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'Hockey, in dire need of marketing'

Rohit Vij

CHANDIGARH, AUG 8: Olympian and former captain of the Indian hockey team Pargat Singh believes that nothing can be changed overnight in any sport.

Soon after receiving an offer from the Indian Hockey Federation to become the coach of the senior National hockey team, Pargat said that he will give his best to India if things materialise. Pargat, during the course of the interview, also expresses a desire to return something to the sport that has given him so much in life.

An interview with the star defender:

Q. Why do you think Indians are such poor starters and tend to loose the initial matches in a tournament?

A. The players feel initially that they have come to play, and not to win. They pick up once the pressure builds up. Once they start playing in a tournament, their psychology changes. I hold the atmosphere of the country, as well as the circumstances in which sports is run in this country responsible for this.

Q .Despite abundant talent, why do we fail to click as a team?

A.This is not entirely true. The fault lies primarily in our basic system. Some forwards have extra speed. Some are slow. They do not match each other in speed, and also do not

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understand each other so well. You see, players cannot change their style after they find a place in the National team. Habits don't die so easily.

Q. So what is the way out?

A. The whole system needs to be looked at carefully. All clubs should adapt a similar style. From childhood some particular skills should be developed in the players.

Q. With matches today being decided on penalty-corner conversions, why do you think India has not been able to produce a specialist like Bovelandor or Fischer?

A. It's not a one or two-day job. You need 8 to 10 years of specialised coaching to train a specialist. First of all, the training schedules are not planned keeping in mind long-term goals. Then we also do not have adequate facilities.

Q. People believe that a quota system of zonal representation is followed while selecting the National team. Is it so ?

A. Though a bias can be there in case the performance of the players is only marginally different, but if eleven players from Punjab are exceptionally good, there is no doubt that they would not be taken. There is no such system.

Q. The advent of artificial surfaces, rolling substitutes etc are believed to have adversely affected India. How can we overcome it ?

A. It's not true. We have been able to benefit equally from the changes.

Q. Though hockey is our National game, the interest of Indians in the game is constantly on the wane. How can this trend be checked?

A. The game needs to be made more popular. For this proper marketing efforts ought to be made. The game cannot be left on its own. Big business houses should come forward to support hockey.

Q. Do you think the government is Are you thinking of including any new players among the probables?

A. I cannot say anything now. I have to watch them in action during the training period.

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