

# Champions Trophy Hockey – 2014 : Rise, Fall and Rise of Indian Hockey

*Ashok Mohanty*

## **Introduction:**

The year 2014, the day was 6<sup>th</sup> December, the Venue was Kalinga Stadium Hockey Complex, the city was Bhubaneswar and the event was Hockey Champions Trophy.

It was the former Indian Hockey Captain and now Hon'ble MP, Padmashree Dilip Tirkey, who in 2005 took the first initiative to create World Class Hockey Infrastructure in the State Capital, Bhubaneswar and apprised the Hon'ble Chief Minister regarding the project. The sports loving Chief Minister appreciated the initiative and gave a nod to the proposal and State Govt. in Sports Department took up the assignment with all seriousness. The work started in war footing and the sprawling vacant land adjacent to the swimming pool complex at Kalinga Stadium was converted to one of the finest Hockey Stadium equipped with latest world class Hockey Astroturf imported from Germany (the second turf to have a blue surface after London Olympics-2012) at a cost of 22.00 crores, which includes the cost of laying of the turf, construction of the stadium, insulation of lighting system and chairs in the gallery, etc.

The newly laid blue turf with an excellent ambience played host to the First Hockey India League in 2013 and the huge success of the event with tremendous spectator response paved the way in making the Kalinga Stadium Hockey Complex a strong claimant for hosting FIH's International Tournaments. State Govt. left no stones unturned in creating the top class facilities as per the requirement/demand of FIH/Hockey India and completed the second turf ground at a cost of approximately Rs.08.00 crores, with an additional cost of Rs.03.00crores towards peripheral site development.

## **Indian Hockey at a Glance:**

Hockey as a game, was introduced in India in late 19<sup>th</sup> century, by British Army Regiment. The First Hockey Club was formed at Calcutta in 1885-86 and subsequently it spread to Punjab and Bombay and then to other parts of the country.

Hockey although made it's Olympic debut in 1908 London Olympics, yet it features only as a regular event from 1928 Olympics, in Amsterdam onwards. Indian team under the captainship of an Oxford educated tribal boy,

Jaipal Singh Munda, won the Gold medal in the Amsterdam Olympics. From 1928 to 1956 India won six consecutive Olympic Hockey Gold medals and in the process won all the 24 matches, scored 178 goals at an average of 7.43 goals per match and conceded only 7 goals.

Considered as uncrowned King of World Hockey, the Indian Hockey was the most dominant force in the world for four decades and the World's greatest Hockey player of all times Hockey Wizard Late. Maj. Dhyan Chand was the cynosure of Hockey lovers round the World. Winner of a total number of 11 Olympic medals (8 gold, 1 silver & 2 bronze), Indian Hockey team had managed 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Inaugural Hockey World Cup in 1971 at Barcelona, Spain, Runners up position in the second World cup at Amstelveen, Netherlands and won the Championship title in 1975 (1<sup>st</sup> & last) at Kualalampur, Malaysia under the mercurial captain Ajit Pal Singh.

Indian Hockey's World dominance came to an end in the mid Seventies, with the advent of artificial turf which suited the European Teams, who were better in physical built, speed, strength and stamina in comparison to their Asian counterparts. The age of artistic Hockey perfected by Indian players was gone. The Indian subcontinent Hockey which had built its dominance in the World Hockey with dribbling artistry, deft passes and body feints proved redundant in the modern Hockey of speed and strength practiced by European teams.

Indian Hockey was no more a force to reckon in World Hockey, and after 1968, Mexico Olympic and 1975 World Cup, India has never been a Gold medal contender in the World events and with a steady downward slide in the world

ranking, the National game of the country (despite G.O.I's claim that no such status has been granted to Hockey) had to face the ignominy of relegation to a all time low to the utter dismay and discomforts of millions of Hockey fans of the country.

After years of internecine factionalism of rival groups, the HOCKEY INDIA could emerge as the highest governing body of the game in the Country and under the renowned Australian Coach Terry Walse, the Indian Hockey Team was able to regain the Asian Games Hockey Title at Incheon (South Korea) Asian Games in 2014 by defeating the arch rival Pakistan. With this Asian Games Title, Indian Hockey with a strong and young side has not only qualified for Rio Olympics, but also playing positive hockey in the current Hockey Champions Trophy and despite their two losses against Germany and Argentina in the league, they were able to register a convincing win against World's no-2 ranked team – NETHERLANDs (3-2), in their last league encounter.

### **HOCKEY CHAMPIONS TROPHY AT BHUBANESWAR:**

After Olympics and World Cups, the Hockey Champions Trophy is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Highest ranked International Field Hockey Tournament conducted by International Hockey Federation (FIH). Founded by Pakistan Air Marshal Noor Khan, the tournament features the World's 8 top ranked teams competing in a round robin format. Pakistan Hockey Federation started the tournament as an annual men's event in 1978. A biennial women's tournament was included in the tournament in 1987. The following countries Hockey teams have secured First/Second/Third/Fourth places in the tournament since its inception.

**Men's:**

<b>Teams</b>	<b>Titles</b>	<b>Runners Up</b>	<b>Third Place</b>	<b>Fourth Place</b>
Australia	13	10	04	03
Germany	09	07	06	02
Netherlands	08	06	07	07
Pakistan	03	06	07	07
Great Britain	-	02	02	02
South Korea	-	01	02	02
India	-	-	01	06
Argentina	-	-	01	-
Newzealand	-	-	-	02
Soviet Union	-	-	-	01

The 2014 men's Hockey Champions Trophy was the 35<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Tournament, hosted for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in Odisha. Unprecedented spectator response is witnessed at the Kalinga Stadium Hockey Complex in all the matches, and the world class facilities created in the stadium as well as the hospitality extended to all concerned have impressed the players and officials of foreign countries, FIH and Hockey India Officials so much so that Kalinga Stadium Complex is now being considered a serious contender for future World Cup and International Tournaments.

In the current tournament, the Indian team despite its initial hiccups by losing to Germany and Argentina, came back strongly and defeated the redoubtable World's 2<sup>nd</sup> rank Dutch team convincingly which gave a great boost to their morale and in the Quarter Final India met Belgium. Cheered on by the capacity crowd, Sardar &

Co came back from a 2 goal deficit to stun the 4<sup>th</sup> rank Belgium (4-2) and set up a dream semi final clash with the traditional rival Pakistan. In the Semi-final hope of millions of Indians was shattered when India in a closely fought match lost to Pakistan (4-3) goals and was deprived of entering the Final.

Despite this defeat, Indian Team have played very positive and scintillating Hockey throughout the tournament and the resurgent Indian team's focus is now on the Rio Olympics. Millions of Hockey fans of the country wish them Good Luck.

---

Ashok Mohanty, 3, Goutam Nagar, Bhubaneswar.