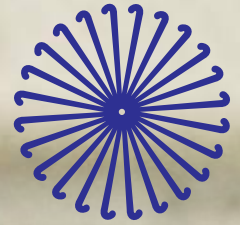


Newsletter

Vol. 47 (March & April 2020)



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Indian Women's team
stands tall to help
feed the poor - raised
over Rs. 20.00 lakhs

#IndiKaGame





HOCKEY INDIA

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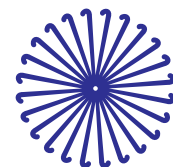
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HOCKEY INDIA



MESSAGE FROM

Mohd. Mushtaque Ahmad

President, Hockey India

Hi,

The months of March and April have been very tough for everyone around the globe. It was disappointing to see many sporting events being cancelled or postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the right decision has been taken as the well-being of people is the most important thing at the moment. I know that the players were initially disappointed to hear of the postponement of the Olympic Games to 2021. However we will ensure that we all continue to put in the hard yards in whichever way we can and stay focussed on the quadrennial event.

Hockey India has announced the restructuring of the annual National Championships with effect from 2021. The fresh structure will certainly help in maximizing athlete participation and further develop hockey among the States, Union Territories/NCTs, Institutional Units and Academy Members.

It was absolutely amazing to see our players being rewarded for their hard work at the Hockey India 3rd Annual Awards 2019 early on in March. The Indian Men's and Women's Hockey Teams have put up some brilliant performances in 2019 and the players deserve all the accolades they received during the Annual Awards.

We were extremely honoured to be in a position to contribute Rs 1.00 Crore to the PM Cares Fund and Rs. 21.00 Lakhs to the Odisha Chief Minister's Relief Fund and help those whose livelihoods have been affected due to the COVID-19 crisis. We hope that we can always be there to support the citizens of our country in difficult times.

It has been fantastic to see the way the Indian Women's Hockey Team has carried out a fun fitness challenge to raise funds for the poor and migrant families whose lives have been affected due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The players always make us proud on and off the field.

Hockey India has ensured that the Indian Umpires and Technical Officials are utilizing the lockdown period productively by conducting interactive sessions through WhatsApp. The sessions have helped officials raise their level of officiating and also maintain their fitness levels.

Overall, it has been an energetic two months for all of us here at Hockey India. We will keep working towards our goal of revolutionizing hockey in the upcoming months. Hopefully, the situation is resolved soon and then the players can begin their preparations for the Olympics in full flow.



HOCKEY INDIA

FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Fight against Covid-19: Hockey India total contribution of Rs. 1.00 Crore/ Rs. 100.00 Lakhs for the PM Cares Fund

In a big step towards helping India's fight against Covid-19 Pandemic, Hockey India announced a total of Rs. 1.00 Crore/Rs. 100.00 Lakhs towards the PM Cares Fund. On April 1, Hockey India had announced the contribution of Rs 25.00 lakhs towards the cause and on April 4, Hockey India further contributed another 75 lakhs unanimously to grow the contribution to a total of Rs 1.00 crore/Rs. 100.00 lakhs equivalent to over USD 130,000 towards the PM Cares Fund.

"In the wake of this crisis, it is the need-of-the-hour to step up and come together to stand with the Government of India who are doing everything they can to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the years, we have received tremendous support from the people of this country who have kept us motivated through various challenges. This is the time to give back to the people of India in whatever we can," stated Mohd Mushtaq Ahmad, President, Hockey India.

Rajinder Singh, Secretary General, Hockey India reflected the President's thoughts and said, "Hockey India has always believed in helping those in need and I am proud the Executive Board took this unanimous decision to contribute a total of Rs 1.00 Crore towards the PM Cares Fund. With millions of Indian lives affected because of this pandemic, it was important for us to step up keeping in mind the interest of the nation."

Hockey India CEO Elena Norman further added, "Hockey India has been built by the nation and hence must do as much as we can for the nation during these testing times. We hope our contribution of Rs 1.00 crore to the PM Cares Fund will help provide vital facilities to those in need. With this, we support all heroic efforts being made to fight this pandemic."



सत्यमेव जयते

PM CARES

Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief
in Emergency Situations Fund

Fight against Covid-19: Hockey India contributes Rs. 21.00 Lakhs to Odisha Chief Minister's Relief Fund

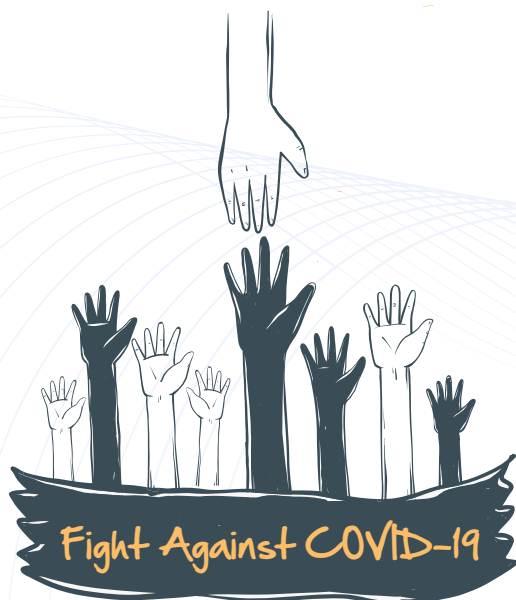
Amid the current situation surrounding COVID-19 pandemic, Hockey India on 08th April 2020 announced a contribution of Rs. 21.00 Lakhs towards the Odisha Chief Minister's Relief Fund in order to help the hockey-loving state in its fight against the global pandemic. With the number of cases on the rise in the state of Odisha, the Hockey India Executive Board took a unanimous decision to make the contribution in order to support the Government of Odisha in their fight against the pandemic.

"The State of Odisha has always been a huge supporter of Hockey, and given the current crisis that we are all facing, everyone at Hockey India hopes that this contribution of Rs. 21.00 Lakhs can make a difference in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic. The Government of Odisha is doing their best to fight the pandemic in the state, and we hope that through this contribution, Hockey India can also help the people of Odisha, who have always been huge support for Indian hockey," stated Mohd Mushtaq Ahmad, President, Hockey India.

Rajinder Singh, Secretary General, Hockey India reflected the President's thoughts and said, "Hockey India has always received huge support and motivation from the people of Odisha, and I am proud that the Hockey India Executive Board took this unanimous decision to contribute a total amount of Rs. 21.00 Lakhs, to the Odisha Chief Minister's Relief Fund. We hope our contribution will help the state provide vital facilities and care to those in need, and also provide support to the heroes who are working tirelessly to fight this pandemic."



Chief Minister's Relief Fund Government of Odisha



COVER STORY

Fight against COVID-19 pandemic: Indian Women's Hockey Team raise more than Rs. 20.00 lakhs to feed the poor

The team led by Captain Rani and Vice Captain Savita had launched an 18-day fun fitness challenge to help raise funds and also encourage people to stay active during the nation-wide lockdown.



It was sometime in the first week of April when Rani had phoned her house to check on her parents' well-being following a nationwide lockdown that was announced by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 25th March 2020 to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Rani, along with 24 other Core Probables of Indian Women's Hockey Team, were housed in the SAI Centre in Bengaluru where all arrangements had been made to ensure players had a safe environment. Though players felt they were better off in SAI than in their hometowns where there was growing concerns about the spread of the infection, many of them would call their family members regularly to ensure they are safe and following all precautions provided by the government.





During one such conversation, Rani's father, who had worked as a cart-puller for a larger part of his life and made a living through daily wages, mentioned to his daughter that -- had she not been playing hockey, perhaps their family would be facing stark difficulties just like thousands of migrant and daily wage workers who were rendered jobless and in want of food and sanitary items. "We may not have had food to eat," he told Rani which broke her heart while tears trickled down her cheeks.



Pained by the sufferings of many people across the country, the Indian Women's Hockey Team felt strongly about doing something for the people. When they discussed this with Team's Chief Coach Sjoerd Marijne, he mentioned to the girls an idea of 'fundraiser which can be done online'.

This set the ball rolling for an initiative that was a first-of-its-kind taken up by the Indian Women's Hockey Team and perhaps the only team sport initiative in the country which vied to contribute to fight the Covid-19 pandemic by helping the poor and displaced migrant workers.

On 17th April 2020, the Indian Women's Hockey Team launched an 18-day fun fitness challenge to raise funds towards helping the poor and migrant families whose lives have been affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



While the challenge aimed to raise crowd-funding for the cause, the movement also encouraged people to use this opportunity to adapt to an active lifestyle during the nation-wide lockdown. Within just a week, the team managed to achieve its initial goal of Rs 15.00 lakhs, but extended the goal to Rs 20.00 lakhs later, which was raised by the team by 3rd May 2020.

"During these difficult times when Covid-19 pandemic has affected millions of lives and every day we are reading in the newspapers and social media about so many people struggling for food, we decided to do something to help these people as a team. When we brain stormed for ideas, we thought an online fitness challenge would be the best way to do it and this way, we can also urge people to stay active during the nation-wide lockdown. Through this initiative, our goal is to raise enough funds to feed at least 1000 families," expressed Rani, Captain of the Indian Women's Hockey Team.





HOCKEY INDIA

The challenge saw members of the Indian Women's Hockey Team come up with fitness tasks that range from burpees, lunges, squats to spider man pushups, pogo hops and more. Each day a player gave a new challenge and tagged 10 people on their social media handles, to take up the challenge and donate Rs 100 to the fundraiser.

"Everyday, we would give a fun new challenge that can be done by anybody. Those who took up the challenge could donate Rs 100 or more to the fundraiser. We are really happy with the support that people from across India have shown in this cause. All of us in the Indian Women's Hockey Team come from poor



economic backgrounds and we have seen days when we have struggled for food and other basics. Today we are in a position to help and we wanted to ensure poor people get basics like food and sanitary kits," expressed Savita, Vice Captain of the team.

Reflecting Savita's views, Rani said, "A few days back when I was talking to my father, he said, 'if you did not play hockey and lift us out of poverty then maybe we also would have been in the same condition as so many poor people today who are struggling to get food.' When he said this to me, it broke my heart. Everyone in the team has faced so many challenges due to poverty and we know the pain of not getting food. It's thanks to hockey our lives are comfortable today but not



everyone is this fortunate." Rani's family depended on the daily wages earned his father in Shahbad Markanda, Haryana that would cover their basic needs.

Several former Indian Hockey stars backed the initiative launched by the Indian Women's Hockey Team. Big names like Sandeep Singh, who is also the Sports Minister in Government of Haryana, Dhanraj Pillay, Gaganajit Singh, Tushar Khandekar and many others lent support by taking up the challenge and donating towards the fund. Hockey India's Member Units also came forward to donate to the noble cause.

The charity from crowd-funding raised by Indian Women's Hockey Team was donated to a Delhi-based NGO Uday Foundation (<https://www.udayfoundation.org/>) and the proceeds from the fund were used to provide basic necessities for families hosted at various location, migrant workers and slum dwellers. Apart from food/ dry ration, the funds were also used to provide sanitary kits that included soaps and hand sanitizers.

"We are very, very happy and pleased with the enormous support received from hockey lovers from around the globe and also many others who don't really follow our sport but lent their support by contributing to the fund and also accepting the challenge. We initially aimed to raise Rs 15.00 lakhs but we were able to raise more than Rs 20.00 lakhs and on behalf of the Indian Women's Hockey Team, I expressed our gratitude and thank everyone who supported us in this initiative," stated Rani.





HOCKEY INDIA

FEATURE STORY

Raj Kumar Pal bursts into the international scene, makes a promising start

There was a sense of high energy when Raj Kumar Pal bolstered the Indian Men's Hockey Team's midfield during the FIH Hockey Pro League match against World Champions Belgium in February. On debut, the 21-year-old showed great intent and helped his side move forward aggressively. He put his hand up every time a fiesty tackle was needed and got himself into magnificent positions to create goal-scoring opportunities. "My focus was on executing the role that the Chief Coach had entrusted me with. Playing against the World Champions in my first international match was the biggest moment of my life and I wanted to ensure I lived up to the expectations," stated Pal.

It hasn't been an easy ride for the attacking midfielder. Raj Kumar had to take a break from hockey in 2011 after his father passed away. The talented player had contemplated leaving hockey forever, "I had joined the SAI Sports Hostel in 2010 itself but after my father passed away (in 2011), I was forced to stay with my mother who was alone as my brothers also were away from home at that time. The emotional turmoil after losing my father and difficulties at home had almost made me give up hockey but as fate would have it, I rejoined the SAI Sports Hostel in 2012 after my mother persuaded me," stated an emotional Raj Kumar.





The Midfielder RAJKUMAR PAL

"I really wish my father could see me play for India because he was my biggest support to take up the sport. But his encouraging words continue to give me strength. My only aim now is to give my 100 percent for the team, stay focused in everyday training and try to make the squad for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics," he added.

Born in Karampur village in Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh, Raj Kumar's skills on a hockey field were first noticed during a U-14 domestic tournament in Lucknow in 2010. The midfielder, who started playing at the age of 10 under the watchful eyes of Coach Tej Bahadur Singh in Meghbaran Stadium was spotted by Hockey India High Performance Director David John during the Hockey India Senior Men National Championships in 2018. "I was called up for the National Camp for the first time in 2018 but it took me a while to get used to the training techniques and game-sense. I used to feel a lot of pressure initially because the hockey we played back home was very different from what the Senior team played. But I was constantly encouraged by Lalit bhai (Upadhyay, India forward also from Uttar Pradesh) who made me understand that it was important to stick to 'simple hockey' and not feel pressurized," recalled Raj Kumar who is the first from Karampur village to wear the India jersey.

Raj Kumar continued to toil away on the hockey pitch and the hard work bore fruit when he was called up for the National Camp again in Bhubaneswar last year after a magnificent performance at the Hockey India Senior Men National Championships in 2019.

"Since then I have constantly been with the team and Chief Coach Reid is very patient and explains to me what exactly I need to focus on and how I need to cope with the demands of hockey at this level. Though I did have awareness about the fitness required at this level, understanding small things like not to hold the ball too long and general tactical awareness is something I had to work on," said Raj Kumar.



HOCKEY INDIA

FEATURE STORY

Navjot Kaur's immense experience key to Indian Women's Hockey Team's success in 2021



Navjot Kaur has been in the international circuit for around eight years and she is just 25 years old. With over 150 international caps under her belt, the Indian Women's Hockey Team Forward has been a vital cog in the side for several years. Scoring seven goals since the start of 2019, Kaur has been in the thick of things as the Indian side triumphed at the FIH Women's Series Finals Hiroshima 2019 and booked a place in the Tokyo Olympics after defeating USA at the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers. With the entire world coming to a standstill due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kaur has used this period to pause and look back at her wonderful journey.

"I completed 150 international caps in February 2019. It has been an amazing journey and I have got some time now to reflect how I have come up the ranks. I have played in big

tournaments such as the 17th Asian Games, 2016 Rio Olympics, 4th Women's Asian Champions Trophy and was also part of India's Silver Medal feat at the 2018 Asian Games. Ever since making my senior debut in 2012, I have focussed on getting better each day and I am very grateful to all my coaches and teammates who have guided me well," said the Forward.

The Kurukshetra-born player's love affair with hockey began in the sixth standard when her father suggested she should start playing the sport. Kaur didn't embark on a journey just to complete her own dream, but fulfilled her father's wishes as well.

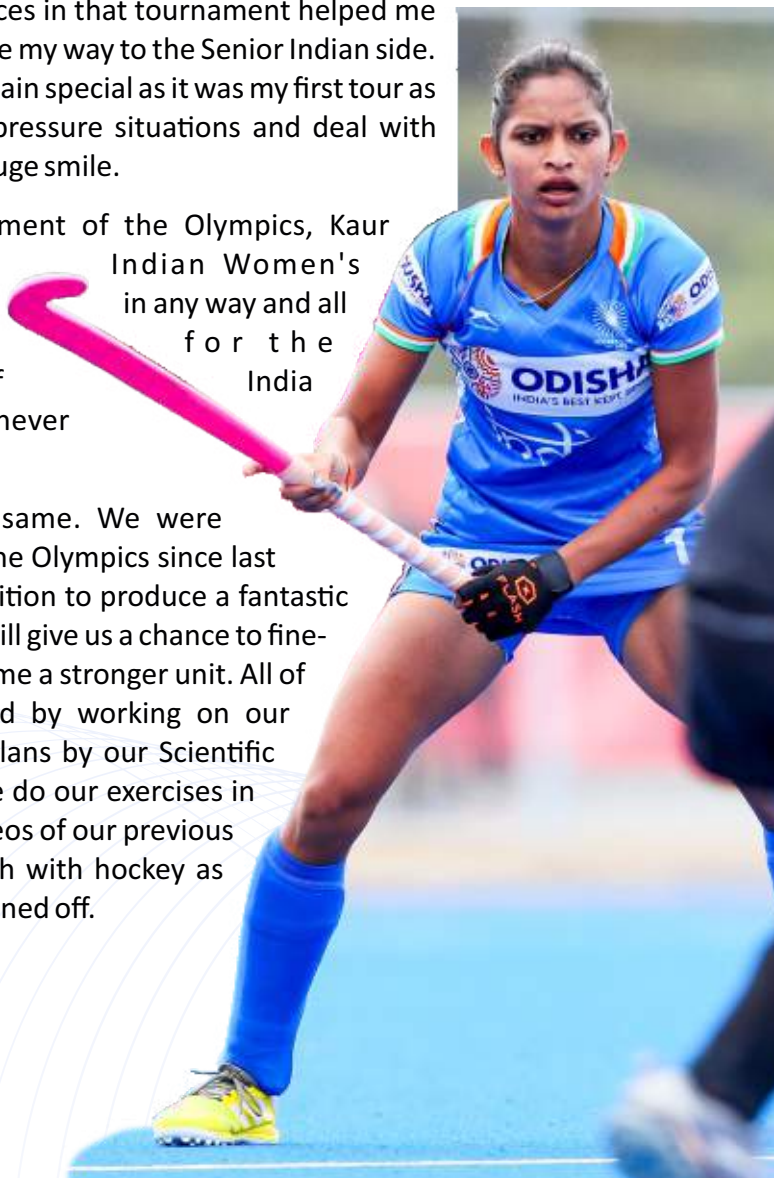
"It was my father who suggested that I should take up the sport in school. He dreamt about seeing at least one of his children (we are three siblings) in sports and I am glad that I have made his dream come true. I started playing the sport in the sixth standard and from then I just kept moving from one level to the other. My parents completely backed me and I am very thankful to them for all their love and support throughout my career," stated Kaur.

The world took notice of the Forward's talent for the first time when she performed brilliantly at the U-19 Asia Cup in 2011. There was no looking back since that competition.

"We won a Bronze Medal at the U-19 Asia Cup in 2011 and I won the Best Forward Award in the competition. My performances in that tournament helped me get noticed and eventually I made my way to the Senior Indian side. That tournament will always remain special as it was my first tour as well. I learned how to play in pressure situations and deal with expectations," said Kaur with a huge smile.

Speaking about the postponement of the Olympics, Kaur expressed that the target of the Indian Women's Hockey Team has not changed in any way and all players are continuing to train for the Games at the Sports Authority of India campus in Bengaluru in whichever way they can.

"Our targets still remain the same. We were working towards doing well at the Olympics since last year and we were in a good position to produce a fantastic result. However, the extra year will give us a chance to fine-tune a few more areas and become a stronger unit. All of us are trying to stay motivated by working on our fitness. We are given training plans by our Scientific Advisor Wayne Lombard and we do our exercises in our rooms. We are watching videos of our previous matches as well to stay in touch with hockey as much as we can," the Forward signed off.





HOCKEY INDIA

FEATURE STORY

With hard work and perseverance, Hardik Singh continues his family's legacy

When things are bleak, everyone looks towards their family for advice and guidance. The Indian Men's Hockey Team's Hardik Singh found himself in a situation in 2017 where he had to make the most important decision of his life. One way would lead him to the national side and the other would take him to the club hockey circuit in the Netherlands. Someone had to step in and it was none other than Hardik's uncle Jugraj Singh who convinced him that he was good enough to make it big at the highest level.

"I was introduced to hockey at a very young age since my father and grandfather played hockey. I am very fortunate to be born in a family wherein there are so many hockey players. I get advice from all corners of the house and they have had a huge influence on my career. I thought about going to the Netherlands to play club hockey in 2017 when I felt that I won't be able to make it big in the international circuit. But I remember it was a very lengthy telephonic conversation with my uncle Jugraj paaji (Jugraj Singh), who explained to me why I should keep working hard in India. It's all thanks to me listening to his advice back then that I am part of the Indian team set-up today. That's the kind of impact my family has had on me," said the 22-year-old with a glint of pride in his eye.

Hardik was bitten by the hockey bug in the second standard when he started practicing with his grandfather Pritam Singh Rai. As he learned the basics of the game, the talent was seen in the youngster almost immediately.

"I started playing hockey when I was in the second standard in my village Khusropur in Jalandhar. My grandfather Pritam Singh Rai, who was a hockey coach in the Indian Navy, was the one who started





guiding me with the basics of hockey. I took to the sport almost immediately and started enjoying the practice sessions. Hockey has been my entire life and I love every minute I spend on the pitch. As I started participating in different tournaments, I started enjoying the sport even more and eventually made it to the Indian team. The love for the sport has only increased with each passing day and after each training session and match," said the Midfielder.

With 37 international caps, Hardik is still finding his way at the international stage, however, the youngster isn't bothered about the competition for a place in the starting XI.

"There is a lot of competition for places in the midfield, but that shows that our

team is very strong. Any side with a good bench strength can produce good results consistently. I just try to focus on my own game and not worry about the competition. I ensure that I carry out my practice drills well and be ready whenever I get an opportunity to play. I think ample opportunities are given to everyone, it's about grabbing those opportunities and most importantly contributing to the team's victories," said Hardik.

Speaking about his role in the side, Hardik expressed that a Midfielder plays an equal part in attack and defense. Midfielders form the first line of defense and ensure good communication within the players while taking the ball forward.

"All Midfielders have been given the role of being the first line of defense. We have to ensure that our opponents don't penetrate into our half easily. All of us support our defenders and give them options when we take the ball from the back and then ensure that there's good communication when we midfielders take the ball forward. Communication is key when we are pressing and we have been getting better at it with each match we play," stated Hardik.



The Midfielder
HARDIK SINGH



HOCKEY INDIA



HOCKEY INDIA CARES

Nepal Hockey distributes hockey sticks received from Hockey India

At a special ceremony held alongside the Sahana Pradhan Memorial Women's Hockey Tournament on 3rd March 2020 at Pokhara, Nepal, President of Nepal Hockey Mr. Umesh Lal Shrestha and Senior Vice President Mr. Anil Prasad Sharma presented the players with hockey sticks gifted by Hockey India.



Players devise new drills for the Workout from Home series

The members of the Indian Junior and Senior Teams have been coming up with different kinds of fitness and hockey drills for the Workout from Home series on social media. The different training drills have helped them maintain their fitness and motivate many fans around the country to take up physical activity as well. Some of the players are seen practicing hockey individually by using minimal equipment, while other athletes are carrying out exercises that can be done by anybody at home.



Indian Men's Hockey Team climb to all-time high World No. 4 in FIH World Rankings

After the introduction of the new match-based model for the calculation of the FIH World Rankings by the International Hockey Federation (FIH) on 1st January 2020, the Indian Men's Hockey Team reaped the rewards in the first couple of months as they climbed to World No. 4 in the FIH World Rankings at the beginning of March 2020.

Impressive performances in their opening few matches of the FIH Hockey Pro League 2020 against The Netherlands, World Champions Belgium and Defending Pro League Champions Australia, saw India climb up ahead of reigning Olympic champions Argentina to the fourth spot, India's highest placement since the creation of the FIH World Rankings in 2003.

The Indian Men's Hockey Team, led by Captain Manpreet Singh, started their campaign at the FIH Hockey Pro League 2020 with impressive wins against The Netherlands at home, and then defeated World Champions Belgium also in their first tie, while losing the next match. A similar story unfolded against Australia where India lost their first match, but came back to win the second match to maintain their good rhythm in the competition.

FIH World Rankings - 4th place Indian Men's Hockey Team



TOP HIGHLIGHTS

Awards' galore for hockey stars at The Times of India Sports Awards 2019

Indian Men's Hockey Team's Defender Harmanpreet Singh and Indian Women's Hockey Team's Captain Rani were among the winners of five separate awards at The Times of India Sports Awards (TOISA) 2019 held in New Delhi on 5th March 2020. Harmanpreet Singh won the Hockey Player of the Year (Men) Award, while Rani was conferred with the Hockey Player of the Year (Women) Award for her contribution to the team's success in 2019.

A special award 'Icon of the Century' was also presented to 3-time Olympic Gold medallist, the legendary Balbir Singh Sr.

The Indian Men's Hockey Team, led by Captain Manpreet Singh, was recognised for an excellent last year which saw them rise to the number 4 spot for the first time ever in the FIH World Rankings, as they were awarded with the Team of the Year Award, while young striker Lalremsiami was awarded with the Emerging Player of the Year (Women) Award for a bright start to her international career with the Indian Women's Hockey team. Meanwhile, having booked a place at the Tokyo Olympics for her team with a wonderful goal against USA in November 2019, Rani was also awarded with the Inspiration of the Year Award.



Khelo India Women's Hockey League(Under 21), Organised by Hockey India Announced

On 5th March 2020 Sports Authority of India in association with Hockey India, announced the first edition of the Khelo India Women's Hockey League (Under 21), organised by Hockey India to be held at three different venues across the country in three phases.

A total of 14 teams will take part in the first season of the League, with the participation of teams being accepted on a first come, first serve basis, subject to confirmation of acceptance of the relevant terms of participation. These 14 teams will be divided into two Pools of seven teams each for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the League, which shall follow a round-robin format, with each team playing a total of six matches each in both the Phases.

Phase 3 will consist of classification matches based on the rankings of teams after the conclusion of the first two Phases. A Final match will also be held to determine the Champions.



Manpreet Singh & Rani bag top honours at Hockey India 3rd Annual Awards 2019

The much-awaited Hockey India 3rd Annual Awards 2019 took place in New Delhi on 8th March 2020, which saw the National Federation celebrate the best hockey players and former greats of the game from India, in what was a glittering evening. The total prize money was in excess of INR 1.64 Crores.

Mr. Harbinder Singh won the prestigious Hockey India Major Dhyan Chand Lifetime Achievement Award 2019, while Manpreet Singh and Rani won the Hockey India Dhruv Batra Player of the Year Award 2019 for Men and Women respectively. Youngsters Vivek Sagar Prasad and Lalremsiami bagged the Hockey India Jugraj Singh Award for Upcoming Player of the Year 2019 (Under-21 Men) and Hockey India Asunta Lakra Award for Upcoming Player of the Year 2019 (Under-21 Women) respectively. Other Award winners from the evening included Krishan B Pathak,



Harmanpreet Singh, Neha Goyal and Mandeep Singh, while Kothajit Singh Khadangbam, Savita, Deep Grace Ekka, Harmanpreet Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay and Nikki Pradhan were also awarded for achieving milestones.

Sports Authority of India were recognised for their support to Hockey India as they were given the Hockey India Jaman Lal Sharma Award for Invaluable Contribution 2019, while Department of Sports and Youth Services, Government of Odisha, were also recognised for their continuous support as they were given the Hockey India Presidents Award for Outstanding Achievement 2019 by Mohd. Mushtaque Ahmad.



Hockey India players & support staff applaud healthcare workers tackling COVID-19

On 22nd March 2020, players and support staff of the Indian Men's & Women's Hockey Teams were seen giving a grand round of applause for the spirit of undying togetherness of the nation, and to salute the selfless work being put in by the healthcare workers, security forces, and people fulfilling the essential needs of the public. The players and support staff joined in for the 5-minute-long act of appreciation which was followed by millions around the country.



Tokyo Olympics postponed due to outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic

After having announced on 24th March 2020 that the Tokyo Olympics will be postponed, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee on 30th March 2020 announced its decision to postpone the Tokyo Olympics to 2021. The quadrennial event will now take place in Tokyo from 23rd July 2021 to 8th August 2021.



Hockey India players & support staff light candles to show unity in tackling COVID-19



On 5th April 2020 saw the players and support staff of the Indian Men's & Women's Hockey Teams participating actively in Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's call for the nation to shut off lights at 9pm and light candles, diyas. The players and support staff were seen lighting candles and diyas to appreciate the unity of the country in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, and were seen emphasizing on the need to follow government guidelines and observe social distancing to tackle the life-threatening disease.

Hockey India National Championships postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19

On 14th April 2020, Hockey India announced its decision to postpone the remaining various annual categories of the 2020 Hockey India National Championships which were earlier scheduled to take place at different venues across the country. The decision was taken following the extension of the nation-wide lockdown.

The 2020 Hockey India National Championships that have been postponed indefinitely are as follows:

1. 10th Hockey India Junior Women National Championship 2020, Ranchi, Jharkhand (B & A Division) earlier scheduled from 29 April to 09 May 2020 and 07 May to 17 May 2020 respectively.
2. 10th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship 2020, Chennai, Tamil Nadu (B & A Division) earlier scheduled from 14 May to 21 May 2020 and 19 May to 30 May 2020 respectively.
3. 10th Hockey India Sub Junior Women National Championship 2020, Hisar, Haryana (B & A Division) earlier scheduled from 03 May to 14 May 2020 and 12 May to 23 May 2020 respectively.
4. 10th Hockey India Sub Junior Men National Championship 2020, Imphal, Manipur (B & A Division) earlier scheduled from 28 May to 04 June 2020 and 03 June to 13 June 2020 respectively.
5. 10th Hockey India Senior Men National Championship 2020, Guwahati, Assam (B Division) earlier scheduled from 20 June to 03 July 2020.



FIH Hockey Pro League extended till June 2021

Due to ongoing uncertainties surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, and in agreement with the 11 participating National Associations (NAs), the International Hockey Federation (FIH) on 24th April 2020 announced that the second edition of the FIH Hockey Pro League will be extended through to June 2021.



Season 2 of the FIH Hockey Pro League was initially set to run from January to June 2020. Taking into account both the latest recommendations from the World Health Organisation (WHO), it was universally agreed that extending Season 2 into the middle of 2021 was the appropriate course of action, giving the best possible chance for this edition of the competition to be completed whilst enabling FIH and all NAs to deliver on broadcast and commercial partner agreements.

FIH will continue to closely monitor the global evolution of the COVID-19 situation and, with the safety of athletes and fans being top priority, any potential dates regarding the resumption of the competition will be announced at the appropriate time.

Hockey India announce restructuring of National Championships from 2021

In an endeavour to maximise athlete participation and further develop hockey among the States, Union Territories/ NCTs, Institutional Units and Academy Members, the Hockey India Executive Board on 15th April 2020 announced that the Hockey India Annual National Championships 2021 will be restructured with dedicated events for the various Member Units as per the following: -

1. National Championships for Hockey India registered State Member Units only, for the categories Sub Junior, Junior & Senior National Championships for both Men and Women.
2. National Championships for Hockey India registered Public Sector Units/ Departmental Units only, for the categories Junior & Senior National Championships for both Men and Women.
3. National Championships for Hockey India registered Academy Member Units only, for categories Sub Junior & Junior National Championships for both Men and Women.



Furthermore, an athlete will only be eligible to represent his/her team in only one of the events listed above at serial number 1, 2 and 3. Further, an athlete will only be allowed to participate in one of the age-group categories i.e. Sub Junior or Junior or Senior to ensure that more athletes are given the opportunity to participate in India's top level domestic events.

Further as part of the qualification process for the State Member Units to participate in the Hockey India National Championships, it will be mandatory for each State Member to conduct their State Level Championships in each category i.e. Sub Junior/ Junior / Senior - Men and Women prior to the annual National Championships.

The previous system of hosting National Championships in A and B Division for various age-groups will no longer prevail but instead all State Members Units will compete in Sub-junior, Junior and Senior age-groups for Men and Women while all PSUs and Departmental Units will come under a separate category and compete among each other in Junior and Senior Category (Men and Women) and a third category that is exclusively for Academy Member Units who will compete in the Sub-Junior and Junior National Championships (Men and Women).

Tournament policy and guidelines, on the other hand, will continue to remain the same and every National Championship event will be played on a league-cum-knock out basis, with pools depending on the final numbers of teams participating and will be conducted strictly as per latest FIH Rules of Hockey as applicable, the latest FIH Tournament Regulations as applicable and Variations in FIH Regulations applicable to Hockey India.

The classification format and eligibility ranking of the participating teams in the 11th Hockey India National Championships 2021 will be taken from the final results of the last Hockey India National Championship conducted prior to 31 December 2020.

Hockey India & SAI collaborate for Coaches Development Sessions

In a bid to make use of the lockdown period to good effect, Hockey India and Sports Authority of India (SAI) on 18th April 2020 announced the introduction of the 21-day Coaches Development Sessions (CDS), as part of SAI's MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) workshop for coaches. These online education Sessions started on 20th April 2020, and are aimed at providing high level knowledge to Hockey Coaches around the country through video conferencing. The Coaches Development Sessions are classified into two Coaching Sessions - Level 'Basic' Coaching Sessions and Level 'Intermediate' Coaching Sessions, and are conducted by Hockey India's Foreign National Team Coaches, Scientific Advisors and Director, High Performance.



Hockey India conducts training & interactive sessions for Umpires & Officials via WhatsApp

Hockey India on 20th April 2020 announced that it has initiated interactive sessions through WhatsApp for Indian Umpires and Technical Officials in order to utilize the lockdown period to improve their officiating knowledge and motivate each other on fitness matters. A team of experienced Tournament Directors and Umpire Managers are conducting these interactive sessions across six WhatsApp groups with the goal to guide and motivate the officials to raise the level of officiating and also to maintain their fitness levels. Further, a total of 30 Hockey India Member Units are also conducting interactive sessions for Technical Officials and Umpires across their respective regions.



Hockey India joins World Masters Hockey

Hockey India joined 38 other National Associations from around the world as a member of the World Masters Hockey (WMH).

To carry out the responsibilities and oversee the activities, Hockey India has appointed former India Captain Dr. RP Singh as the Convener of Hockey India Masters Committee and Mr. Harbinder Singh as the Chairman of the Committee, while Mr. BP Govinda, Mr. Jagbir Singh, Dr. AB Subbaiah, Ms. Surinder Kaur and Ms. M Renuka Lakshmi have been appointed as Members of the Committee.

The WMH is the sole Masters entity recognized by the International Hockey Federation (FIH) and responsible for organizing International Masters hockey globally. In order to continue the growth of Masters Hockey around the world, WMH will be working towards opening up opportunities for players and officials from various countries to continue to participate in hockey throughout their lives.



HOCKEY INDIA

FEATURE STORY

Lengthy spell on the sidelines made Namita Toppo stronger



The nationwide lockdown has certainly given a lot of people time to introspect and reflect on their lives so far, and one such player from the Indian Women's Hockey Team is the experienced Namita Toppo, who commands the midfield for the World No. 9 side. The 24-year-old who had completed the feat of winning 150 International Caps for the country in July 2018, returned to the side after a lengthy injury lay-off only in September 2019, and has since focused on catching up to speed with her teammates.

"I was really struggling when I was away from the team. It was close to 9-10 months that I was out of the side, and was nursing my injured knee. I had injured my meniscus, which basically means I had torn my knee cartilage during the Asian Games 2018. I was really worried at first because I was not sure how long it would take for me to come back, especially with the Olympics only a couple of years away. But when I look back now, I think that lengthy spell on the sidelines made me stronger," said Namita.

"Initially it was really tough because I would have immense pain, and would wake up at night, and start to overthink. I believe my teammates and Coaches played a huge role in making sure I was in the right frame of mind," she added.

As an athlete who was aiming to take part in her second consecutive Olympic Games, Namita's journey back to the Indian team was full of ups and downs. "At first I didn't realise I would be



The Midfielder NAMITA TOPPO

spending about 9-10 months outside, but our Scientific Advisor Wayne Lombard told me that the type of meniscal injury I had was accompanied by some early onset degeneration - which made things complicated, and it increased my recovery period. It was tough because I would keep thinking if I would ever make it back to the squad. But I spoke to my teammates who had spent similar periods on the treatment table, and I would get some sort of strength," said the Midfielder from Rourkela, Odisha.

It was in September 2019 when Namita finally returned to the Indian team, and the shy midfielder calls it one of the most satisfying days of her life. "When I was finally fit and had regained my touch and sharpness in the National Camp, and was included in the squad for

England Tour, I was really happy because I had set a target for myself and I was able to achieve it. I wanted to help my side qualify for the Tokyo Olympics, and playing in the England Tour gave me a chance to prove to Chief Coach that I should be in the team for the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers, which were to take place in November 2019," said Namita, who eventually helped the Indian team in qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics.

Namita, who now has more than 165 International Caps for India, also spoke on the postponement of the Olympics and how it affects her. "Our target was always to win an Olympic medal, and even with the postponement, that does not change. It definitely gives us more time to be prepared for next year, and to perform really well. I feel our team is also fortunate enough to not have any ageing players, and this group of players has been playing together for a long time, and I believe one more year of experience will only help us in achieving our goal," said the winner of the Hockey India Asunta Lakra Award for the Upcoming Player of the Year 2014.





HOCKEY INDIA

FEATURE STORY

Simranjeet Singh aims to make improvements via video analysis

With the entire country under lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indian Hockey Teams are trying their best to remain positive during this very difficult period, and are focusing on devoting as much time to video analysis as possible, to ensure further improvements are made to the team. With a very focused look on his face, Indian Men's Hockey Team Forward Simranjeet Singh spoke about how he has been devoting most of his time watching videos of his side's previous matches to note down important aspects.

"It surely is a tough time for all of us. We have to stay positive and hope that the situation resolves soon. I have been mostly watching a lot of videos from our previous matches. It has given me a chance to patiently go through the footage and note down key aspects that I need to work on, once we can get back on the pitch. We generally have a busy schedule while we are playing, so this is a good use of time to spend on looking back at our performances and learning from them," said the 23-year-old.

With the Indian Hockey teams stationed at SAI, Bengaluru, at the time of writing of this story, Simranjeet expressed that he is very lucky to be staying at the SAI Campus during this period, and it has helped him maintain his fitness and keep him busy during the day.

"It's wonderful to be staying at the SAI campus at the moment. We are given fitness schedules by our Scientific Advisor Robin Arkell and all of us carry out exercises in our rooms. Maintaining fitness is the key for any sportsperson and therefore we put a lot of emphasis on it. Sometimes, I go for an individual run around the campus as well. It helps me to stay mentally strong and fresh. Other than exercises, we carry out a host of activities during the day which keeps us busy. I miss home and it would have been great to stay with family during this time,





but I wouldn't have been able to use the facilities here," said the Forward from Punjab.

Speaking about the postponement of the Olympics, Simranjeet said that the Indian team should utilize the extra year to become an even better side.

"It's disappointing that the Olympics has been postponed to next year. We have been in fantastic rhythm since last year and the team was building up well for the Olympics. But, the well-being of the people is more important than anything else and the best decision has been taken. We should certainly utilize the next year to become an even better side. We will ensure that we work harder and produce great results on the field," said the Forward.



**The Goal-scorer
SIMRANJEET SINGH**



HOCKEY INDIA

FEATURE STORY

Fearless Navneet Kaur believes attitude change has largely helped her side



The Indian Women's Hockey Team's upswing in recent times is thanks to a 'change in attitude' believes striker Navneet Kaur who played a vital role in team's tour to New Zealand earlier this year. "Earlier, we feared playing against top teams like Great Britain, New Zealand and Australia. We lacked that match-winning confidence and this was perhaps why many teams even considered us as underdogs," said Kaur.

But over the last two years in particular, there has been a major shift in how the team prepares against a tough opponent. "Apart from winning important matches, I think there are a lot of other factors that have contributed to this change and one of them being Chief Coach Sjoerd Marijne's style of play. He likes aggression, he has instilled that belief in us that we are a team that can play with good speed in our attack," she said.

"The Chief Coach always tells us it's not over until the last whistle. Even during the half-time of the Olympic Qualifiers, he said we will begin the third quarter as though the scores are 0-0. We have been instilled with that fighting spirit," she explained.

Fitness has been one of the key factors in the team's success in recent years, and Kaur says the team has great awareness about fitness, recovery and diet. "I also believe our improvement in fitness has been another big factor. Every girl (including new comers) are aware of the



importance of fitness, recovery and diet. Apart from this, small things like support staff encouraging us to improve internal communication, point out openly in meetings about what we can do differently in training sessions etc, these things make us feel bold and confident," added Kaur who scored a total of 10 goals in 2019.

Having expressed her excitement on playing at the Olympics earlier this year, Navneet says that her team is still very focused, and wants to use the next 15 months to good effect. "Obviously the change in the Olympics is something that we are ready to adjust to. We have already started discussing about the road ahead for us, and I believe it is important that we utilize these 15 months in the best way possible. All of us in the team here want to win an

Olympic medal, and we will try to work very hard to give ourselves the best chance at achieving that feat," said Navneet.

Amid the lockdown and the global pandemic, she also spoke about the importance of following the guidelines regarding social-distancing and maintaining hygiene.

"It is important for everyone to maintain distance, and always use hand wash and sanitizers. We have been facing challenge collectively as humans, and it is important that we tackle this in the right way and as a collective force," she said.





TEAM BIRTHDAYS

SENIOR MEN'S

JUNIOR MEN'S

MAY

RAJ KUMAR PAL	01	PAWAN	01
NILAKANTA SHARMA	02	SHIVAM ANAND	03
SHILANAND LAKRA	05	SANJAY	05
SV SUNIL	06	NIRAJ KUMAR WARIBAM	14
P R SREEJESH	08		
AMIT ROHIDAS	10		

JUNE

MANPREET SINGH	26
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SENIOR WOMEN'S

JUNIOR WOMEN'S

MAY

MANPREET KAUR	17
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JUNE

DEEP GRACE EKKA	03	MARINA LALRAMNGHAKI	26
NAMITA TOPPO	04		
RAJANI ETIMARPU	09		
SUNITA LAKRA	11		

IN FOCUS

Rajani Etimarpu

(Indian Women's Hockey Team)

My age is: 29



My hometown is: Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh

I play as a: Goalkeeper

I made my debut in: 2009

My most important target this year: is to keep myself fit & fresh, both physically and mentally

My favourite workout: strengthening my goalkeeping skills

My favourite actor: Allu Arjun

My favourite song: is a Telugu song called *neli neli akasam*

My favourite cuisine: is South Indian (laughs); specifically *Idli*

My best sporting moment: was when we were successful in the 2015 FIH Olympic Qualifiers

My idol: is my mother

My dream destination: Ooty and Kerala

If I wasn't a hockey player, I would've been: I would've been studying something probably

My gym buddy: Savita

My favorite outfit: Saree

Go to Karaoke song: *Ye Raate Ye Mausam*

3 things I don't travel without: my purse, mobile phone & water bottle

My 3 am buddy in the team: Savita

My cheat meal: Halwa



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