

In the run-up to India's 70th Independence anniversary, The Tribune brings you the country's most notable sporting achievements over the last seven decades. The first part of the series features feats accomplished in the first decade (1947-57) after Independence...

THE glory DAYS

INDIA MAINTAINS UNCHALLENGED SUPREMACY IN HOCKEY

FOURTH SUCCESSIVE WIN IN OLYMPICS

4-0 Victory Over Britain In Final

WENBLEY STADIUM, (LONDON), AUG. 12.—INDIA CRASHED ITS WAY THROUGH A FOUR GOALS TO ZERO

...the Indian players had impressed in the past few months since they had taken off the India and was winning in every match. The second time was in the quarter-finals when they beat the Netherlands 3-0. The final was a 4-0 victory over Britain in the final.

PLAYERS HAPPY

LONDON, Aug. 12.—Jubilant Indian hockey players pointed "the more red" tonight in celebration of their Olympic victory and the bill is being paid by their national team manager, A. C. Chatterjee. After tonight's game the eleven victorious players literally danced off the field to their dressing room. Their laughs and songs as they danced could be heard from the stands.

HOCKEY GOLD FOR INDEPENDENT INDIA

LONDON, AUG 1948

Exactly a year after Independence, India scored a symbolic victory over Great Britain in the Olympic Games. India had thrashed the field to reach the final, to earn a shot at Great Britain for the first time in the Olympics. The final was played in a charged atmosphere, for the match had acquired greater significance than just a hockey game. Balbir Singh Sr scored twice in the first half, Pat Jansen and Trilochan Singh added two in the second as India won 4-0 to earn free India's first sporting success.

BALBIR SCORES 5 GOALS:

INDIA RETAIN HOCKEY TITLE

6-1 Victory Over Holland

HELSINKI, July 24. INDIA won the Olympic Hockey championship to-day and thus retained the world title which has been theirs for the last quarter of a century, writes P.T.I. special correspondent.

At the Velodrome, special Olympic hockey ground, they decisively beat Holland by six goals to one. The Indian forward line today moved in accordance with a carefully prepared plan which was brilliantly executed by the skip-

<<FIFTH IN A ROW

Helsinki, July 1952

Balbir Singh Sr, the star of the London Olympics final, was the man of the moment four years later at Helsinki as well, scoring nine of India's 13 goals in the tournament. Captained by KD Singh 'Babu', with the charge led by Balbir Singh, India easily dismissed Austria and Great Britain on the way to the final. The Netherlands awaited India there, but it was again a cake-walk for India as Balbir smashed in five goals as India won 6-1.

FOOTBALL'S FINEST HOUR >>

Melbourne, Dec 1956

Melbourne provided the zenith in the history of Indian football — India became the first Asian team to reach the semifinals in the Olympic Games. Neville D'Souza scored the most famous hat-trick in Indian football against Australia to take India to the semifinals, where India lost 1-4 to Yugoslavia. D'Souza scored the goal, and was unlucky to hit the bar once. India got beaten to the bronze by Bulgaria, who won 3-0.

A visual from the 1951 Asian Games, hosted by India in New Delhi. FILE PHOTO



JADHAV'S FIRST

Helsinki, July 1952

In 1952, Khashaba Jadhav, a low-profile wrestler, went to the then Maharashtra Chief Minister, Morarji Desai, to seek Rs 4,000 he needed to travel to Helsinki for the Olympics, but was turned down. Then the principal of Jadhav's college did something extraordinary — he mortgaged his home for Rs 7,000 to send his former student to the Olympics. Jadhav came back with a bronze, and Desai was among the men who honoured Jadhav. Until 2008, Helsinki was the only Olympics in which India won more than one medal.

India In Olympic Soccer Semi-Finals

HAT-TRICK BY D'SOUZA

MELBOURNE, December 1. INDIA scored her first success in the Olympic football here today when she defeated Australia by four goals to two in the quarter-finals, after being level at two-two at half-time. Centre-forward Neville D'Souza scored the first three goals for India, achieved a hat-trick, while Kittu

<< FIRST ASIAN GAMES

New Delhi, March 1951

The inaugural Asian Games were originally scheduled to be held in 1950, but a young nation, free for less than four years, was not ready until March 1951. The intent was to put India on the world map, and India's athletes rose to the challenge. Around 490 athletes from 11 nations participated in athletics, aquatics, basketball, cycling, football and weightlifting in the eight-day competition, and India finished second on the table with 52 medals, 15 of them gold.

A WORLD TITLE

France, 1957

The first decade after Independence ended with another world title when the Indian polo team won the World Polo Championship in France. Sawai Man Singh led the team to wins over Argentina, England, Spain and France. The team included players who became legends, such as Rao Raja Hamut Singh, Kanwar Bijay Singh and Lt. Col. Thakur Kishen Singh.

<<THIRD FOR BALBIR

Melbourne, Dec 1956

It was tougher this time, but no one expected India to take anything but gold from their third Olympics as an independent nation. Balbir Singh Sr won his third gold in row, this time as captain, though he missed the later stages of the tournament due to an injury. India had thrashed everyone in the group stage, racking up 36 goals without conceding any. The last two games were difficult — a 1-0 victory took them past Germany into the final, where India clashed with Pakistan for the first time in the Olympics. After a goalless first half, India scored off a penalty-corner in the second through Randhir Singh Gentle.

DHYAN CHAND'S LAST BOW

EAST AFRICA, 1947-48

Dhyan Chand, the greatest hockey player of all time, had won the last of his three Olympics gold medals 11 years before Indian became independent. When independence dawned, at 42 he was well past his prime. There was nothing left for him to achieve, except for glory in free India — the three Olympics gold medals were won under the British flag. Then he led a young bunch of players to a tour of East Africa — the organisers had insisted: "No Dhyan Chand, no team". In 22 games, the old master scored 61 goals, the second-highest tally on the tour, before bowing away from the sport.

INDIA ON TOUR

AUSTRALIA, 1947-48

Just months after a bloody Partition, India's cricket team went on its first overseas tour, to Australia in 1947-48. India, led by Lala Amarnath, took on Don Bradman's Invincibles. It was a mismatch and there could have been only one result — a hammering for India. Bradman, nearing 40, punished the Indian bowlers with 715 runs at an average of 178.75. Vijay Hazare scored two hundreds at Adelaide and Mankad also got two in the Tests, but those were the only consolations as India lost 0-4.



FIRST TEST WIN

Madras, Feb 1952

India's first Test win, coming 20 years after their Test debut, caused jubilation among fans of cricket — India had, after all, beaten colonial masters England by an innings and eight runs. Vinoo Mankad was the star with 12 wickets in the match, while Pankaj Roy and Polly Umrigar scored 100s that set up India's 457/9 declared.