

Useful companion

KUBER-HOCKEY YEAR BOOK-1998: Edited by Shanthi Arumugam. Published by Read & Write, F-128/II, Mohammadpur (1st Floor), R. K. Puram (Behind Bhikaji Cama Place), New Delhi-110066. Price Rs. 495.

Chronicling events with a critical eye can be very fascinating. At least that is the impression one gets after going through this compilation.

It is transparent that hockey as a major sport, has very little reference data, notwithstanding our glorious history in the sport, what with eight Olympic gold medals standing as a clear testimony to the one time hegemony and heritage.

Evaluated from this plank, the author deserves commendation for the painstaking effort in presenting in detail the events that went into history in the last two years.

Predictably, the author cannot remain unaffected by the cataclysmic events resulting in the worst ever performance in the Olympics in the year in which the compilation was prepared.

In a fairly long sum up, touching upon the highs and lows, the author concludes, that despite the change of guard there is little to commend the working of the federation.

Discussing details of sponsorships — television rights in particular — honoured and dishonoured, the author castigates the federation for remaining indifferent to some beneficial ideas from sponsors that would have really benefited the players. At one

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point the author notes, "the irony of all things is that the R. N. Prasad regime too was a divided house, the treasurer N. P. Katare, the vice-president Gufran-E-Azam on the one hand, and Gurusewak Singh the secretary on the other were pulling in different directions. Prasad, in his later part in office, had become a puppet in their hands. It is disheartening to see the same scenario repeating. The act remained the same only the actors had changed. What a pity!"

The author concludes that many of the well thought out programmes were badly implemented or beyond the reach of the comprehension of some of the officials charged with conducting the administrative apparatus.

However, the author wholeheartedly compliments the IHF for doing away with the obnoxious practice of making the institutions pay for their players appearing in international competitions.

It is not easy to agree with every line of argument or assessment of the author but the panoramic view of the events both men and women makes compulsory reading. The value of the whole exercise lies in the statistical presentation of events, although, for many, the highlight will be the comprehensive documentation of the cause celebre involving India, Malaysia and Canada in what was known as match-fixing case after the qualifier in Barcelona.

Colourfully designed and consciously produced the work would remain in the realm of excellence if only little more attention was paid to proof reading and correct syntax. As a reference work the book is a useful companion for hockey buffs.

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