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Sports Champ



Exclusive Interview

Gabi Kool

International Korfball Federation President

Bronze Debut!

*Indian U-16 Volleyball
Team's Historic Win*

Queens Rising

*WGM Divya
Deshmukh*

Special Coverage

*Sports Champ at World
Games, Chengdu*



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A portrait of Bhushan Thakur, Editor-in-chief & International Table Tennis Player, smiling and wearing a dark blazer over a white shirt.

EDITORS NOTE

Sporting Minds, Sporting Frontiers

Welcome to the August edition of Sports Champ, where passion meets enterprise and the spotlight stretches far beyond the pitch. This issue celebrates not only sporting milestones, but also the minds shaping sport's future with grit, imagination and game-changing ideas.

We begin with a sharp look at korfball's global resurgence. IKF President Gabi Kool, in an exclusive with us, lays bare the strategy behind the sport's inclusive evolution.

Our coverage then jets off to Chengdu, as the city prepares to host The World Games 2025 from 7 to 17 August. With Asia playing host for just the third time, expect a fusion of tradition, spectacle and athletic excellence. Sports Champ will be your access point to every breakthrough and backstage moment from the Games.

Chess finds its queen in Divya Deshmukh. Her World Cup triumph isn't just a win, it's a turning point. Supported by legends and flanked by rising stars, Deshmukh's journey anchors a powerful shift in how Indian women command the board. No longer quiet contenders, they are leaders rewriting every script.

India's under-16 volleyball team steps onto the global stage with a bronze debut, while coach Ajay Jangara shares a vision that blends hunger and hope.

Golf, often seen as elite, finds fresh soil at the Tarun Sardesai Golf Academy. Here, ambition is matched with discipline, and Olympic dreams are chiselled with precision.

And finally, the Sports Entrepreneur Championship 2025 ignites a different kind of competition. Students, drawn from leading schools, build startups rooted in sport. With structured pitches, real-world strategies and fearless innovation, this initiative redefines youth engagement.

This month, sport isn't just something we watch. It's something we think, build and live.

A stylized handwritten signature in black ink.

Bhushan Thakur

Editor-in-chief & International Table Tennis Player

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BOOK SHELF

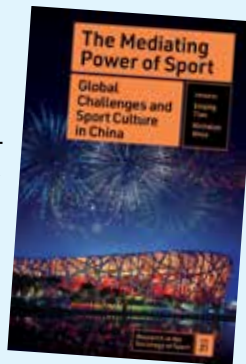
The Mediating Power of Sport

China's significant investment in sports, growing success at international competitions, and its recent role as host to high-profile events firmly position it as a rising global force in the world of sports. This collection encourages readers worldwide to consider the subject through their own cultural lenses, exploring why China has so fervently adopted modern sporting practices. It asks how this momentum interacts with China's mediated ability to engage and compete with the West.

As the first English anthology featuring contributions from both seasoned and emerging sociologists specialising in sport culture in China, the collection explores sport as a means of interpreting political, economic and global challenges. With each chapter grounded in a Chinese cultural context, contributors dissect themes such as traditional athletics, nationalism, football fandom, commercialisation and the rise of esports.

Providing critical insight into 'glocal' sporting cultures and shifting power structures, authors draw on established sociological frameworks to unpack questions around influence, control and the evolving identity of sport in China. The volume also investigates sport's role in social transformation, contemplating how future research might approach the sociology of sport in the Chinese context.

By examining how sporting attitudes, habits and identities vary across cultures, *The Mediating Power of Sport* illustrates China's novel methods of asserting influence through athletics and reflects on what this evolution reveals about soft power, global standing and the deeper symbolic weight sport carries on the international stage.



Inside Mercedes F1

By Matt Whyman

Award-winning author Matt Whyman was granted exclusive access to the Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS Formula 1 Team, chronicling their dramatic journey across the 2023 and 2024 seasons. Once dominant, with seven Drivers' World Championships and eight consecutive Constructors' titles, the Silver Arrows now face the stark reality of having slipped from the top.

Embedded throughout the team's fight to return to the front of the grid, Whyman follows Lewis Hamilton, George Russell, Team Principal Toto Wolff, and the world-class engineers and strategists who design, build and race their cars.

From the intensity of pre-season testing to the spectacle of race weekends in Austin, Miami and the inaugural Las Vegas Grand Prix, the book captures the high-octane world of Formula 1 and the spirit of one of its most decorated teams.

Whyman exposes the pressure-cooker atmosphere of elite sport, delves into the secrets behind teamwork and high performance, and highlights the extraordinary individuals driving the team's resurgence. Featuring never-before-seen photographs, *Inside Mercedes F1* offers a rare glimpse into the beating heart of a global racing powerhouse.



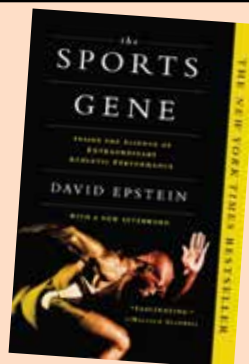
The Sports Gene: Inside the Science of Extraordinary Athletic Performance

By David Epstein

A New York Times bestseller by the author of *Range*, this provocative and gripping investigation asks what truly sets elite athletes apart. Are global icons such as Usain Bolt, Michael Phelps and Serena Williams born with exceptional genetic gifts, or have they defied biological limits through relentless training and discipline?

In this compelling exploration of athletic performance and the limits of human potential, David Epstein unpacks the nature versus nurture debate and challenges popular beliefs surrounding the famed 10,000-hour rule. With vivid reporting from locations ranging from equatorial regions to the Arctic Circle, Epstein delves into conversations with scientists, Olympic champions and athletes with rare physical traits, offering readers a fresh perspective on what makes sporting greatness possible.

Now featuring a new afterword focused on youth sports and the implications of early specialisation, *The Sports Gene* redefines how we understand the science of success on the field, track and court.



What's Your Everest?: A Path to Passion and Purpose

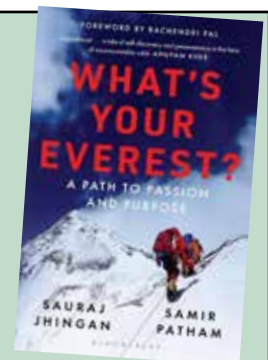
By Samir Patham and Sauraj Jhingan

This is no ordinary self-help manual offering formulas and shortcuts. It's a visceral, first-person account of two friends who broke with convention to chase a dream, asking themselves a question few dare to confront: how much hardship would you endure to pursue your deepest passion?

In a world that equates success with stability and career progression, Sauraj Jhingan and Samir Patham walked away from secure corporate jobs to embrace the uncertain world of adventure and mountaineering. Their path was anything but straightforward.

Across four gruelling years, they mounted multiple expeditions to summit Mount Everest. Their efforts were thwarted first by a deadly avalanche, then by hurricane-force winds in the Death Zone, halting them a mere 900 metres from the peak. On their third attempt, they finally reached the summit, proving that vision and grit can move mountains.

What's Your Everest? is a testament to unwavering resolve and the hunger to live with purpose. It invites readers to reflect on their own aspirations and challenges them to climb the metaphorical Everest that stands in the way.



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- **Sports Champ International is our new initiative aimed at bridging the gap between local and global sports landscapes. This section will bring a fresh perspective to sports education and development by exploring international avenues.**
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- **Enriching this section further, distinguished international scholars and experts will contribute insightful articles on diverse topics, ranging from sports science and education to global trends in sports management and training.**
- **Through Sports Champ International, we aim to create a platform that fosters learning, inspiration, and collaboration, celebrating the essence of sports on a global scale.**



SCHOOLS ARE ESSENTIAL TO KORFBALL'S GLOBAL EXPANSION

In an exclusive interview with Sports Champ magazine, IKF President Gabi Kool reveals the transformative strategy behind korfball's worldwide resurgence. From competitive milestones to grassroots outreach, Kool underscores the critical role schools play in fostering inclusive growth, as the sport charts new territory across continents and formats under visionary leadership.

Korfball's global growth and strategic expansion

Since being elected IKF President in October 2023, we have focused on unlocking the full global potential of korfball, while building on the strong foundation I inherited. Over the past year, we've made major strides in Asia, Africa, and Latin America through strategic partnerships and development programs. Simultaneously, we relaunched IKF Europe under new leadership, with strong progress already visible across competitions, development, and governance.

We now promote three core korfball formats, 8v8, beach korfball, and our newest discipline, urban korfball, each playing a strategic role in broadening access to the sport in different environments. Our initiatives are guided by the 2032+ Better Together Strategy, which was created collaboratively to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and global growth.







Recent milestones and competitive achievements

2024 and 2025 have already been landmark years for korfball. Events such as the IKF U17 World Cup in Eindhoven, the IKF U21 World Championship in Türkiye, and the IKF European A-Championship in Catalonia have demonstrated the strength and diversity of our competitive ecosystem.

At the club level, the IKF Korfball Champions League in Europe continues to elevate performance standards, with Dutch club PKC/Vertom again proving world-class. Meanwhile, beach korfball reached

a new high with the World Beach Korfball Championship in Thailand, serving also as a qualifier for The World Games 2025 in Chengdu. This milestone confirms the beach format's widespread appeal and media potential.

Strategic leadership and organisational evolution

The IKF's governance and operations have been strengthened through a modernised organisational structure anchored in our three strategic pillars:

A Green Hat Mindset: Embracing a

culture of learning, innovation, and open-mindedness.

Smart Use of Technology & Data: Driving simplification, transparency, and enhanced user experiences.

Ecosystem Engagement: Partnering beyond traditional boundaries to access global expertise and innovation.

The new Leadership Team, supported by our Central Office in Lisbon, operates across fourteen defined areas, including Development & Education, Events, Refereeing, Marketing & Communications, Urban, and Beach, to name a few. Our



GABI KOOL: LEADING KORFBALL INTO A NEW ERA

A former elite korfballer turned global marketing strategist, Gabi Kool, has been appointed as the eighth President of the International Korfball Federation. Hailing from the Netherlands and residing in Dubai, Kool is widely recognised for his expertise in brand building and fan engagement. Already credited with initiating the federation's forward-looking '2032+ – Better Together' vision, his leadership marks a pivotal step towards expanding korfball's international appeal.

INTERNATIONAL KORFBALL FEDERATION



designed to set the benchmark for future host cities.

Youth development as the foundation

Youth engagement is central to our long-term strategy. Competitions like the U19 and U21 championships are critical not only for identifying elite talent but for instilling korfball's core values of teamwork, equality, and inclusion at a formative age.

We are also expanding grassroots programs in schools and communities, and we actively encourage national federations to strengthen youth pipelines. By 2032, we aim to see widespread integration of korfball into educational systems around the world.

Beach & Urban Korfball: innovation in action

Beach korfball is rapidly becoming a global fan favourite. With its debut at The World Games 2025, it offers a dynamic and accessible gateway into our sport, perfect for coastal regions and summer festivals.

Just as transformative is urban korfball, debuting this October in Lisbon. Tailored to the rhythm of the city, urban korfball adapts our mixed-gender values to urban spaces, maintaining inclusivity while offering a fast, simplified format supported by fan

committees, now revitalised with diverse, skilled leaders, are aligned with these strategic pillars to support federations, streamline pathways, and drive visibility.

Upcoming competitions and global reach

The second half of 2025 is packed with milestone events. In July, the IKF U21 European Korfball Championship (Herentals, Belgium) and the IKF U21 Asia-Oceania Championship (Leshan – Sichuan Province, China) will engage young talent. In August, korfball makes its highly anticipated return to

The World Games in Chengdu, featuring both 8v8 indoor and beach korfball.

October brings further innovation with Urban Korfball: Lisbon Unlocked, our inaugural official urban korfball launch from October 14–16 in Portugal alongside our IKF World Korfball Congress. This exciting new discipline, designed for urban settings like parks and playgrounds, is fast-paced, accessible, and deeply tied to local culture. The Lisbon event is more than a tournament; it's the start of a movement that brings korfball to cities across the globe, and it is

engagement and a vibrant atmosphere. It invites new communities, players, and fans into the korfbal family, helping us reach where traditional courts can't.

Expanding into new regions

Our expansion efforts prioritise underrepresented regions with large youth populations and emerging sports cultures. India is a key example, where we're supporting school and university-based development. In Africa and Latin America, we work with local stakeholders to deliver tailored programs, equipment, and promotional support, building trust and long-term sustainability.

All three formats, indoor, beach, and urban, allow us to flexibly meet local needs and unlock korfbal's full global potential.

Overcoming challenges with innovation

We're realistic about our challenges, limited financial resources, lower media visibility, and a shortage of trained coaches and referees. However, we are actively addressing these through smarter use of digital platforms, stronger partnerships, and increased investment in our IKF Academy, offering scalable and multilingual education across all roles in the sport.

Our status as a recognised International Federation by the IOC and our long-standing partnerships with IWGA and ARISF provide credibility and access to broader development ecosystems.

Technology & transformation

We are committed to making korfbal a digital-first sport. This means improving match streaming, modernising competition systems, and harnessing data to drive coaching, fan engagement, and decision-making. From interactive tools for referees to livestreams for global fans, our goal is to make korfbal accessible, visible, and modern.

Schools as catalysts for growth

Schools are essential to korfbal's global expansion. With adaptable, inclusive formats and strong educational values, korfbal is ideally suited to physical education programs. We provide federations with curricula, training materials, and simplified rules to support mass adoption at the grassroots level.

This is how we build from first contact to lifelong participation and embed korfbal into the hearts of future generations.

The deeper value of mixed-gender sport

Korfbal's unique identity as a truly mixed-gender team sport is more relevant than ever. As the New York Times recently explored in its article on korfbal, the experience of growing up playing as equals has profound, lifelong impacts on how boys see leadership and teamwork, and how girls experience confidence and equality in sport.

This isn't just a matter of policy; it's personal. It shapes character, challenges stereotypes, and fosters empathy. In today's world, where gender discourse is often polarised, korfbal offers a living, breathing model of what respectful equality can look like on and off the court.

We are also deeply committed to fairness. As we grow, we ensure that our rules, officiating, and development frameworks are designed not just to include but to protect the integrity of the game. Our inclusive model doesn't compromise on competition; it elevates it.



HISTORY OF KORFBALL

Korfball: The Mixed-Gender Game with Global Reach

Korfball is a fast-paced ball sport that shares characteristics with netball, basketball and ringball. The aim is to throw a ball into a netless basket mounted on a 3.5-metre (11.5-foot) pole. What sets korfball apart is its mixed-gender format, with each side consisting of four female and four male players. The sport was founded in 1902 by Dutch schoolteacher Nico Broekhuysen and has since grown into an internationally recognised game.

Its rules encourage cooperation and skill rather than physical contact, making it uniquely inclusive. The basket's height presents a tactical challenge, demanding precision and teamwork. It is played both indoors and outdoors, with clubs and federations across dozens of countries. Though still niche in some regions, korfball is steadily gaining momentum through school programmes, community events and international competition.



From Swedish inspiration to Dutch creation

Korfball traces its lineage to a Swedish game called ringboll. In 1901, Broekhuysen visited the town of Nääs to study gymnastics teaching techniques and encountered the co-ed sport. Ringboll involved tossing a ball through a ring affixed to a three-metre pole, with players assigned to static zones on the field. Motivated to adapt the game for his young pupils in Amsterdam, Broekhuysen introduced a basket in place of the ring and simplified the rules to make play more intuitive. This thoughtful revision birthed korfball, a sport that championed gender equality long before the idea was mainstream.

The Dutch word *korf*, meaning 'basket', lent its name to the newly minted sport. Its blend of inclusiveness and athleticism led to rapid local adoption, with the first clubs forming soon after.

Global recognition and organisational backbone

Korfball appeared as a demonstration sport in the Olympic Games of 1920 and 1928, setting the stage for wider international interest. Since 1985, it has been a fixture in the World Games, cementing its reputation in the global sporting arena. The International Korfball Federation (IKF) was formed in 1933 in Antwerp, Belgium, and now governs the sport's development across continents.

Every four years, the IKF organises the World Korfball Championships. Countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Taiwan frequently contend for top honours. In a stance reflective of its values, the IKF suspended the Russian Korfball Federation from all international competitions in 2022 following the invasion of Ukraine. This move barred Russian athletes and events from participation for the foreseeable future.





Chengdu gears up to host the World Games 2025

Chengdu will host The World Games 2025 from 7 to 17 August, delivering global standards and cultural flair as Asia welcomes the event for just the third time since its inception. Sports Champ magazine will be part of the official coverage, bringing in-depth stories, interviews and behind-the-scenes access throughout the Games.

The 12th edition of The World Games will take place from 7 to 17 August 2025. Chengdu, one of China's largest cities, will host the event. This edition will introduce the IWGA's strategic blueprint Growth Beyond Excellence, first adopted in November 2020. It will also mark only the third time since 1981 that the Games will be held in Asia.

Situated in south-western China,

Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan province. Internationally renowned for its Giant Panda Breeding Research Base, the city is home to over 20 million people.

At the closing ceremony of the 2022 Games in Birmingham, USA, Chengdu delegation head Yang Shen Wei described Chengdu as "China's happiest city". He announced, "Chengdu will make every effort

to ensure the 2025 Games are exceptional and unforgettable. Let us gather in Chengdu and cheer for the world." He further stated, "We are ready to welcome friends from across the globe. The city will present a world-class sporting occasion that combines international standards with Chinese culture and Chengdu's distinct charm. Together, we will write a new chapter in the history of The



World Games.”

TWG 2025 Expands its Horizon

The IWGA's strategy paper, Growth Beyond Excellence, sets the framework for the sports programme and participant count for The World Games 2025 and beyond. The maximum permitted number of participants, including athletes and technical officials, will rise from 4,200 to 5,000.

Out of these, 4,000 will be nominated by IWGA Member Federations. The remaining 1,000 will be allocated as follows:

- 400 participants from disciplines chosen in consultation with the Host City
- 400 participants from disciplines selected in consultation with the IOC
- 200 participants from para-sports not featured in the Paralympic Games, in

coordination with the IPC

Chengdu is equipped to accommodate the expanded roster. In line with IWGA principles, no new venues will be constructed. Fortunately, the city already boasts an extensive inventory of high-calibre sports facilities.

The city's track record includes hosting the 2019 World Police and Fire Games and the 2023 FISU World University Games. IWGA CEO Joachim Gossow said, “Seeing all the assets the city offers, we are looking forward to showcasing our event in Chengdu. We especially witnessed the enthusiasm of the city and, equally important, the backing of the Chinese Olympic Committee for our Games and for non-Olympic sports.”

Strategic Partnerships

Two seasoned partners will join the IWGA for the execution of The World Games 2025. As in the 2022 edition, Madrid-based ISB will handle TV signal production and international marketing of broadcast rights. Swiss Timing will once again serve as the official timekeeper, a role it has held since 2009.

The Organiser Agreement for TWG 2025 was signed in

2019 in Gold Coast, Australia. Chengdu's Mayor, Mr Luo Qiang, led the host city's commitment. The agreement was witnessed by Mr Yu Zaiqing, Vice President of the IOC and the Chinese Olympic Committee. IWGA President José Perurena signed on behalf of the association. The contract had been ratified earlier that year by all 37 member federations of the IWGA, a group which has since grown to 40.

Following the signing, José Perurena said, “By awarding our Games to one of the most forward-looking and dynamic cities in China, we have signalled our arrival as a major power in international sport.” Mayor Luo Qiang added, “Chengdu strongly appreciates the concept of the IWGA and believes it aligns with our development philosophy. With guidance from the IWGA and support from the Chinese Olympic Committee and all levels of government, Chengdu is confident in delivering a successful and memorable Games and leaving behind a lasting legacy for both Chengdu and The World Games.” IWGA CEO Joachim Gossow echoed the sentiment, stating, “The flavour of The World Games fits the city.”



TWG 2025: SPORT AND DISCIPLINE LINE-UP

- Air Sports: Drone Sports
- American Football: Flag Football
- Archery: Field, Target
- Billiards Sports: Carom, Pool, Snooker
- Boules Sports: Lyonnaise, Pétanque
- Canoe: Dragon Boat, Marathon, Polo
- Cheerleading: Pom
- DanceSport: Breaking, Latin, Standard
- Fistball: Outdoor
- Floorball: Indoor
- Flying Disc: Disc Golf, Ultimate
- Gymnastics: Acrobatic, Aerobic, Parkour, Trampoline
- Handball: Beach
- Ju-Jitsu: Duo, Duo for athletes with impairment, Fighting, Ne-Waza
- Karate: Kata, Kumite
- Kickboxing: K1 Style, Point Fighting
- Korfball: Beach, Indoor
- Lacrosse: Sixes Lacrosse
- Life Saving: Pool
- Muaythai: Combat
- Orienteering: Foot Orienteering
- Powerboating: MotoSurf (biofuel or electric)
- Powerlifting: Classic, Equipped
- Racquetball: Racquetball
- Roller Sports: Inline Freestyle, Inline

Hockey, Speed Skating

- SAMBO: Combat
- Baseball-Softball: Softball
- Sport Climbing: Speed
- Squash: Squash
- Triathlon: Duathlon
- Tug of War: Outdoor
- Underwater Sports: Finswimming, Freediving, Freediving for athletes with impairment
- Waterski and Wakeboard: Cable Wakeboard, Wakeboard, Wake Surf
- Wushu: Sanda, Taolu

INDIAN CONTINGENT AT TWG 2025

- Archery (Target – Compound)
- Men: Rakesh Kumar, Abhishek Verma, Rishabh Yadav
- Women: Parneet Kaur, Madhura Dhamangaonkar
- Compound Team: To be confirmed
- Billiards Sports
- Pool (Heyball): Shivam Arora
- Snooker 15-Reds (Men): Sourav Kothari, Kamal Chawla
- Snooker 6-Reds (Women): Natasha Chethan
- Racquetball
- Men's Singles: Kosetty Jyotheekalyan

- Women's Singles: Shilpa Dalvi
- Mixed Doubles: Kosetty Jyotheekalyan and Shilpa Dalvi
- Roller Sports
- Inline Freestyle:
- Slalom Classic (Women): Joshi Shreyasi
- Speed Slalom (Men): Jinesh Satyan Nanal
- Speed Skating:
- Road Elimination Race 15,000m (Men): Velkumar Anand Kumar
- Road One Lap (Men): Aryanpal Singh Ghuman
- Road Point Race 10,000m (Men): Velkumar Anand Kumar
- Road Sprint 100m (Men): Aryanpal Singh Ghuman
- Track Dual Time Trial 200m (Men): Aryanpal Singh Ghuman
- Track Elimination 10,000m (Men): Velkumar Anand Kumar
- Track Points 5,000m (Men): Velkumar Anand Kumar
- Track Sprint 1,000m (Men): Velkumar Anand Kumar, Aryanpal Singh Ghuman
- Track Sprint 500m+D (Men): Aryanpal Singh Ghuman
- Wushu (Sanda)
- Women's 52kg: Namrata Batra
- Women's 60kg: Roshibina Devi Naorem
- Men's 56kg: Abhishek Jamwal

Dual Careers in Sport

The Importance of Balancing Athletic and Educational Development

The concept of a dual career in sport means to pursue an athletic career at the same time as education or another job (Stambulova and Harwood, 2022). Many young adults pursue dual careers because becoming an elite athlete often starts at a young age while they are still in school. The need to support athletes in pursuing both sport and education is increasingly becoming important. As a result, dual career pathways are recognised as crucial for athlete well-being, long-term employability, and smoother transitions out of sport. Dual careers can be viewed as a continuum, ranging from prioritising sport at one end to prioritising studies at the other end (Stambulova et al., 2015). Furthering the idea that dual careers pathways exist on a continuum, Cartigny et al. (2020) asserted that there are three profiles for dual careers. Firstly, athletes who are students with an increased focus on the sports pathway and careers. Secondly, dual career athletes who place an equal balance on sport and education. Lastly, athlete-students who prioritise the education or vocational pathway. Balancing sports and education can be challenging, but the research shows continuing with education alongside sport is beneficial for the dual career athlete. For example, dual career athletes have been reported to have higher levels of life satisfaction, reduced stress, and more confidence regarding life after sport (Aquilina, 2013). Dual careers can also help with the holistic development of athletes through enabling transferable skills such as time management, discipline, goal setting and resilience (De Brant et al., 2019). Furthermore, obtaining an education can help athletes prepare for life after a sports career, which can make the transition out of sport smoother (Torregrosa et al., 2015). Having interests outside of sport can also assist the athlete to have a more balanced identity (Stambulova C Wylleman, 2019).

Despite these benefits, the challenges associated with a dual career include scheduling conflicts, burnout and fatigue, limited social time and underperformance in one or both areas (Stambulova and Harwood, 2022). It is very important for educational institutions and sports organisations to collaborate to provide flexible learning opportunities for student athletes and address the unique needs that they have. Students can also follow the recommendations by Stambulova and Harwood (2022) to help them with the challenges of a dual-career pathway:

- 1) Set realistic goals and revise as required
- 2) Keep learning from many different people about what works and what to avoid
- 3) Set a daily schedule to help manage time
- 4) Plan for both short-term and long-term events, and keep planning flexible
- 5) Be mindful of stress, which can come from conflicting demands
- 6) Stay positive and learn from the past while planning for the future to be successful

Dual careers in sport are an important part of supporting the long-term development and well-being of athletes. The dual career model empowers athletes to prepare for life after their athletic career, but can also maximise their performance and growth during their career. A multi-disciplinary approach where athletes, educators, coaches, families and policy makers collaborate can help in creating a supportive environment for athletes as they negotiate the challenges associated with combining both study and sport. It is important for those

Dr Deb Agnew is an associate professor in the College of Education, Psychology, and Social Work at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia. She teaches sociology of sports in the Bachelor of Sports and Active Recreation programme. Her primary research area is athlete welfare and retirement from elite sport. She holds a PhD in the constructions of masculinity following a career in elite Australian football.

who work with dual career athletes to remember that dual careers exist on a continuum, with some prioritising sport and others prioritising education. Therefore, an individual, holistic approach that considers the whole person is the best strategy for supporting dual career athletes.

Associate Professor Deb Agnew, Flinders University, Adelaide, South Australia



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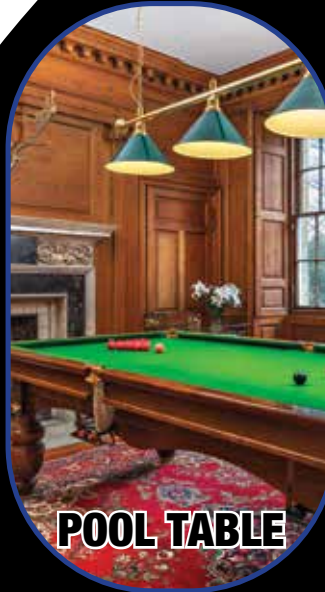
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KHO KHO MAKES HISTORIC DEBUT IN SINGAPORE

In a significant move to internationalise India's traditional sport, Kho Kho marked its debut in Singapore with an exhibition match between the national sides of Singapore and Malaysia. The Malaysian team had previously competed in the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup 2025 held in India.

The event, hosted by the Asian Kho Kho Federation (AKKF) in collaboration with the Kho Kho Association of Singapore (KKAS), took place at Jurong West Secondary School. Designed to introduce Kho Kho to the wider public, the day featured training clinics, theoretical sessions and friendly matches, engaging students and officials alike.

Sudhanshu Mittal, President of the International Kho Kho Federation (IKKF) and the Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI), hailed the occasion as "a historic day," highlighting the sport's expansion across Asia. He praised the dynamic nature of Kho Kho, describing it as a unique blend of agility, speed, reflexes and stamina.

The Malaysian team conducted a skills workshop attended by 180 children from across Singapore, followed by instructional presentations and friendly matches among school teams.

Aslam Sher Khan, President of the Asia Kho Kho Federation, called the Singapore-Malaysia match a "landmark initiative" in Kho Kho's global journey. Co-Secretary Kshitij Aggarwal noted enthusiastic student



participation, media presence and growing interest in the sport.

The event concluded with an exhibition match showcasing Singapore's fledgling national team against Malaysia's seasoned players. The spirited contest signalled rising potential, laying foundations for Kho Kho's future across Southeast Asia.

SPO
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TWIN BRONZE BOOST FOR INDIA

India's campaign at the Badminton Asia Junior Individual Championships 2025 ended with a breakthrough moment as Tanvi Sharma and Vennala Kalagotla bagged bronze medals in women's singles, becoming the first Indian duo to finish on the podium in the same edition of the tournament.

Both shuttlers had advanced to the semifinals with impressive wins. Second seed Tanvi outplayed Indonesia's fifth seed Thalita Ramadhani Wiryawan 21-19, 21-14 in just 35 minutes, continuing her run of straight-game victories. Vennala took a grittier route, overcoming Thailand's Janyaporn Meepanthong 21-18, 17-21, 21-17 in a 58-minute battle that showcased her resilience.

In the last four, Vennala mounted a late charge against China's Liu Si Ya, saving three match points from 15-20 in the second game before a costly error handed Liu a 21-15, 21-18 win.



Tanvi Sharma

Meanwhile, Tanvi recovered from a sluggish start against Yin Yi Qing, but her momentum faded as the eighth seed wrapped up the match 21-13, 21-14.



Vennala Kalagotla

Despite falling short of the final, the twin bronze medals underscore India's rapid rise in junior badminton and reflect the fighting spirit of its next-generation athletes.

PHL RETURNS WITH RECORD RS 30 LAKH PRIZE

Roundglass Hockey Academy, in partnership with Hockey Punjab, has rolled out the second edition of the Punjab Hockey League for junior players, featuring India's highest-ever prize pool at the grassroots level, Rs 30 Lakhs.

Set to begin on 31 August at the Mohali International Hockey Stadium, the revamped league will feature eight academy teams competing across two phases. The first leg wraps up on 9 September, followed by the second phase and finals at Jalandhar's Surjit Hockey Stadium from 15 to 27 September. Teams will be ranked after 14 matches each, with prize money allocated accordingly.

Each squad may include 20 players, three in the Under-21 category (born after 1 January 2005) and 17 in the Under-19 (born after 1 January 2007). This format encourages a balanced field while offering consistent exposure to emerging talent.

The league's return builds on last year's edition, which featured six Punjab-based teams in a home-and-away setup.

The expansion signals a clear intent to develop hockey beyond state lines.

Roundglass founder Gurpreet Sunny Singh described the tournament as a milestone in reviving India's passion for hockey, pointing to its scale and focus on competitive match play. Hockey Punjab President Nitin Kohli added



that the structure promotes tactical innovation and consistency, essential for long-term player growth.

With robust planning and a development-first approach, Punjab Hockey League 2025 is poised to redefine youth-level competition in Indian hockey.

SPORTS
50

MARQUEZ MAKES DUCATI HISTORY WITH FIFTH WIN

Marc Marquez stamped his authority on the Czech Grand Prix with a commanding fifth consecutive win, becoming the first Ducati rider to achieve such a streak. The Spaniard held off Marco Bezzecchi, who finished 1.7 seconds adrift for Aprilia, after a fast-paced and dramatic contest in Brno.

Francesco Bagnaia launched well and took the holeshot, but Marquez retaliated by Turn 3. Bezzecchi charged past both riders to take the lead on Lap 2, but Marquez struck back with purpose to reclaim his spot and set the tempo. Pedro Acosta made a decisive move later in the race, overtaking Bagnaia for third and securing his first podium of the season for KTM.

Alex Marquez's weekend collapsed at Turn 12. While battling Joan Mir, the Gresini rider attempted a risky overtake that took both out of the race, ending hopes of collecting vital championship points. The incident dents Marquez's title ambitions with zero points from Czechia.

Further down, Enea Bastianini surged past Bagnaia in a promising spell before crashing at Turn 3. Raul Fernandez and Jorge Martin moved through the field as Fabio Quartararo slipped down the order.

With the Austrian Grand Prix up next, teams and riders prepare for the next chapter in a season that continues to deliver hard-fought battles, surprise moves and mounting pressure across the standings. The grid now turns its focus to



Spielberg, where the championship fight is expected to intensify between the usual contenders and rising challengers.

GREENS WITH GRIT

A full-page background image of a male golfer in a white t-shirt and dark shorts, captured in the middle of a golf swing on a lush green course. The golfer is seen from the back, with his arms extended and the golf club visible. The background shows a vast green field with some trees in the distance under a clear sky.

Golf in India is no longer a fringe pursuit. As Olympic dreams grow among young aspirants, the Tarun Sardesai Golf Academy (TSG) emerges as a powerhouse nurturing talent with precision, passion and discipline. Built from sheer vision and resilience, TSG is fuelling the next generation of pro golfers who dare to dream big on the fairway.

SHWETA SARDESAI

Every athlete dreams of representing their country at the Olympic Games, the world's most prestigious sporting arena. Golfers are no exception. With golf now firmly recognised in global competitions, it is only natural that Indian players too aspire to mount the medal podium. Tarun Sardesai Golf Academy has stepped up to help realise this vision for India's young talent.

It takes passion and purpose to make a lasting impact. Tarun Sardesai embodies both. A golfer and now an accomplished coach, he has gone far beyond personal accolades to establish a world-class golf academy. The Tarun Sardesai Golf Academy (TSG) has become a hub for ambitious young players eyeing a professional career, including Olympian Aditi Ashok, who narrowly missed bringing home a historic medal.

Speaking to Sports Champ, Sardesai detailed the academy's evolution and future roadmap.

"Starting a golf academy is no easy feat. It demands serious investment and extensive land. When I began building TSG, the road was anything but smooth. Financial hurdles emerged on day one and are still very real today. Golf development in India gets limited funding, and our commitment to top-tier sports science, nutrition and coaching means tuition is no small expense for parents."

Relocating TSG to Zion Hills Golf Course initially raised eyebrows. "Parents said it was too far. Enrolment was slow, with barely ten or eleven students following me to the new campus," he recalled.



Running the academy is a full-time, high-pressure job. "It's a 24/7 commitment. Managing student schedules, performance metrics, and facilities is relentless work," Sardesai said. Yet that drive reflects in the calibre of athletes TSG produces.

Pushing forward with purpose

We found ways to push through. For funding, I began approaching individual high-net-worth individuals and philanthropists, requesting contributions. My belief in what we were building helped me overcome personal fears. The location challenge was resolved through the success of our students, which showed everyone the standard of excellence we were cultivating. My decision to relocate was driven





performance suffered," he admits. That experience led him to reimagine his role, not as a competitor but as a mentor. His time in boarding school influenced this vision deeply. "I was just average back then, but the structured, distraction-free environment shaped me," he says. This inspired the academy's ethos: to create a focused learning space for young golfers far removed from urban chaos.

Educating through sport

His broader mission revolves around integrating education and sport. "Sport is education. It teaches discipline, patience, and resilience. Mentorship must be holistic if we want to build future champions," he explains. TSG is designed not just to improve swings but to develop life skills.

Potential, for Sardesai, is not defined by a child's swing. "Every kid has talent. What truly matters is their attitude and commitment," he says. The academy does not select based on technique but monitors dedication and consistency over time. "I work with a player for six to twelve months before making that call. If they cannot embrace the rigour, they won't last. The process itself filters who is truly made for the sport."

International exposure for homegrown talent

Players at TSG Academy are given opportunities to train and compete abroad, though securing funding for such exposure remains challenging. "There is no government support for golf yet. We operate within financial constraints," says Sardesai. "Even one lakh can help send a student overseas. We often manage hand to mouth, but generous contributors have allowed us to keep pushing forward."

TSG trains approximately 50 players annually, alongside short-term students from across India and abroad. With limited capacity, the academy maintains a niche and intensive setup supported by a 35-member team. This includes specialists in coaching, nutrition, fitness and sports science. A separate team handles student and player management. Coaches and support staff live on campus, fostering continuous mentorship beyond structured training sessions.

Learning from the world's best

Foreign expertise is integral to the academy's evolution. "We learn weekly from some of the top minds," Sardesai explains. All coaches participate in two-hour learning sessions focused on knowledge sharing. Sardesai's own journey includes mentorship under Italian coach Donato Ponziano and sessions with global specialists like Phil Kenyon for putting, Andy Plummer for swing technique, and James Ridyard for short game. The academy uses cutting-edge GASP technology, with ongoing lessons from Canadian coach Scott Cowx. A studio inspired by Phil Kenyon's is also part of the facility, underscoring the academy's commitment to integrating global methods.

by the desire to create an environment free from urban distractions. George, the promoter, supported this vision and provided a beautiful facility. I built a comprehensive team to manage coaching, student support and sports science. My passion drives me. I work seven days a week and feel withdrawal symptoms if I am away from the academy for too long.

Changing perceptions around cost

Golf is often seen as a costly sport, and those developing academies face criticism. I certainly dealt with scepticism when starting TSG Academy, particularly around the image of golf and coaching. Many believe golf is reserved for the wealthy and unsuitable for families without financial resources. I always say it is only as expensive as you make it. Zion Hills operates on a "pay and play" basis, and beginners do not need high-end equipment. You can walk into a driving range, rent clubs and start with a coach. The real issue is the lack of awareness about how accessible the sport actually is.

Turning sceptics into believers

Parental doubts were overcome through the

achievements of our students. One parent who had opposed the relocation saw his son become a national champion and now strongly endorses the facility. This proved the environment of excellence we aimed to create. My goal was to build a space without distractions, similar to my own boarding school experience, which taught me so much. George shared that vision and offered us a top-tier facility featuring some of the finest greens in the country.

Vision behind the fairways

The academy operates on a lush stretch of land featuring a nine-hole golf course, but ownership of the greens lies with Zion Hills. TSG rents the course for training purposes, and its upkeep is fully managed by the Zion Hills team. "They do an outstanding job maintaining bent grass greens," says Sardesai. "We train for eight hours daily on grass tees, which demands serious maintenance commitment."

The academy was not born from a flash of inspiration but a slow realisation. "As a professional player, I lacked proper coaching and guidance. I was winging it, and my





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QUEENS RISING

Divya Deshmukh's historic sweep of the Women's World Cup title marks a turning point in Indian chess. Backed by legends like Koneru Humpy and Dronavalli Harika, and joined by emerging stars including Vaishali Rameshbabu and Vantika Agrawal, India's women are transforming the global chess narrative with skill, presence and unstoppable momentum

DEEPTI SHIDORE

Indian chess has undergone a dramatic transformation since the pioneering days of Grand Master Viswanathan Anand, whose five-time World Championship reign put India firmly on the global chess map. From a solitary torchbearer to a full-fledged powerhouse, India today boasts 87 Grandmasters, with Divya Deshmukh becoming the 88th GM and the 13th from Maharashtra, a historic achievement clinched just this month in Batumi, Georgia.

India is officially ranked the second most powerful country in the world in both Men's and Women's Chess, an achievement made even more astonishing considering the pace at which we've climbed the ranks. For the first time, both the Men's and Women's teams won Gold at the World Chess Olympiad 2024, marking a defining moment in our Chess legacy. We now boast the youngest-ever World Champion, GM D Gukesh, who conquered the Candidates and claimed the title. GM Koneru Humpy secured the title of World Rapid Champion 2024, reinforcing her status as one of the all-time greats. And in the junior circuit, GM Divya Deshmukh emerged as the World Junior Champion 2024, a title that placed her firmly in the global spotlight. Today, half of the top 6 players in the world are Indian.

A New Chapter: Women's Chess in India

Now, we celebrate yet another first: Grand Master Divya Deshmukh, who became the first Indian to win the Women's World Cup, a feat that earned her the Grandmaster title directly, without the long pursuit of norms. What makes this moment even more thrilling is the possibility of her facing the reigning Women's World Champion in 2026, a player she has already defeated in recent competition.

At just 19 years, Divya is at the peak of her powers, is an absolute professional, deeply aware of the stakes, fiercely focused under pressure, and consistently delivers when it matters most. Off the board, she's equally impressive, media-savvy, gracious



Divya Deshmukh

with fans, always present for interviews, and a true star in every sense of the word. With a growing fanbase and an undeniable presence, she's not just admired, she's looked up to. Among them is Divi Bijesh, the Under-10 World Champion, who smiles, "Divya's name and mine are similar! She won the World Cup and I won the World Cup for Under-10 in the same year! I hope she becomes the Women's World Champion and I follow her path!"

While the men's circuit has seen a rise of young prodigies making their mark,

Indian women's chess has been defined by resilience. At the helm are two formidable legends, GM Koneru Humpy (38) and GM Dronavalli Harika (34), who have not just held their ground but also redefined longevity in the sport.

Humpy, famously, made a triumphant comeback after a two-year break to win the World Rapid Championship in 2019, and remarkably repeated the feat in 2024, becoming a two-time Rapid World Champion. Harika, known for her consistency, has represented India in 10 Chess Olympiads over



GM Dronavalli Harika

20 years, embodying dedication and grit. Harika played an instrumental role in winning the Olympiad team in 2024, Budapest.

Now rising alongside these stalwarts is GM Vaishali Rameshbabu, who in 2023 became India's third female Grandmaster, and notably, the first Indian woman to qualify for the Candidates Tournament, a gateway to the World Championship. Her landmark achievement also made her and her brother, GM Praggnanandhaa, the first-ever brother-sister Grandmaster duo in the world. Vaishali's ascent signals a generational shift, blending youthful ambition with deep-rooted inspiration from India's Chess greats.

Adding to this list of inspirational figures is IM Tania Sachdev, Olympiad Gold medalist,



GM Koneru Humpy

a prominent face of Indian Chess and one of its most vocal ambassadors on the global stage. One of the first players to get a long-term commercial brand endorsement with RedBull. Through her playing career and commentary, she has brought visibility to the game and inspired a generation of young players, particularly girls, to dream big.

Another favourite is IM Vantika Agrawal, an Arjuna awardee who was part of the Gold-winning Olympiad team in 2024 and with a recent brand endorsement deal with LG Electronics India, opening a path for more brands to support players, a clear signal of the rising popularity of chess.

Watching these women compete with such grace, grit, and determination is deeply inspiring. Their journeys, both on and off the board, resonate far beyond the chess community. Unsurprisingly, this surge in excellence has sparked a visible rise in the number of young girls across India taking up chess not just as a hobby, but as a serious pursuit.

Along with the players, the arbiter community has also seen a rise in women professionals. There are six women International arbiters only in the State of Maharashtra working actively at local, state, national and international level events. Government bodies, at the state level as well as National, are taking steps to



WGM Tania Sachdev

encourage more women's participation. The need to have more women representation in organisational roles and trainer roles, in addition to an increase in the number of women's tournaments, is recognised by many prominent chess personalities. Inclusivity is a continued effort, and representation is one of the first steps towards an equalitarian goal.

The state has seen a systemic rise, with regular tournaments happening in most of the districts. This has enabled all stakeholders to take a more active role locally. The results of such a robust system are evident when we see upcoming talents taking the National crown. Recently concluded Nationals Under 9 was won by Girisha Pai from Mumbai, Maharashtra and bronze by Narayani Marathe from Nandurbar, Maharashtra. There's a need for financial support for these upcoming talents, not just at the peak of their careers, but from the very beginning. In recent times, Indian sports have enabled a system where players are more visible in the



GM Vaishali Rameshbabu

media, encouraging a healthy fan base that has started following games more than ever. Brands like Persistent, Ambit, Adani, Tech Mahindra, and Unisports have consistently given voice to players and continue to aid the chess ecosystem.

Getting financial support for athletes is an ongoing battle, not just in chess, but in all sports in India. It might seem like too big a problem, but the combined effort of the community can solve anything.

Choose a sport, choose a player and support in any way you can.

It's a great time to be part of Chess. It's a game which inculcates great qualities in players, enhancing focus, analytical and



WGM Vantika Agrawal

decision-making skills, making a long-lasting impact on one's life.

The chess world today is a growing family, every stakeholder working towards the betterment of infrastructure, dedicated to promoting this game and its players.

Deepti Shidore is an International Arbiter who has worked in the World Junior 2024, World Chess Olympiad 2022, and World Youth 2019. She has worked with several renowned personalities of chess, like GM Abhijit Kunte, Dronacharya Awardee GM RB Ramesh and Arjuna Awardee GM Surya Shekhar Ganguly.



Bronze Debut!

In an exclusive with Sports Champ, India's under-16 volleyball coach Ajay Jangara speaks about the team's historic bronze at the Asian Championship and how they're gearing up to take that momentum global



MILIND DHAMDHERE

Volleyball in Asia has long been dominated by powerhouses like China, Japan and Uzbekistan. For India, cracking the continental elite in this sport has always felt like an uphill climb. But a fearless bunch of under-16 boys just flipped that narrative and made history doing it.

At the recent Asian Championship, India's under-16 boys' team stunned spectators and rivals by clinching a bronze medal in their debut appearance. Behind their disciplined approach and tactical excellence was a coaching team that believed this dream was possible. And now, the dream has expanded.

India's entry onto the podium was historic. This is the first time any Indian team has won a medal in this age category at the championship. More than just bringing home bronze, the boys have qualified for next year's World Championship, placing India firmly on the global volleyball map.

"This wasn't just a lucky campaign," said Ajay Jangara, head coach of the national squad. "We built this result on the foundations of trust, technique and temperament. These boys proved they're ready for top-level competition, and now we're aiming even higher."

Preparations for the World Championship are already underway. According to Coach Jangara, the focus will now shift to refining strategy and boosting performance benchmarks. Asia was the beginning. The

world is the next arena, and this team is hungry to show what it's made of.

Mental Pressure and Mindset Shift

Every debut international appearance carries its own share of pressure. For the Indian under-16 volleyball team, this first-ever entry into the Asian Championship presented unfamiliar challenges and formidable opponents. The team had never faced the techniques and skill levels of countries like China, Japan and Uzbekistan in direct competition before. According to head coach Ajay Jangara, the initial mental pressure was noticeable. The players were stepping into unknown territory, and expectations were high. However, their eagerness to perform and excitement to showcase their talent became a driving force. As victories started rolling in, confidence soared. Despite dropping two matches, the squad rallied to earn a historic bronze and leave a mark.

Comeback Against Japan

One of the tournament's standout moments came against Japan. After losing to them earlier by 1-3 sets, India turned the tables in the bronze medal decider with a nail-biting 3-2 win. The turnaround was no accident. Each evening after matches, the team conducted detailed debriefs, studying their own sets and analysing footage of rival squads. When the possibility of a podium finish emerged, the coaching unit delved deep into strategy. The focus was placed on



identifying Japan's weaker defensive links and targeting them with precision smashes. Even after narrowly dropping the fourth set, the team kept its composure and surged to victory in the fifth. Earlier in the tournament, India had stunned powerhouses China, Australia and hosts Thailand with straight-set wins. A gripping 3-2 result against Uzbekistan further cemented their fighting spirit. Despite strong support for the home side, the Indian team maintained focus and dictated the tempo throughout.

Preparation That Made the Difference

Behind the scenes, intense groundwork





Captain's Confidence Signals Determination

Team captain Adesh Singh echoes this sentiment with grounded confidence. Reflecting on the team's campaign in the Asian Championship, he notes that belief played a central role. Despite being newcomers, the team rallied to claim a podium finish. He admits there was pressure at the outset, but it gradually gave way to self-assurance. With strong camaraderie across players and support staff, the squad gelled as a unit. Adesh believes the upcoming camp will serve as a tactical blueprint, helping the team adapt to foreign styles and refine their strategies for the big tournament ahead.

A Personal Milestone for Shabad Gautam

For Shabad Gautam, the tournament was far more than just a competition. It marked the realisation of a long-held dream. Chosen as libero for India's under-16 squad, he hoped not only to help win a medal but also to earn individual recognition. That moment arrived when he was named Best Libero of the championship.

Shabad's journey was fuelled by purpose

shaped this breakthrough. A week-long preparatory camp was held at the Sports Authority of India's centre in Bengaluru. With dual training sessions of two and a half hours daily, players focused on building match fitness and sharpening tactical reflexes. Competitive games against athletes from SAI's excellence wing helped simulate tournament pressure. The camp was fully equipped with support staff, including physiotherapists, mental trainers, and nutritionists. Though short, the camp laid the foundation for team coordination and self-belief. Coach Jangara believes that a longer preparatory phase could have pushed the team towards gold. As it stands, the bronze has reset expectations and proved that India can rise on the continental stage.

World Championship Looms as Next Big Test

India's qualification for the World Championship marks a significant step forward in its volleyball journey. After securing bronze at the Asian Championship, the challenge has now intensified. The under-16 boys' team is aiming to convert confidence into global credibility. Coach

Ajay Jangara believes the squad is mentally prepared to take on the world, and planning is already underway for a rigorous long-term preparatory camp. The emphasis will be on refining techniques, eliminating weaknesses, and building overall strength and resilience. Player selection will be merit-based, drawing from performance in trials and training camps.

Pushing Boundaries Through Global Exposure

To match international standards, foreign exposure is seen as a critical element. According to Coach Jangara, understanding strategies and systems used by global opponents is essential for development. He remains hopeful that the Indian team will travel abroad ahead of the World Championship for competitive training. Backed by continued government support, particularly under policies encouraging high-performance sport, the Indian squad is expected to receive logistical and financial backing. Coach Jangara is quietly optimistic that just like in Asia, the Indian side can spring surprises on the world stage.



and ambition. Every game was approached with full commitment, aimed at lifting the team and reaching personal excellence. He credits this achievement to the tireless efforts of his teammates and support staff, who worked round the clock to keep the squad mentally and physically prepared. He also extends heartfelt thanks to his family, particularly his grandfather, whose encouragement helped him pursue volleyball seriously.

For Shabad, every reception and dive was a statement of intent. The Best Libero award stands as proof of what focus, support and belief can achieve.





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Runner Team Sports Track:
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Kumarasetty, B Lithesh Narasinmha Reddy



3rd Position Team Blue (Nilam):
Sri Sahith Reddy Indukuri, Yogith K, Popuru
Sreenaga Sai Samanvitha, Laxmi Vaidika Gonuguntla

The Sports ENTREPRENEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

'Where students turn Sport

In an age of fleeting distractions and passive spectatorship, Sports Champ magazine is rewriting the role of schoolchildren in India's sporting narrative by inviting them not just to play, but to build. The Sports Entrepreneur Championship 2025 is not a school competition. It is a challenge to young minds across multiple schools, including Jain Heritage School Bangalore, The Shri

Ram Universal School Hyderabad, GK Gurukul and The Kalyani School Pune, to reshape how sport is experienced, marketed and innovated.

Here, students are not guided by drills or routines, but by sharp thinking and bold enterprise. Teams of four, drawn from standards 9 to 12, are tasked with one goal: to develop a credible business pitch in the sports world. Whether it

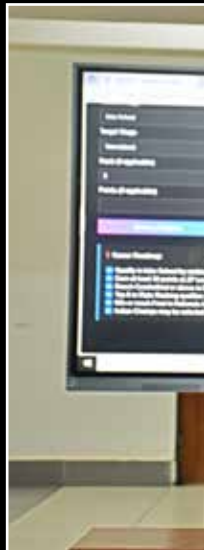
GK GURUKUL, PUNE



Winner Team Game Rise: Mihir Arbuj, Aarnav Naik,
Diya Mathur, Shraddha Hurakadli



Runner Team Kynetik: Rudra Paretha, Avika Sar



IP 2025

s into Startups'

is a new fitness product, a disruptive fan experience or a digital solution for coaching and performance, the contest demands substance. These are not vague ideas. They are structured pitches with speaker orders, customer briefs, market strategies and business models that rival actual startup frameworks.

What makes the initiative exceptional is its blend of competition and industry

immersion. Students undergo scrutiny rounds, team audits, innovation mapping and pitch assessments against real-world parameters. Points are not just awarded for presentation. They are earned through research, relevance, delivery and clarity of vision.

The concept is the brainchild of Sports Champ's Editor-in-Chief Bhushan Thakur, an international businessman with a bold vision for empowering future leaders through sport. His approach positions students not merely as participants, but as future innovators and decision-makers in the global sports economy.

By fostering ideation, ownership, and competitive storytelling among teenagers, Sports Champ magazine is not just planting entrepreneurial seeds. It is cultivating a generation that treats sport not only as passion, but as potential.

This is the pitch. And the future is listening.



Fit: Trisha Bandewar, Singhvi, Dhairya Madan



3rd Position Team Stabi-Step: Aks Mali, Vaibhavi Tamant, Dhyey Dhimmar, Vani Agrawal



THE KALYANI SCHOOL, PUNE



Winner Team Sportsbuddies: Kavya Peshkar, Samruddhi Shah, Deiwik Prashant, Abhinav Rao



Runner Team Gear 2 Glory: Tanvi Whig, Shaarav Narang, Mannat Bhatia, Devansh Goyal



3rd Position Team BTW: Dhruv Iyer, Tilak Bhimrajka, Mayan Sreedharan, Ranveer Bhatia



MAA ANANDMAYEE MEMORIAL SCHOOL, UTTARAKHAND

Badminton Team

Champions of PPSA Inter-School Badminton Championship

We're thrilled to announce that our badminton team has emerged as the Overall Winners in the prestigious PPSA Inter-School Badminton Championship! This achievement is a testament to the team's hard work, dedication, and exceptional teamwork. The team's victory is all the more impressive considering the tournament's competitive nature, with over 40 schools

participating. We're thrilled to see our students excel in sports and demonstrate exceptional teamwork and sportsmanship. Congratulations to the badminton team on their well-deserved win!

Team Members

1. Priyanshu Rawat
2. Bhupendra Singh
3. Rishabh Panthri
4. Shourya Panthri
5. Vipul
6. Atharv Thapa
7. Tanishka

8. Suraj Negi
9. Prince
10. Sushant
11. Vaibhavi
12. Siddhika



Special Achievements

Overall Winners in PPSA Inter-School Badminton Championship
Demonstrated exceptional teamwork and sportsmanship throughout the tournament
Showcased remarkable skill and strategy in defeating opponents from over 40 schools



"Kudos to our badminton team for their remarkable achievement in the PPSA Inter-School Badminton Championship! Their outstanding performance and sportsmanship reflect their hard work, dedication, and teamwork. I'm proud of every player for their commitment to excellence and for making our school proud. This achievement is a testament to the team's exceptional abilities and their ability to work together towards a common goal."

— Dr Mansi Singhal, Principal



"I'm incredibly proud of our badminton team for their outstanding performance in the PPSA Inter-School Badminton Championship. Their teamwork, communication, and equal efforts from all players were truly impressive. Despite badminton being an individual sport, our team played cohesively, demonstrating their ability to work together seamlessly. This achievement is a testament to their hard work, dedication, and commitment to excellence."

— Uditanshu Arya, badminton coach

DHRUV GLOBAL SCHOOL, PUNE

Arnav Khanzode

Sport: Climbing

Competition Performance

I had participated in the IMF West Zone Competition, where I was a part of the "Open Men's" category, which includes male participants from age 17 and above. Since it was my first time competing in the "Open" category, the competition was much tougher, and I placed 5th in the "Speed Climbing" Discipline. It was a much different environment as I went from being a national champion in the Under-17 category to placing 5th in the "open" category, and it was a great opportunity to climb and give a good competition to my fellow senior competitors.

Current Coach

I have worked with many coaches over the years, but my current coaches are Coach Umesh Sharma, Coach Bharat Gowda. I have been training under them for more than one year.

Training Routine

I train 5 days a week with 2 active rest days for each training session, lasting 4 hours. I focus on speed, agility and strength training every day.

School Support

My school and subject teachers have been very supportive in my journey and are flexible with my academic work. Whenever I have training camps or competitions, the school allows flexible timings and grants leave when required, while also helping me catch up on missed lessons. They also understand the demands and needs of a highly active Student-Athlete.

Family Support

My parents, especially my father, have been the biggest pillars in my sports climbing journey. My father saw my strengths and capabilities in sports climbing and has been my no.1 supporter since the beginning, encouraging me to travel to all competitions and training camps in the past 10 years.

Sports Goals

My short-term goal is to make my country proud by challenging and being on par with all the athletes who will be competing with me in the 2025 IFSC Asian Youth Championships in Guiyang, Guizhou, China, from 20th – 24th August 2025. My long-term goal is to be selected for the Olympic



Games in the next 10 years and secure a spot on the podium for the sports climbing Speed category for our country.

Role Models

I don't have any specific sports idols or role models. I look up to all the great Indian Athletes who have given their best for our nation and made a name for the whole country, whether it is the Commonwealth Games or the Olympics. I want to be known as a part of them.

Achievements

Open National Indore (2019): Bronze medal
Open National Srinagar (2019): Bronze medal
Represented India in Asian Kids Championships, China (2019)
25th National Championship, Bhubaneswar (2019): Gold medal
Zonal Competition, Pune (2022): Silver medal
26th National Championship, Uttarkashi (2022): Bronze medal
Tata Jamshedpur Open National Competition (2023): Silver medal
Zonal Competition, Udaipur (2023): Silver medal
27th National Championship, Bangalore (2023): Bronze medal
Represented India in Asian Youth





India an international shooting hub for next three years

India has secured hosting rights for major international shooting events through to 2028, strengthening its reputation as a key destination for competitive marksmanship. The International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) has confirmed that India will host the ISSF World Cup (Rifle, Pistol, Shotgun) in 2027, followed by the ISSF Junior World Championship in 2028.

The announcement came following the finalisation of the ISSF's global shooting calendar, with official communication sent to the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI).

In a significant development for the sport, November 2025 will see the inaugural edition of the Shooting League of India (SLI), a new platform aimed at professionalising shooting in the country.

NRAI President Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo expressed optimism, saying, "With the Los Angeles Olympics on the horizon, hosting international events each year is a major boost for our athletes. It provides senior shooters with high-level preparation and gives juniors exposure to elite competition here at home."

He added that the launch of the SLI reflects India's evolving approach to nurturing talent and building professional systems.

NRAI Secretary General K. Sultan Singh noted, "This announcement shows the faith ISSF has in India's capabilities. I thank the Government of India, the Sports Ministry, the Sports Authority of India and all stakeholders for their continuous support. The new league marks a bold step for future development."

Confirmed Shooting Events in India:

- ISSF Junior World Cup (Rifle, Pistol, Shotgun) – September 2025

- Shooting League of India – First edition, November 2025
- Asian Rifle/Pistol Cup – February 2026
- ISSF World Cup – 2027
- ISSF Junior World Championship – 2028

NRAI president Kalikesh Singh Deo to head ISSF Tech Panel

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has announced that its President, Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo, has been appointed Interim Chairperson of the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) Committee on E-Sports, E-Games and Technological Innovations. The confirmation came via an official communication from ISSF Headquarters in Munich, signed by President Luciano Rossi and Secretary General Alessandro Nicotra di San Giacomo.

The newly formed committee will focus on integrating virtual and augmented reality formats, e-shooting

competitions, and innovations in judging and training. Singh Deo's appointment highlights India's rising influence in global shooting sport governance and recognises his progressive leadership.

Under his tenure, the NRAI has approved the inaugural Shooting League of India (SLI), scheduled from 20 November to 2 December 2025 with support from the ISSF. The league will showcase digital innovations aimed at broadening participation and fan engagement.

Reacting to the appointment, Singh Deo said the future of sport lies in technology and accessibility, and emphasised collaboration with international experts to create inclusive and forward-thinking frameworks.

India's shooting ecosystem is undergoing rapid transformation, with young athletes and coaches increasingly relying on

technology for training.

Fans too are engaging with the sport through digital channels, positioning India at the forefront of tech-led reforms.

Singh Deo's leadership of the ISSF committee is expected to strengthen India's role in shaping global strategies for shooting sport innovation and digital outreach.





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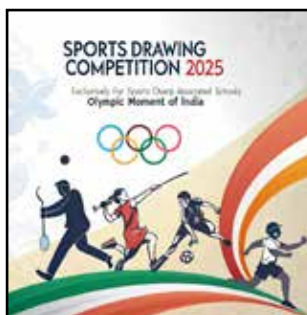
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