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INSIDE

NEHRU HOCKEY

The birth of the 'dream-child' of Indian Hockey ...2

DHYAN CHAND'S BIRTH CENTENARY

Dhyan Chand the legend remembered ...3

National Awardees (Hockey) ...3

WOMEN'S NATIONAL HOCKEY

National Title shared in Women's Hockey ...3

ROBOBANK MEN'S JUNIOR WORLD CUP

India finish fourth ...4

ROBOBAK EIGHT-NATION HOCKEY

India avoided bottom placing ...4

SINGAPORE WOMEN'S HOCKEY TOURNEY

Indian Eves Win Singapore Tourney ...4

WOMEN'S JUNIOR WORLD CUP
India Finish Eleventh ...4

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From the President's Desk

As the Nehru Hockey Tournament Society enters its 42nd year of its glorious existence, it is worth looking back at its fascinating past, eventful present and a great and prosperous future. The Society's contribution to Indian hockey can never be overstated. The Society began its activities in 1964 with the sole aim of reviving the 'golden era' of Indian hockey. Today, the Society runs five tournaments in the Union Capital and provides top-class hockey.

This year coincides with the birth Centenary of the game's greatest 'Wizard' Major Dhyan Chand. The hockey legend's birth Centenary was observed throughout the country as the 'National Sports Day'. The nation's highest sports awards are given away every year on this very date by the President of India. The Nehru Hockey Society joined millions of admirers and fans of Dhyan Chand in saluting the legend on this auspicious occasion.

The Railways and Haryana shared the 53rd National Women's Hockey Championships. The two stellar teams ended in a 1-1 draw in the final on July 11 in Delhi. The spin of coin favoured Haryana, who will keep the prestigious Lady Ratan Tata trophy for the first six months.

Indian men's team's fourth-place finish among 16 teams in the Junior World Cup at Rotterdam did little justice to their talent and potential. Defending champions India lost a couple of matches after taking lead proved to be Indian team's nagging weakness. But Indian hockey received a setback in Amstelveen where the senior team finished seventh, out of eight teams, in the Robobank Senior Mini-World Cup. There was, however, something to cheer about. The Indian women's hockey team won the four-nation tournament in Singapore defeating Asian Games silver medalist South Korea 3-0 in the final. It was hoped that this win would go a long way to strongly face the 16-team U-21 World Cup (Women) at Santiago (Chile). But that was not to be. The girls ended their campaign by securing a lowly 11th place.

Ram Niwas Mirdha



The Birth of the 'Dream-Child' of Indian Hockey

The advent of Nehru hockey's open tournament in Delhi in the mid-60s was a boost in the arm for the game. It became a popular tournament attracting the cream of talent from all over the country. The tournament discovered some brilliant players, most of whom went on to wear national colours. The Nehru tournament, in fact, was the best thing that happened to Indian hockey and when the organisers, the Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament Society, with some big names as patrons and a bunch of keen enthusiasts from the bureaucracy running the show, expanded the idea and introduced tournaments for Sub-juniors and Juniors, the feeling was that Indian hockey had at last found a good base to sustain itself. All these ventures provided some top-class hockey to crowds which flocked to the then Lady Hardinge Ground (now called Shivaji Stadium). For the Nehru hockey tournament's contribution to Indian hockey can never be overstated. The two are closely linked and must continue their association. It must be admitted the Nehru Hockey Tournament Society, which runs five tournaments in Delhi has a very high profile administration with some big names associated with it. They are influential people, who have held senior-most positions in the Government and have, at the same time, been connected with the game at one stage or the other. The administrative wing too has been ably handled by men who have devoted a lifetime to the cause of Indian hockey.

The Nehru Hockey Tournament Society (NHTS) now has entered into the 42nd year of its glorious existence. It has a fascinating past, eventful present and a great future.

What prompted the birth of the Society is an interesting story, worth recalling though briefly. The shock defeat of the Indian team in the 1960 Rome Olympics final to our arch-rivals Pakistan, breaking the country's longest chain of spectacular successes in Olympic Games since 1928, brought an amalgamation of hockey lovers, Olympians and general public at large, who put their collective ideas for the revival of this national game in the country and formed the Society in 1964, named after the sports-loving first Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru.

Persons in exalted positions in the Union Government immediately came forward to give the Society a proper shape, identity and system by heading the nascent organization. Such big names as those of Union Ministers A.K. Sen (Law), Y.B. Chavan (Defence), Ram Niwas Mirdha (Communications) and Sharad Pawar (Agriculture) gave it a boost. Other celebrities like H.C. Sarin (Defence Secretary), S. Ratnam (Finance Secretary), Maj. Gen. Virendra Singh (DG-NCC), Saiyid Hamid (Chairman, Hamdard University) and Subir Raha (Chairman, ONGC) involved themselves wholeheartedly and became an integral part of the Society. India's Vice-President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat is the Patron, Ram Niwas Mirdha, President and Delhi C.M. Sheila Dikshit is one of the Vice-Presidents.

The organization of the tournaments is in the capable hands of Lt. Gen. M.S. Bhullar as Chairman Tournament Committee with Mrs. Sindhushree Khullar as Chairperson, Managing Committee to look after the Junior Sections. The Society's Secretariat is run by two-time Olympian Cdr. G. Nandy Singh (General Secretary) and Shiv Kumar Varma (Secretary). They are ably assisted by a band of dedicated hockey lovers that include K.G. Kakkar, N.L. Narang, Y.R. Khatkar (better known as Indian hockey's moving encyclopaedia), K.N. Sharma, A.S. Thakur, S.P. Malhotra, R.C. Pandey, just to name only a few.

The Society began its activities in 1964 with a senior open tournament. Inspired by its instant success as it attracted a good number of recognised foreign teams, it started age-group competitions in 1972, for under-17 and later under-15 school boys. Government Scholarships and prize money are awarded to the winners and outstanding players. Former Union Minister of Chemicals, Jai Chandra Singh was the first person who initiated the concept of prize money as incentive to attract the youngsters to the game. In the 1972 Munich Olympics, India conceded a goal against Pakistan in the first half of the Semi-final while in the second session India got as many as 12 penalty-corners but failed to convert even a single one of them. This shocked Cdr. Nandy Singh, who happened to be in Munich to witness the match personally. It prompted him to seriously promote the game at University level. And in consultation with IHF and the Association of Indian Universities, conceived the Champion Colleges Tournament in 1993. Sixteen best Champion Colleges of the country vie for the top honours. To maintain equality of sex and gender, the girls were not left behind. And on a proposal from the Indian Women's Hockey Federation, the Society started its fifth tournament, a school girls tournament (under-17 years), since 1993. **Nehru Hockey Society is thus fondly called the cradle of Indian Hockey. PLAY THE GAME IN THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME.**

Dhyan Chand – The Legend Remembered

A grateful nation on August 29 celebrated the 100th birth anniversary of hockey legend Dhyan Chand, one of the world's greatest-ever players, who not only gave the country three Olympic gold medals on a trot but took hockey artistry to a sublime level to still remain a source of inspiration for the new generation of players. His birthday is observed in the country as the 'National Sports Day'. The Arjuna and other highest sports awards including the Dhyan Chand Award for lifetime achievements in sports, are conferred by the President of India in his honour on this very date. The main functions took place at his ancestral place in Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. With the active co-operation of the State Government, the Centenary Celebrations Committee, headed by his Olympian son, Ashok Kumar, officially began its chain of programmes on August 20



Dhyan Chand (3rd from left in the standing row) with the first Indian Army team that toured Australia and New Zealand in 1926.

with a 16-team boys hockey tournament. SAI Hostel (Bhopal) won the centenary trophy defeating the Western Railways (Jabalpur) 2-1. Organised by the local Heros Club, the week-long tournament concluded on August 29 with a suitably auspicious total : exactly 100 goals scored! Then there was a 'padayatra' by eminent citizens and a collection of 21 former Olympians and World Cuppers. They were joined by a band of 15 Railway Police Force. An exhibition hockey match was also held between the former hockey greats and the junior women's World Cuppers. This match may not have been the best in terms of sheer skill but the respect for the legend was nevertheless a treat to see. The day's functions ended with a burst of fireworks to lit up Jhansi's evening sky. In the Union Capital, an exhibition hockey match was organised by the Indian Hockey Federation between a Junior-XI and the Seniors. In Kolkata, the Bengal Hockey Association has decided to instal a life-size statue of the great player at a suitable place in the city. The Andhra Pradesh Government paid its tributes by unveiling his statue in Medak.

Born in Allahabad on August 29, Dhyan Chand joined the British Indian Army as a lowly Sepoy in 1922 and was given the King's Commission in 1943. He retired from the Army as Major. He was conferred the Padma Bhushan in 1956 and a year after his death in 1979, the Indian Government issued a Commemorative Stamp in his honour. The Nehru Hockey Society joins millions of his fans and admirers to give a big salute to the legend on his 100th birth anniversary.

National Awardees (Hockey)

Life's ambitions achieved! Three superstars from the world of Indian hockey received the nation's highest sports awards from the President, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam on August 29 at the Ashoka Hall of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Coach Rajinder Singh (Jr.) was honoured with prestigious Dhyan Chand Award, meant for ones lifetime achievements in sports and games. Incidentally, the date of this award giving ceremony has a special significance for Rajinder Singh in more ways than one. 'August 29' is not only the birthday of hockey wizard, the day is also observed as the 'National Sports Day' in the country in his honour, and this year happens to be the Birth Centenary Year of the legend. Senior players Deepak Thakur (men's hockey) and Innocent Helen Mary (women's hockey) are the two proud recipients of the coveted Arjuna Award, the highest national recognition of distinguished sports-persons. **Nehru Hockey Society congratulates all of them for receiving such national honours this year.**

National Title Shared in Women's Hockey

Over 200 goals in 14 days! Unbelievable indeed, but true. It happened in the 53rd edition of the National Women's Hockey Championships, which ended on July 11, at the Shivaji Stadium in the Union Capital. Obviously, the participating teams did not play according to their potential. The Championships began on June 27 with 14 teams –12 qualifiers and two direct entrants in defending champions Railways and runners-up Indian Universities. Mizoram, who did well in the qualifiers, failed to turn-up. Besides those who made it to the knock-out stage, only Uttar Pradesh and Orissa showed some promise and calibre. The title clash between the Railways, which had as many as 12 internationals in the squad and Haryana, comprising a few raw talent groomed into the team, ended in a 1-1 draw. At the end of the regulation time, they were declared joint winners as further extra-time play became impossible owing to failing light. Spin of coin went in favour of Haryana and they will keep the prestigious glittering Lady Ratan Tata Silver trophy for the first six months. Jharkhand scored a 1-0 win over former champions Mumbai in the third-place play-off match.

India Finish Fourth

Defending champions India's fourth-place finish in the eighth edition of the Junior World Cup Hockey Tournament, which concluded at Rotterdam (Holland) on July 10, did little justice to its inherent talent and potential. The Indians initially did show glimpses of what they were expected to do. Their progress through the first round of preliminary league matches with an unbeaten record raised hopes of an eventful cup triumph. After overcoming Egypt 4-1 in their first match, they struggled to beat Poland 3-2, nearly squandering away a comfortable 3-1 lead. Their best performance, a 4-1 drubbing of the Netherlands in a match that saw the Indian team at their sparkling best, and thus topped Pool-D. The Indians, however, lost their flow and rhythm in their championship round Pool-E matches. India went into a tailspin and crashed to a 0-4 defeat to Spain. However, rattled India bounced back to beat South Korea 3-1. In their last Pool-E match, they beat England 1-0 and thus entered the Semi-final berth. In the Semi-final against Australia, after leading 2-0 at the breather, India conceded three goals in the space of just ten minutes midway through the second half. India eventually lost 2-3. It was a match the Indians should have wrapped up with ease after such a bright start. In the other Semi-final, Argentina beat Spain 2-1 to reach the final. Winners in the last edition, India missed out on the bronze medal after going down 5-6 via tie-breaker to Spain. The South American Champions Argentina, the runners-up to India at the last edition at Hobart (Australia), defeated Australia 2-1 to lift the coveted 16-team Men's Robobank Junior World Cup Hockey.

India Avoided Bottom Placing

The Indian team had the skill and fitness to reach the final of the eight-nation Robobank Senior Mini-World Cup tournament held in Amstelveen (August 14-21). But they failed even in the basics, according to Coach Rajinder Singh (Jr.). Even the return of Gagan Ajit Singh upfront and Kanwalpreet Singh in defence, boosted the team to a great extent. Yet the team was unable to bring any worthwhile result. They finished their league engagements without a single point losing all the three matches on a trot. India finished seventh beating England 2-1 in the 7th-8th place classification stage. Pakistan, on the other hand, grasped all the chances that came their way and emerged worthy winners after beating Olympic Champions Australia 4-3 in the final. Spain edged past Asian Games Champions South Korea 2-1 to take the bronze. **Failure to convert penalty-corners was once again the main reason for India's poor performance. They earned as many as ten penalty-corners but succeeded in converting only two. FINAL PLACINGS : 1. Pakistan, 2. Australia, 3. Spain, 4. South Korea, 5. Netherlands, 6. Germany, 7. India, 8. England.**

Indian Eves Win Singapore Tourney

At last a good news for Indian hockey. The Indian eves have convincingly won the four-nation women's hockey tournament held at Singapore defeating Asian Games Silver medallist South Korea 3-0 in the final on August 28. Mercurial centre-forward S. Chanu scored two goals while ever agile centre-half Mamta Kharab netted one. In their route to the final, the vibrant girls defeated hosts Singapore 2-0 in their opener and then drew with Malaysia 3-3. This win will, it is hoped, go a long way in boosting their morale and help them revive the killer instinct to strongly face the 16-team 5th U-21 Junior World Cup (Women) to take place at Santiago (Chile) just a few weeks away (Sept. 14-25).

India Finish Eleventh

Soon after achieving spectacular success by our women's hockey team in the Singapore Open tourney, held just a few weeks earlier, much was naturally expected from our young girls to keep the winning trend continued. But unfortunately that did not happen. In the just held 5th U-21 Women's Junior World Cup at Santiago (Chile), the team with four drawn games, two wins and two defeats, was at best able to capture the lowly 11th place in the 16-team championships on Sept. 25.

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