



PRO SQUASH

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NEWS LETTER OF THE INDIAN SQUASH PROFESSIONALS

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RAHMAT KHAN'S BOOST FOR INDIAN SQUASH

Rahmat Khan to boost Indian Squash. Indian Squash never had so good. We at the ISP do not believe in mutual back-slapping but this piece of news has really elated us.

The reason is that when Pro Squash was launched it was the aim of the ISP to increase awareness about the game in India and its potential.

One such who has seen its potential is Rahmat Khan. Cut off from the game for seven long years, Rahmat during his stay in India, has seen the talent at the grassroots and also seen what a long way Indian players have to go to reach the pinnacle. Rahmat has also seen the pinnacle, through vicariously, through the man who he once coached, his cousin Jahangir Khan.

Rahmat knows what he is attempting for producing an Indian Champion of the world. He knows first and foremost that the Indian players have to cross the pain barrier that the Pakistanis did with shedding of blood, sweat and tears. This may sound a cliché but you only have to see the way the stars of Pakistan came up to realise how arduous the road to the top of the ladder is for anyone, not just Indians.

Most of Indian players have been born with silver spoons in their mouths. That's not their fault. But the test lies in how they address themselves to the unappetising task of slogging it out when they know that there are no short-cuts to success, in this sport at least. That will be the true test of character of Indian Squash players once they decide to come into the fold of Rahmat and try to fulfill his dreams, a dream he shares with Indian Squash followers, a minuscule minority, a dream he set out to turn into reality through the efforts of the ISP and, hopefully, with the blessing of the official agencies that are meant to develop the sport.



Rahmat Khan making a point to the professionals during his maiden coaching venture in India at the Bombay Gymkhana courts

RAHMAT KHAN'S DREAM

Living all my life in England and playing and coaching squash all over the world, when I got married to India's famous star and singer Salma Agha, I moved from London to Mumbai to live and work closely with my wife for films, T. V. and music. I became a song writer and a actor

Because of these activities I was out of touch with squash for almost seven years. One day, at the reception of Salma's song album at Centaur Hotel, I met Mr. Dube, Health Club Manager and a keen squash player who then introduce me to Mr. Rizaz Mohammed, Squash Pro. Both were keen to see me back in squash. A meeting was arranged with Mr. Mahendra Agarwal and Subhash Wali, both very enthusiastic and squash - loving people keen on seeing squash grow all over India. They invited me to join them at the Mahindra International Squash challenge finals. I was surprised to see a great event very well organised by Mr. Anil Singh of ProCam Sport. I met some old friend and lots of new players who had come on top in the last seven years during which I was away from Squash.

After the finals, I came back. It was very late. I went to sleep and I dreamt: Myself, Mahendra Agarwal, Subhash Wali, Anil Singh, SRAM, GRPI, the Indian Press all are sitting together and discussing the future of Indian Squash, making plans to train the Squash Pros, juniors, to give them the knowledge of proper coaching, searching for talent all over India finding sponsors all over country, competitions for all ages, squash camps for juniors and seniors and I saw there is a World Championship going on. The final was played. And both players fighting for the glory at 16-all.

We all are sitting, watching and then it's all over; one player is winner. He is coming out with glory he is coming towards us. Yes, he is the World Champion from India.

We are all hugging each other, congratulating each other it was the effort put by all of us together and we saw the result, the champion from India. Suddenly I was awakened by a telephone call, the dream was gone but I am thinking can this dream come true?

Shall we hope? Now we must work on it.

Where there is a will there is a way.

Inshallah.

RAHMAT KHAN



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1998 WORLD OPEN SQUASH IN MUMBAI

MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA HAVE WON THE BID FOR THE 1998 MEN'S WORLD OPEN SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIP. THE EVENT IS TO CARRY A PURSE OF \$ 1,75,000 MAKING IT THE RICHEST EVER IN THE HISTORY OF GAME. TO DATE THE 1992 WORLD OPEN AT JOHANNESBURG WHICH HAD PRIZE MONEY OF \$ 1,60,000 REMAINED TOP BUT IT WILL NOW BE OVERTAKEN BY THE MAHINDRAS.

CCI TO SPONSOR SHONDIP GHOSH.

THE CRICKET CLUB OF INDIA HAVE DECIDED TO BE MAJOR SPONSOR FOR THE NATIONAL UNDER 19 SQUASH CHAMPION SHONDIP GHOSH THANKS TO ITS PRESIDENT, MR. RAJUSINGH DUNGARPUR.

ASIA TO INCLUDE SQUASH.

SHAIKH AHMAD PRESIDENT OF THE OLYMPIC COUNCIL OF ASIA TOLD THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THAT THE 1998 ASIAN GAMES AT BANGKOK WILL INCLUDE SQUASH AS A DISCIPLINE.

ASIAN JUNIORS SQUASH

India's boys did better than expected in the 8th Asian Junior Squash Championships, sponsored by India Cements at Chennai, by coming home with a bronze in the team event. This success is certainly going to give a major fillip to the sport in this country.

That we have the talent is by and large generally acknowledged, but we sadly lack the wherewithal to develop it. This has been underscored by the comments of Major S. Maniam, the Malaysian Squash Coach, who particularly impressed with the Shondip Ghosh and Ritwik Bhattacharya. India would do well to take a leaf out of Malaysia's programme for the progress of the sport in that country, which broadly outlined to the correspondent of The Times of India. Much of what he suggests is for the Squash Rackets Federation of India to do the needful.

The Asian Championships made it apparent that India has a long way to go to be able to match the skills of Pakistan, who won both the individual and team titles for boys, but they are catching up with the others as their success over Singapore and Hong Kong indicated on their way to the bronze.

What must have been particularly satisfying from Shondip Ghosh, India's brightest prospect for a medal who was eliminated on the second day, was the stellar performance he turned in while defeating Hong Kong number one Wong Wai Bhung in a crucial match in the team event, which paved the way from the bronze medal.

Shondip Ghosh was earlier to play a key role in helping India to make the semi-final of the team championship with a great victory over Singapore. That he lost to Mohammed Rizwan (Rizal) who was seeded seventh in the individual event had no daunting effect on Shondip, when they met in the team quarter

INDIAN JUNIORS AT THE BRITISH / SCOTTISH OPEN JUNIOR TOURNAMENTS 1996 - 97.

A group of juniors from all over India, accompanied by some parents and the coach of the Indians for the Asians, Akshay Joshi, participated on an individual basis in the Scottish and British Junior Opens in December 96 / January 97.

The Scottish Junior open was held in the squash complex of Herriot Watt University, Edinburgh. It was quite cold but the juniors got acclimatised very quickly. The Indians had mixed results. In the boys U-12 John Paul Rothie reached the final, but lost to an Egyptian (this match was shown on Cairo TV), primarily because of nerves. In the girls U-14 Rhea Bhandare came 3rd. In the boys U-16 Bikram Uberoi, Arjun Krishnan, Rahul Singh and Parth Doshi came 5th, 9th, 11th, and 19th respectively. In the boys U-19 Shondip Ghosh, Ritwik Bhattacharya and Awish Jaiswal came 11th, 14th and 20th respectively.

In this tournament John, Rhea and Bikram put up a good show. In 1997, Rhea has a good chance of winning. For the older boys, the standard was a bit high for them to do very well.

The standard of squash at the British Open in Sheffield, was higher than at Edinburgh. Here Rhea was the only Indian player seeded (9th - 16th). Nevertheless she lost in the second round to the No.9 seed. Rhea was however selected for rest of the world side to play against England and girls U-14 in a Test match on the final day. The rest of our boys lost either in the qualifying or first rounds Arjun Krishnan won the Classic Plate event for qualifying losers in the boys U-16. Bikram Uberoi entered the semi - final of the plate event for first round losers in the boys U-16, while Parth Doshi entered the quarters. Our U-19 boys lost early in the Classic Plate and Plate events. In the girls U-19 Anjali Ponni lost early in the plate event.

Analysing the performance of our boys and girls at the two events it appears that our younger players are almost on a par with the rest of the world, but the older ones are way behind. The need of the hour is to get our U-14 boys and girls to catch up with the rest. Today their weakness is in lack of power and imperfect court movement. If these are rectified in the next few months, then in the coming year our junior players will do well in these tournaments. Once our under 14 players are established then they will be the hopes of the future.

final. Shondip rallied to win after being a game down to the Singapore number one.

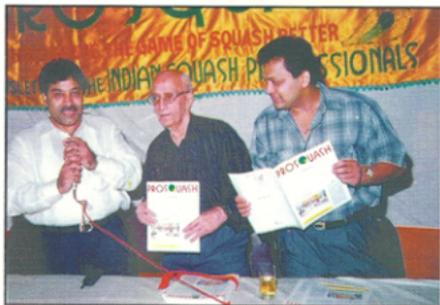
That Pakistan are head and shoulders above the rest was borne out by the results of the Asian Championships winning for the seventh time in the eight years the championship were held. They seemingly have a store of potential championships and was underscored with their seed Manzoor Zaman putting it across top seed Amjad Khan with the fourth seed going on to win the title, getting the better of third seed Kashif Shuja.

Nevertheless a dent was made in Pakistan's seeming invincibility in Malaysia's Ong Beng Hee, the number two seed, who after leading 6-2 in the fourth game lost it and the Manzoor Zaman in the semi-final round. In the team Championship Hee got the better of Amjad Khan, the match going the full distance. It was full of quality squash, clever counter play and excitement to be justifiably labeled the match of the Championships.

If only for the records Shondip Ghosh lost to Rizwan of Singapore in the pre-quarter-final, Ritwik Bhattacharya lost to 5th seed Michael Soo (Malaysia) and Parth Doshi after beating Aaron Soyza lost to Wong Wai Chung (Hong Kong). Amitpal Kohli, who lost to Mohammed Azlan in the first round, reached the last four of the Plate event, as did Arjun Krishnan and Awish Jaiswal, the last named winning the final against Aaron Soyza.

The girls need to work very hard as they are far behind the rest was Bhuvaneshwari Kumar's comment on the Indian team performance. India, however beat Sri Lanka to stay out of the cellar, while Anjali Ponni went down Singapore's Tan Hui Shah in the plate final at 9-0, 9-7, 7-9, 10-8.

PRO SQUASH LAUNCHED



"PAPA" Pandole displays the inaugural issue of Pro Squash which he released. He is flanked by Subhash Wali and Mahendra directors of ISP

It was a great evening of squash when the newsletter of the Indian Squash Professionals, **PRO SQUASH** was launched at the Mumbai Schools Sport Association grounds, Dhoobitala.

Doing the honours was the 'grand old man of Indian squash' Phiroze Pandole. Now in his seventies and with a cataract in one eye 'Papa' Pandole has lost none of his memory. He recalled the great days of the professionals from Pakistan who graced Indian clubs and trained the players in clubs and gymkhanas. Men like Abdul Bari, Jamal Din, Yusuf Khan and others. He felt sad that Indian professionals had not had a similar boost the Pakistanis did when they sought greener pastures in the U. K. and U. S. He was happy that someone like the ISP was coming forward to better the lot of the pros and give them a better deal so that the tiny tots picking up the lowest levels would benefit. The cynosure of all the mediamen that evening was Rahmat Khan, who announced for the first time that he would involve himself full scale with the activities of the ISP so that an Indian Champion of the world would emerge one day.

Rahmat was as good as his word for within three months he had set rolling the clinics, first for professionals, his brethren across the border, and then the women.

Rahmat found that the professionals had been subdued far too long. That is why they would take time to develop communication skills so vital in coaching. He thought they had the natural ability but their playing skills were in need of sharpening so that they could give better feeding progression in the drills. The pros thought Rahmat's practical aspects were far superior to what little they had learnt earlier.

Some year ago, Maj Maniam, the Malaysian coach, had conducted a level zero training programme for the pros. They had even done a written exam in their own language Marathi! Maniam had found them potentially good.

Then Abdul Shaikh, badminton and squash coach from Vancouver had done a clinic for the pros at Otters club which had been beneficial to them. But Rahmat's experience and his superior communicative skills, both in English and Hindi, went a long way towards opening up the closed minds of the professionals and will serve them, and in turn the players at the clubs where they work, immensely.

What the pros say is " Give us the status and we will show you what we can do."

For starters, people must stop referring to them as markers. That will be the first step. The ISP exhorts readers of this newsletter to make a resolution unto themselves and their friends to make a start by stopping reference to the professionals at the clubs as markers.

BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH SQUASH IN THE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE.

It was an evening of squash that will stay in memory for a long time. It happened by chance. The Pakistani juniors team was pausing through Mumbai on way home from Chennai where they had won the Asian Juniors title, beating Malaysia. ISP directors Subhash Wali and Mahendra Agarwal came to know about it and promptly fixed a farewell at Haveli restaurant. The Pakistanis had a surprise in store. On hand to greet them were two of their kin, Rahmat Khan and Salma Agha, his singer wife.

They talked of their home Pakistan, they talked about the friendly life here and why it should not be the same in Pakistan, about what was the hitch in normal relations since the people of the two countries loved each other and didn't mind crossing swords in sport with the principle " May the better man win " being accepted with grace.

Rahmat and Salma told them that Jansher Khan had made a mistake in turning down the trip for the Mahindra Challenge. Salma said artists like her, Nusrat Fateh Ali, Zeha had no problems here. Rahmat and Mohibullah Jr., their coach, exchanged notes. Between them they had coached the two greatest players of the last chunk of the century, Jahangir Khan and Jansher. There was much mutual respect.

Rahmat was world No. 12 Mohibullah No. 2. Said Rahmat " My god, Mohibullah was tremendous when it came to returning the ball. One could never be sure of a winning drop against him. Out of nowhere he would come and pick it up. He has to be the best in this among all the grates." Rahmat though has the greatest respect for Mohib's younger brother, Jansher. He would have liked him to do something more for the game as Jahangir did. The greatest years of squash are the ones when Jahangir had his 500-match unbeaten streak. It grew like by leaps and bounds in terms of prize money and popularity.

Who would take the place of these two? Mohibullah said Manzoor Zaman was an obvious choice. " He works hard and has magical squash in the blood from father Qamar. That's a heavy mix." It was a pleasure talking to the young Manzoor. He has his priorities right. " Father has said play seriously no fooling around." Manzoor does just that cutting his opponents to size. He beat an older player, Kashif Shuja, in the Asian final, which he won at first attempt.

The Pakistani lads enjoyed themselves savoring the handi biryani. One of them even sang " Pardesi jaana nahi". That's also the favorite song of Salma's daughter Zarah, who you won't believe it, can't sing mamma's famous " Dil ke Armaan". The team manager, Taufeeq, said it was the duty of Pakistan to help Indian squash grow. He threw an invitation to young lads to come over to Peshawar to train. It is learnt Ritwik Bhattacharya may take up the offer. Taufeeq invited Saket Wali too. This young lad had taken great strides under guidance of Rahmat. He is already feeling the difference. He used to be beaten straight by Rohan Juneja, now he takes two games off him.

Saket exchanged notes with the Pakistani lads. " Take him there give him a taste of the Peshawar water," Rahmat exhorted. Side by side Rahmat will put him through the squash wringer that will help him cross the pain barrier, which is the key to Pakistan's success in squash.



The winners of The Leela Spectacular

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