



PROSQUASH

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AKHIL BEHL BRINGS SQUASH CROWN BACK TO MAHARASHTRA

The national squash title has come back to Maharashtra. Thanks to **Akhil Behl** playing to his potential. Not many expected him to put it across **Arjan Singh**, India's national champion and the only one who is ranked in the top 100 of the PSA.

But Behl was in top form throughout the season. He had won the Maharashtra Open and the Western India. His only reverse had been in the Videocon Classic where **Udai Singh** had got the better of him. Udai has a great low return from back court which perplexes the best of opponents.

But there was no Udai at the Chennai Nationals. But the obstacle of Arjan was there. The sardar is a veritable returning machine.

Arjan blanked Behl in the opening game and it looked like another year wasted for Akhil. But then the virtues of keeping ball in play worked. Arjan, it appeared wasn't as strong as before. Akhil on the other hand, had worked hard at his game. All those long hours came handy in the final stages as Arjan made a last-ditch effort in the fourth where he level-pegged. But Akhil had plenty in reserve and knew exactly where his opponent would faller.

Akhil is a self-made man. He was a footballer at Bombay Scottish school where among his teammates was **Rohan Gavaskar**. When he came to Otters Club he began liking the game of squash. He has picked up from watching the others and Otters have had a wealth of talent.

'Behl's performance has led to some sponsors coming forward to help out. **Shyam Bhatia** of Dubai has offered him playing facilities at the Indian Club there and the chance to play tournaments.

Akhil is keen on playing the PSA circuit. But that will require a lot of inputs which Indian players don't seem to be blessed with. And the most likely outcome is Behl joining exodus to the Ivy League. The American universities have beckoned any number of Indian squash players right from the time **Anil Nayar** went to Harvard in the seventies.

There is no chance of the Satellite circuit coming to India. All that we have is the magnum opus the Mahindra Open which will turn into the World Open this year. In that case Behl will have to depend on largesse of the organisers in the form of wild cards. How long can he depend on this? Might as well try his hand in the land of opportunities where squash of the type played in India is now played there with the not-so-hard ball.



National champion Akhil Behl with the trophy presented to him by the ISP who were among the first to felicitate him.



Akhil Behl receives a trophy from Mr. Durgapur & Mr. M.K. Sanghi during the prize distribution of the Motilal Sanghi inter-club

like to thank the professional for the verbal support they gave me, especially **Chandrakant Pawar**.

Akhil Behl on his Chennai triumph

I was up against **Arjan Singh** who was looking composed as usual and confident throughout the tournament. Nothing disturbed him. The other contenders for the title were **Ritwick Bhattacharya**, **Rajdeep Brar** and me. Arjan made the final with straight sets wins while I dropped a set to Ritwick.

The final was one of the biggest matches of my life. I knew this was it. I entered the court as positive as I could be. But I lost the first game 9-0. For some reason I was still very focused and believed in myself began to exploit his weakness and in a matter of time I had the second game in my pocket. 9-0.

Using the same strategy as in the second I won the third 9-2. I knew Arjan would fight back in the fourth but I kept strong and went on to win the match 9-7. It is unexplainable the joy and emotions felt at that moment. The sense of personal satisfaction which that moment gave me I don't think I will now experience again. It was a moment of a lifetime. Last but not the least I would



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Junior boys on a see-saw

Mumbai squash is looking up. Ample evidence of it could be had from the way juniors stole the show at the satellite tournament organised by the **Indian Squash Professionals** and sponsored by the **Mukesh Babu Group**. A top firm in stock broking and investment counselling the fact that two juniors broke into the men's semifinals speaks for itself. The most heartening part was not only quality of the juniors' play but also their numbers. There was as many as six of them battling it out. The intense rivalry saw **Parth Doshi** scoring over **Avish Jaiswal** in the men's after being two games down and Jaiswal warding off the determined challenge of **Gaurav Juneja** in the semi-final and of **Rohan Juneja** in the final of the boys under 19.

Gaurav could well have put it across Jaiswal as he was 2-1 up and led 9-4 in the fourth. Their absorbing clash lasted two hours. So exhausted was Gaurav that he had little choice but to concede his men's semi-final against **Manish Chaitrani**.

Doshi had a more or less similar misfortune. He was two games up before going down to **Rohan Juneja** in the under 19 semi-final and games up before going down to **Rohan Juneja** in the under 19 semi-final and had to play his men's semi-final against **Paul Ferreira** soon after. Such rivalry is good for the players as well as the game because it motivates them to run the extra mile and work harder on their game.

The tournament, carrying Rs. 1.25 lakhs in prize-money attracted over 150 entries for the four events. Despite all the ups and downs that caused tremendous excitement the eventual champions, almost predictably, were **Manish Chaitrani** in the men's, National champion **Mekhala Subedar** who was a cut above the rest, in the women's and **Avish Jaiswal** in the under 19. The professionals event saw **Rajesh Verma** lowering the colours of top-seeded **Chandrakant Pawar** but it was not exactly a surprise as the much younger Verma was the fitter and faster than Pawar.

The presence of cricketer **Salil Ankola** and actress **Anita Raj** added a touch of glamour to the prize-distribution function and dinner at the **Haveli** in Juhu.

Final scores:

- U-19: Avish Jaiswal beat Rohan Juneja 17-16, 15-13, 7-15, 15-14.
- Men's: Manish Chaitrani beat Paul Ferreira 15-11, 15-9, 15-11
- Professionals: Rajesh Verma beat Chandrakant Pawar 15-4, 15-5, 15-9
- Women: Mekhala Subedar beat Deepali Anvekar 15-12, 15-7, 15-11



The Mukesh Babu Satellite prize winners with the guests of honour and ISP officials. Left to right: Salil Ankola, Avish Jaiswal, Rajesh Verma, Mahendra Agarwal, Manish Chaitrani, Mahendra Agarwal, Mekhala Subedar, Dr Ali Irani, Anita Raj, Subhash Wali, and Vijay Kumar Gautam.

Suchde, Mathur parade their skills

An exclusive event for junior is rare. That too carrying attractive scholarship. It was made possible thanks to Pix Transmissions Ltd. who underwrote the Pix Junior Championship to the tune of Rs. 1.25 lakhs. Out of the amount Rs. 55,000 went to the players.

Promoted by the Professional Management Group, the tournament had six events, including doubles. And provided a great opportunity to the youngsters to parade their skills. **Siddharth Suchde** and **Auloke Mathur**, both barely 13, made the most of it. While Suchde won the under-14 event and reached the semi-final of the under 16. Mathur was the runner up in the under-14 and semi-finalist in the under 16.



The Pix Juniors Squash Championship winners snapped with the chief guest, Mr Prithpal Sethi. Left to right: Gaurav Juneja, Karanpal Sethi, Junaid Nathani, Siddharth Suchde, Mr Sethi, Avish Jaiswal, Junaid Nathani, Karanpal Sethi and Deepali Anvekar.

Mekhla Subedar - fully focussed on squash

Mekhla Subedar looks like following in the footsteps of **Misha Grewal**. She beat **Sohini Kumari** in the final. Sohini is the younger sister of **Bhuvaneshwari Kumari**, who ruled women's squash for over a decade in the eighties. For three years Mekhla was runner-up to Misha, who has called it a day. Mekhla is a product of the army courts. Daughter of Col. Subedar, now posted at Deolali, she has had the advantage of practising with men. Though she has played abroad in a few tournaments not much success has come her way. But when it is realised that even Candy Bhuvaneshwari didn't win any foreign title, this is not surprising. In a short while Mekhla has had the guidance of coaches like **Satinder Bajwa** and other Indian coaches.

On court she is a picture of concentration. As Indian women players go she is quite mobile and has good stamina. Once she gets the exposure that Indian women have always lacked, Mekhla could make a mark. But the going is going to be tough as always. Misha Grewal had some sponsorship coming her way in Dubai but even then she could make no headway in the women's ladder. She kept playing on the circuit and while doing that there was always a danger of de-training. Mekhla is not wanting in ambition and drive if one goes by her declaration that she wants to be among the top 20 in the world in two years time. Well it's not bad to have an ambition. Indian squash is lucky to have an Indian champion who aims high inspite of realising the odds stacked against her.

Pix Junior Championship

Mathur who took to the game barely two years ago and is being guided by **Cyrus Poncha** was adjudged the player of the tournament.

Supriya Balsekar was another to create a fine impression. Barely 12, She stormed to the under-19 girls final where of course **Deepali Anvekar** proved a little too strong for her.

Avish Jaiswal had a close call against **Parth Doshi** in the semi-final before winning the under -19 title. **Junaid Nathani** won under-16 event and **Karanpal Sethi**, the under-12.

Finals scores:

- Under 12: Karanpal Sethi beat Singhvi 9-4, 9-5, 9-2
- Under-14: Suchde beat Mathur 9-3, 3-9, 9-2, 9-7
- Under-16: Junaid Nathani beat Verma 9-1, 9-0, 9-5
- Under 19: Jaiswal beat Gaurav Juneja 9-10, 9-4, 9-6, 9-2
- Girls U-19: Deepali beat Supriya Balsekar 9-0, 9-1, 9-1
- Doubles: Gaurav Juneja and Saket Wali beat Avish Jaiswal and Moin Motiwala 9-4, 9-2



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Mahesh Verma bound to go far.

A silver jubilee is always something special for a squash tournament. That too at the club level, to complete 25 years is extra extraordinary. Indeed, the **Motilal Sanghi** inter-club tournament is without a parallel in the country. The credit for it should go almost entirely to **Mr. M. K. Sanghi** who has extended unstinted support to the event held in memory of his father year after year. A true patron of the sport.

In order to celebrate the occasion eight open events carrying a total prize-money of Rs. 1.25 lakhs were added to the inter-club this year. They provided an opportunity to not only men, women and professionals but also juniors and veterans to compete and parade their individual skills. So elated was **Mr. Sanghi** over the enthusiastic response that he has promised an even bigger show next year.

For long, the four or five participating clubs were from the city. This time two others thought nothing of traveling 30 to 40 km to play their matches. They were the **Jindal Group** based at Vasind in Thane and who have hosted an **Indian Squash Professionals** event on their sports complex last year and **Navi Mumbai Sports Association**, Vashi.

They displayed more enthusiasm than skill and did not go far in the team event but the fact that they are on the right track could be seen from the number of juniors **Jindal** fielded. One of them, **Mahesh Verma**, came within two points of downing top-seeded **Junaid Nathani** and capturing the under-16 title. The gallant fight he put up earned him the most promising player of the tournament award. If he follows in the footsteps of **Mehervan Daruwalla**, **Adrian Ezra** and **Akhil Behl** who had won the award, when they were little known, **Mahesh Verma** is bound to go far.

Despite allowing two of their key players, **Paul Ferreira** and **Niraj Shirgaonkar** to assist Bombay Gymkhana the wealth of talent in their midst enabled **Otters Club** to romp through the Inter-club. In the final they routed **Bombay Gymkhana** 8-1. In the semi-finals, **Otters** beat **Willingdon** by the same margin while the gymkhana scored over C.C.I. 6-3.

By winning the men's event **Manish Chaitrani** bagged his third title of the year. While **Rajesh Verma** of **Jindal** took his second successive professionals title. **Deepali Anvekar**, who is being sponsored by the **Mukesh Babu Group** through the initiative taken by the **ISP**, underlined her progress by scoring over fancied **Rhea Bhandare** in the girls under 19 final. **Mr. Raj Singh Dungarpur**, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India as well as the C.C.I. was chief Guest at the prize-distribution function at **Sanghi House**. The **Squash Rackets Association of Maharashtra** provided a fine gesture on the occasion by presenting a crystal trophy to **Mr. Sanghi** in recognition of his services to the game. It was handed over by their president, **Mr. Vaman Apte**.

Scores:

Inter-club (final): **Otters Club** beat **Bombay Gymkhana** 8-1.

Boys U-14 Final: **Auloke Mathur** beat **K. Sethi** 9-3, 9-7, 9-3.

Boys U-16 Final: **Nathani** beat **Verma** 6-2, 9-6, 9-9, 9-7, 9-1.

Boys U-19 Final: **Avish Jaiswal** beat **Doshi** 9-7, 9-9, 9-7, 9-5.

Girls U-19 Final: **Deepali** beat **Rhea** 9-7, 9-5, 9-9.

Women's Final: **Pameeta** beat **Charisma** 8-10, 9-6, 9-6, 6-9, 9-5.

Men's Final: **Chaitrani** beat **Shirgaonkar** 9-6, 9-5, 9-3.

Professional I.: **Rajesh Verma** beat **C. Pawar** 9-1, 9-3, 9-3.

Over 40 final: **Vaman Apte** beat **Basu** 9-0, 9-4, 9-3.

Motilal Sanghi Inter-Club Squash

M.K. Sanghi honoured

In a unique gesture **M.K. Sanghi** was honoured for his contribution in making the **Motilal Sanghi** inter-club a big success. The felicitation was organised by three leading clubs, the **Bombay Gymkhana**, The Cricket Club of India and **Willingdon Club**. **Raju Chainani**, the man behind the scene, outlined the contribution of **Sanghi**. **Raj Singh Dungarpur**, of **CCI**, called for more inter action among the clubs so that youngsters would benefit.

Gautam Thakkar the **Bombay Gymkhana** president, **Vajifdar**, vice-chairman of **Willingdon**, hoped there would be more **Sanghis** to make the game popular.



Mr. Sanghi hoped the inter-club would continue to progress towards its golden jubilee. And **Minoo Vajifdar**, vice-chairman of **Willingdon**, hoped there would be more **Sanghis** to make the game popular.

Mr. Sanghi was presented with a silver salver. He said the tributes were a little exaggerated but said the support of **Firdaus Jahangir** and **Ezra** was important at a time when he was wandering whether to continue with the tournament or not.

Harry Singh, veteran of **Otters Club**, said the tournament had given a handful of **Otters Club** members the confidence to play squash in a big way. He said eleven tools like us did not mind making fools of themselves together when playing in the inter-club. Once begun **Otters** rose to great height to so dominate the game like no other club in the city.

Tunku Imran meets ISP officials



Tunku Imran, president emeritus of the **World Squash Federation**, met **ISP** officials during a visit to the city. At the **Leela**, **Tunku** told the **ISP** officials **Vijay Kumar Gautam**, **Subhash Wali**, **Mahendra Agarwal** and **Vivek Nair** of the **Leela** about his plans for squash at the **Commonwealth Games** and the **Asians**. He said there were nine courts. At the push of a button they could be changed into courts for doubles play. The state-of-the-art courts will be the showpieces of the games to be held in **September in Kuala Lumpur**.

Tunku has invited **ISP** officials to KL for the event.

Tunku was very keen that **Mumbai** should stage a major event apart from the **Mahindra Open**. He suggested that a world women's event involving the top sixteen should be staged so that Indian women would get exposure to the top level squash. **Raju Chainani**, the well-known columnist, has promised to co-ordinate with **Tunku Imran** in getting this event off the ground in the near future.

Jaiswal clinches title for Maharashtra Niraj Shirgaonkar

Maharashtra were victorious in the Inter-State Squash championship held at the **Racquets Club**, Calcutta from January. **Maharashtra** regained the trophy after a gap of two years. The **Maharashtra** team was represented by 1. **Akhil Behl** 2. **Manish Chaitrani** 3. **Paul Ferreira** 4. **Awish Jaiswal** 5. **Neeraj Shirgaonkar** (Captain) 6. **Amritpal Kohli** (Reserve).

In the league matches, **Maharashtra** faced stiff resistance from the **Services** 'A' team, whom they beat 3-2. In this tie, **Paul** and **Neeraj** lost their matches and **Maharashtra** were 0-2 down. They were then bailed out by **Akhil**, **Manish** and young **Jaiswal**, who played well to clinch the tie. The semi-final was a cakewalk for this outfit from **Mumbai** as they demolished the **Services** 'B' team 5-0.

In the final league matches, **Maharashtra** had to face the defending champions **Delhi** 'A'. **Maharashtra** began well, with captain **Neeraj Shirgaonkar** winning a hard-fought five setter against **Gaurav Murgal** of **Delhi**. Then **Ferreira** made easy work of veteran **Yogendra Singh** to give his team a 2-0 lead. Then former National champion **Arijan Singh** turned the tables on the current champion **Akhil Behl** 3-2 to give **Delhi** their first point of the finals. Junior champ, **Ritwik Bhattacharya** upset **Manish Chaitrani** 3-1 to level the tie at 2 matches all. Then **Awish Jaiswal** played calmly against **Sameer Thakral** to clinch the decider for **Maharashtra**. It was end, **Neeraj**'s victory proved decisive in **Maharashtra**'s triumph.

The victorious **Maharashtra** team was coached by the legend **Rehmat Khan**. He proved to be a great inspiration for all the players in the team. Incidentally all six players of the team came from **Otters Club**, **Bandra**, a club known for producing squash and swimming champions.

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11-year-old Pakistani creates history

ISLAMABAD: Haider Jamil Zafar became the youngest ever player to complete in British Open Squash Championship. Previously, the record in the U-14 event was held by former World Champion Jahangir Khan, who played in the British Open at 13 years and 7 months.

Haider, who comes from Punjab town of Jhang, holds second position in junior ranking of the province. Khan retired in 1993 and compatriot Jansher Khan 28, currently holds the world number one title as Pakistan maintains its supremacy in the game.

Asian Squash

The senior Asian squash championship will be held at Kuala Lumpur from July 11 to 19. The Championship is to be held at the newly constructed squash arena for the Commonwealth Games Complex.

Mekhalha up 15 rungs

National Men's champ Arjan Singh and Women's champions Mekhalha Subedar improved their World squash rankings this year.

Mekhalha, who ranked 105 last year, has moved up 15 places to 95 where women's world champion Sarah Fitz-Gerald of Australia heads the list.

Arjan Singh has moved from 84 to 80 in the men's ranking.

Peter Nicol of Scotland, who won last year's Mahindra International title, is heading the list in the men's section. Nicol is set to have a long reign at the top of the world squash ladder. He overtook Jansher towards the end of the last year and then continued there in the March rankings of the PSA.

Now with Jansher plagued with a knee problem it is unlikely that Nicol will let go of the top spot. Nicol had a great 1997 reaching semi-finals of all PSA events and winning four titles and beating Jansher three times in a row.

Vineet Asthana tops:

Mumbai lad Vineet Asthana beat his twin brother Vinay 10-9, 8-10, 9-1, 9-3 to win the Men's Under-25 event at the US Squash Championship held at Los Angeles in February.

Parth loses final

India's Parth Doshi was top seeded for the Sportsexcel Milo open but lost in the final to Aaron Soya of Malaysia 9-6, 9-7, 9-2. He stayed back to train with Maniam, the reputed Malaysian coach.

Meanwhile, the fourth leg of the Asian junior circuit will be held in Chennai in October. The earlier legs are in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore.

PSA RANK FOR MEN AS ON 1-3-98			
RANK	(PREV)	NAME	COUNTRY
1	(1)	PETER NICOL	SCO
2	(2)	JANSHER KHAN	PAK
3	(3)	JONATHAN POWER	CAN
4	(4)	RODNEY EYLES	AUS
5	(5)	AHMED BARADA	EGY
6	(7)	ALEX GOUGH	WAL
7	(6)	SIMON PARKE	ENG
8	(8)	ANTHONY HILL	AUS
9	(11)	MARK CHALONER	ENG
10	(10)	DAN JENSON	AUS
80	(84)	ARJAN SINGH	IND
231	(256)	AKHIL BEHL	IND

PSA RANK FOR WOMENS AS ON 1-3-98			
RANK	NAME	COUNTRY	
1	SARAH FITZ-GERALD	AUS	
2	MICHELLE MARTIN	AUS	
3	SUE WRIGHT	ENG	
4	CASSIE JACKMAN	ENG	
5	CAROL OWENS	AUS	
6	SABINE SCHOENE	GER	
7	SUZANNE HORNOR	ENG	
8	LIZ IRING	AUS	
9	LINDA CHARMAN	ENG	
10	FIONA GEAVER	ENG	

NEWS NEWS NEWS

Jaiswal wins collegiate title

Avish Jaiswal of Sydenham claimed the inter collegiate squash tournament organised by Mumbai University. Jaiswal defeated Siddharth Thacker of Government Lab 14-17, 15-0, 15-2, 15-2. In the semifinals, Jaiswal overcame Kapil Tadarwal of H. R. Commerce in straight games to win 15-4, 15-12, 15-13. While Siddharth got a walk over from numero uno Akhil Behl of Sydenham. The opening game was evenly contested.

Mumbai to host World open squash

This year's US \$ 175000 World Open squash will be held at the Cricket Club of India from November 30 to December 7 1998.

Representatives of the Professional Squash Association and the 1998 Mahindra World Open organising committee had presented the logo design. Promotional plans and format changes at Kuala Lumpur recently for the event to be held for the first time in India.

The World Open includes an expansion of the main draw from the original 32 to 64 players and the invitation of eight exempt players into the qualifying rounds.

"We felt the time was right to distinguish the Mahindra World Open by making it the most difficult tournament to win and by including players who could not normally be able to enter" said John Nimmick, executive director, PSA.

Squash Academy

CHENNAI: Chennai, home of many academies, may have one more, to produce talented squash players. According to Asian Squash Rackets Federation and Tamil Nadu Squash Rackets Association (TRASRA) President N. Ramachandran, if TNSRA's efforts to have their own facility is realised soon, a full time academy would also be set up to sport talent.

INDIA CEMENTS NATIONAL SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIP (CHENNAI)

MEN

AKHIL BEHL BEAT ARJAN SINGH
0-9, 9-5, 9-2, 9-7

WOMEN

MEKHALHA SUBEDAR BEAT SOHINI KUMARI
9-2, 9-1, 9-0

PROFESSIONALS

BALA MURUGAN BEAT CHANDRAKANT PAWAR
9-5, 9-7, 9-1

OVER 35 MEN'S

YOGENDRA SINGH BEAT CHANDRAKANT PAWAR
9-2, 9-0, 9-4

OVER 45 MEN'S

BHARAT INDER SINGH BEAT LT. COL. K. J. VOHRA
9-4, 6-9, 9-0, 9-3

OVER 55 MEN'S

SHIV NANDA BEAT MUNEEER SAIT
9-3, 9-6, 4-9, 9-4

INTER-STATE SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIP

SEMI-FINALS

MAHARASHTRA BEAT SERVICES 'B' 5-0

AMITPAL SINGH KOHLI BEAT JASBIR SINGH
9-1, 9-5, 9-7

AKHIL BEHL BEAT DHIRAJ BHARGAV
9-2, 9-6, 9-6

MANISH CHOITRANI BEAT MANDEEP GREWAL
9-3, 9-2, 9-0

DELHI BEAT SERVICES 'A' 3-1

RITWIK BHATTACHARYA BEAT ANUJ KALIA
9-1, 2-9, 1-9, 9-2, 9-0

ARJAN SINGH BEAT RAJDEEP BRAR
9-2, 9-5, 9-2

GAURAV MURUGAN BEAT MILAN KHURANA
9-5, 9-4, 6-9, 9-7

YOGENDRA SINGH BEAT NAVNEET NARIN
0-9, 3-9, 3-9

FINALS

MAHARASHTRA BEAT DELHI 3-2

NEERAJ SHIRGAONKAR BEAT GAURAV MURUGAN
9-5, 9-1, 4-9, 5-9, 9-1

PAUL FERREIRA BEAT YOGENDRA SINGH
9-1, 9-2, 9-1

AVISH JAISWAL BEAT SAMIR THAKRAL
9-7, 9-1, 9-1

AKHIL BEHL BEAT ARJAN SINGH
0-9, 9-3, 10-9, 9-4, 2-9

MANISH CHOITRANI BEAT RITWIK B.
10-9, 0-9, 9-10, 6-9

ALL INDIA INTER UNIVERSITY TOURNAMENT 1-2-98

QUARTER FINALS

MIMBA BEAT OSMANIA UNIVERSITY 3-0

SEMI FINALS

MUMBAI BEAT DELHI UNIVERSITY 3-1

FINAL

MUMBAI BEAT AHILYA UNIVERSITY 3-1

PREMAL JAVERI BEAT AMRISH MOHME
9-3, 9-1, 9-0

SIDDHARTH THACKER BEAT TOHFI KHAN
9-5, 9-0, 9-0

KAPIL TODARWAL BEAT SIDDHARTH RAJAPADY
4-9, 9-6, 5-9, 9-2, 9-4

CARK BOKDAWALA GAVE A WALK OVER TO
NIRANDA KHANDLWAL

GRAND FINALS



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