the final. They defeated the Bhopalans 3-1 to annex the coveted title for the eighth time since 1996. Earlier in the day, the Govt. Mahindra College, Patiala thrashed the Kashi Vidyapith, Varanasi 5-1 to bag the third place.

The winners were richer by Rs. 96,000 while the runners - up got Rs. 64,000 as prize money. The third placed team received Rs. 32,000. Gundeep Singh, the Coach of the winning team, Habeeb Hasan of the runners-up team and Hira Singh of the 3rd placed team also received cash award of Rs. 8,000, Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 3,000 respectively. The PEPSI Penalty - Corner award of Rs. 20,000 went to the Govt. Mahindra Colleges.

## PREMIER HOCKEY LEAGUE

### Steelers steal the show

The Indian Hockey Federation's brain-child, the Premier Hockey League's third edition had gone through during this year from January 4 to March 5 in its usual big way. The Championship was organised by the IHF in association with ESPN STAR SPORTS & LEISURE SPORTS Management. It carried a prize money of Rs. 67 lakhs. It was a two-city event - Chennai (January 4 to February 4) and Chandigarh (February

11 to March 5) where seven teams played 87 matches. They were Orissa Steelers, Sher-E-Jalandhar, Bangalore Lions, Maratha Warriors, Chandigarh Dynamos, Chennai Veerans and Hyderabad Sultans.

It was a 'double' round-robin league played at two venues. The top two teams from the round-robin stage played in the best of three finals to decide the winners. Each match was divided into four quarters of 17 minutes and 30 seconds each. the winners in the stipulated time got three points while the team winning in the extra time got two. The losers in extra-time got one point. The third edition had attracted 26 top grade players from six countries viz. The Netherlands (8), Spain (1), Australia (1), Argentina (1), Pakistan (12) and Malaysia (3).

It was quite interesting to observe that out of seven teams, Orissa Steelers, Sher-E-Jalandhar and Bangalore Lions fought neck-to-neck and remained in the same first three positions all through the two legs and ultimately also ending in identical placings. Orissa Steelers with 28 points acquired from the two legs and Sher-E-Jalandhar with 23 points fought the best of three finals to win the coveted title. With both the teams having one 'final' each, the decisive final proved crucial for each other. The Steelers had the last laugh when they edged out the Shers 4-3 to win this year's title at Chandigarh on March 5. But this was not under the best circumstances. All hell broke loose when a contentious penalty corner goal was scored by the Steelers' captain Dilip Tirkey in the 55th minute of the game. India's International umpire Satinder Sharma was manhandled by the Shers protesting against his decision about awarding the goal in question. Thankfully, it took the persuasive skills of the IHF Secretary, K. Jothikumaran to resume the match after a gap of 26 minutes. Shers have since been fined 50 per cent of thier prize money for "unsportsmanlike behaviour" by the IHF. The Federation has also imposed a three-year ban on three delinquent players of the Sher-E-Jalandhar prohibiting them from taking part in any recognised domestic or international tournaments with effect from March, 2007. They have also been permanently debarred from participation in future editions of Premier Hockey League. Defending Champions Bangalore Lions with 20 points were placed third this year.

The winners were richer by Rs. 40 lakhs as prize money while the runners-up received only Rs. 7.5 lakhs (50 percent less of Rs. 15 lakhs prize money on account of fine imposed for misbehaviour). Banagalore Lions, who were placed third earned Rs. 7.5 lakhs. The Lions also won the Fair Play Trophy along with Rs. 1.5 lakhs. Steelers' captain Dilip Tirkey got Rs. 1.5 lakhs having been declared the "Player of the League". The Highest Scorer Award of Rs. 1.5 lakhs was given to



Gagan Ajit Singh of Sher-E-Jalandhar, who had scored as many as 16 goals.

## WORLD RANKINGS

### Indian Men Seventh, Women thirteenth

India's worst-ever performance at the 11th Men's Hockey World Cup in Germany has pushed them down one place from Sixth to Seventh in the latest world rankings. After suffering five defeats and a draw before collecting a consolation win (against South Africa), the Indians could manage only an 11th place finish in the tournament and gathered just 350 points. With 1418 points aggregate, India are now placed below South Korea (1500), who rose to sixth from eight with a fourth place finish. With 2315 points, champions Germany effected the biggest change at the top, toppling Olympic champions Australia (2295) to emerge Number one.

**TOP TEN : 1. Germany (2315), 2. Australia (2295), 3. Spain (2193), 4. The Netherlands (2000), 5. Pakistan (1810), 6. South Korea (1500), 7. India (1418), 8. Argentina (1275), 9. England (1249), 10. New Zealand (1220).**

Insofar as Indian women's hockey is concerned, the team, which also finished 11th in the just held 11th Women's Hockey World Cup held at Spain, maintained its 13th spot in the latest world rankings with 850 points in their kitty.

## INDIA TO QUALIFY FOR BEIJING OLYMPICS

India will have the last opportunity to earn a berth in the 2008 Beijing Olympics when they go through qualifiers because of their failure to book an automatic entry into this 12 - team mega event. It may be recalled that owing to the fall from grace on the World Cup, Commonwealth Games and, of late, the Asian Games, India will have to win any one of the three qualifying tournaments for men to take place next year in Auckland (New Zealand) during February 2-9, March 1-9 in Santiago (Chile) and April 5-13 in Kakamigahara (Japan).

Ironically, similar is the fate in respect of our women's team for identical reasons. They will also have to emerge winners in any one of the three qualifying tournaments for women to be held in Baku (Azarbaijan), Kazan (Russia) and

Vancouver (Canada) during April 12-20, April 19-27 and April 26 to May 4, 2008 respectively for a berth in the Beijing Olympics 2008.

After the International Hockey Federation (FIH) announced the six hosts of the Olympic qualifiers at its Congress in November 2006, the dates for these qualifying tournaments were confirmed on December 21, 2006.

Starting from February 2, 2008, the six qualifiers will be played till May 4, 2008 and the last three Olympic tickets in each gender will be awarded to the winners of the respective Olympic qualifiers. The qualifiers will be the last chance for India's both men and women's teams as they did not qualify directly through their Continental Championships.

## SOCIETY'S ASSTT. TREASURER R. C. PANDEY PASSES AWAY

The Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society was shocked to learn the untimely demise of Shri R. C. Pandey, who breathed his last at his New Delhi residence on Thursday, March 1 at the age of 83. He died of heart failure.



Shri Pandey, had been functioning as Assistant Treasurer of the Society since 1970. A valued member of the Society, he was not only looking after the finances but also helped the Society greatly in raising funds. He was ever willing to lend his helping hand to further the cause of sports in the country. With his charming and versatile personality, Shri Pandey had endeared himself to all who came in contact with him.

The Nehru Hockey Society will badly miss his wise counsel and guidance. May his noble soul rest in peace!