Chapter 2
Media Research:
Their and Ours
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MEDIA RESEARCH : THEIRS AND OURS

Sports journalism, specially in India often turns out to be a routine exercise as the rules of the games remain unchanged, and the reporting is made out to be what is seen by the eye and put faithfully into print. A comparison automatically arises with the sports journalism of the medal winning Countries vis-a-vis sports journalism in India. The Western Countries mostly have the incisive and 'investigative' research based approach. Again, the sports journals of medal winning countries include in their journalism facts to mould policies and suggest ways to implement them.

The first striking difference to be noted between Indian and Western journalism was the fact that in the West, the particular magazine dealt with one definite type of game. It gave exclusive interviews with great personalities of professionals, highlighting their meteoric rise to the top. The 64 page World Soccer magazine published from London contained details of all major football competitions documenting all aspects of soccer at the highest level. The ever changing tactics and rules of the game have been prominently covered with analysis and discussion of experts of the area. The Aug. '92 issue of the magazine detailed reports on Denmark's world shaking triumph in the European Championships. This was suffixed by the achievements and
disappointments of the participating teams, bringing the world's most popular game to the doorstep of the followers. Miscellaneous items spread in a classified form, for instance, daily diaries of important events of the world, 1994 World Cup qualifying group with fixtures, international results, statistical comparison of events, action photographs, news of books on football, videos, playing gears, were regular features of this magazine, which undoubtedly helped the budding talents.

Contents on similar pattern were also found in the Basketball Digest from USA available in booklet form (about 100 pages). There were features on different players with analysis of their individual style of play that forges the team ahead and makes them stand out as players of superlative ability. "The marques players of the NBA have reached a popularity formerly reserved for rock stars and Frank Sinatra. Basketball's top professional league has developed a reputation as an entity of marketing genius, but for all the money and notoriety and applause the players receive . . .", reports the digest.

There were features on most memorable games of different players - where the personality development of a player was described often in relation to his social upbringing. Statistical sections illustrated records of
various National Basketball Association games and other details informative to the followers of the sport.

Similarly, the *Track and Field News* published from USA is a magazine for only athletics. There were research based articles from persons involved in the profession. Analysing the different aspects of socio-economic problems the magazine reported in an article on the sprint crisis in America, "America's inner cities have been crippled by bad economics, hindered by racism and ravaged by hopelessness. Our best sprinters have long been young black males, a group beset with challenges unimaginable to middle class white America". The same article states: "...recruiting sprinters, they sound like they're on a scavenger hunt. Find a sprinter with decent grades, an acceptable SAT score...". The Indian-athletic scenario does not differ much from the above except that we do not have a substratum of athletes with acceptable performance scores.

"But it has its effect in the only nation on earth that leaves its athletic development solely to its colleges. Consequently, many young blacks are not even making it to high school." But as a knowledge-base, education has proved to be pre-requisite for an all round development in the sports world of today.

The magazine for athletes included geographical listing of US Track
and Running camps and Schools, their duration and seasons of operation. Furthermore, the names of the coaches were also incorporated offering scope to the willing athletes on their selection of camps. The toppers of high school and college, the favourites' comparative analysis, progression charts of an athlete with prospects, biography of good athletes, information and use of high tech equipment, sports kits, new books and videos are regular and attractive features of Track and Field News Magazine.

The Volley Tech magazine writes:—

"In his teenage years a young person is subject to constant change. The teenager undergoes physical, psychological, mental and biological changes all of which result in a variety of different responses to authority and training. Keeping the trauma of teenage years in mind, the coach must be sensitive to the responses of different experiences, offer support, and advice and assist wherever possible. A good coach appreciates the trauma young people experience and is always there for them, mentally, or emotionally and spiritually ...".5

Such research based articles often guide a coach taking up an assignment, to be mentally prepared for the enormous task of bringing up the future youth of the country. Adolescent stage as emphasised upon is an all important stage for any child,
sports and non-sports alike. For non-sports persons the parents perform a major role, while for aspiring sports youths the coach is the most important person in their life who may be emulated and idolised. Yet the role of the parents of the latter category may not be totally overviewed upon.

The angle or areas of research often are eye-openers. There can be an effect on the warm-up practiced by the different countries in volleyball which has a direct impact on the players of different teams may be educative to players and coaches alike. Technical coverage of the game or dessession of a tournament gamewise are automatic inclusions in the magazines dealing on a particular sport.

The social problems like drinking which is accepted universally as a detractor, has yet to derive any practical or successful solution. Contents of panel discussion held on drinking and the role of a coach in the magazine "Swimming Technique" published quarterly from U.S. enriches the readers with the discussion of socially accepted criteria.

The coaches of different clubs and colleges of America have tackled the problem in their own way. "I resolved that by recruiting kids with higher intellect, a stronger purpose in life, academic career, that these guys would have less tendency to harm their own bodies."  

"They're living from party to party, and they can't
seem to have fun without drinking. That "need" bothers me. If a kid needs to have fun, that's a dependency". You don't have to drink to have fun. It's fun to go fast. You don't drink to go fast".8

This publication is designed for coaches and swimmers interested in up-to-the-minute trends in stroke technics, swimming, sports medicine and getting the most from their time spent in the water. This lively and helpful publication provides information packed issues with the find and complete coverage of all aquatic sports.

'Olympic Message', the publication of the International Olympic Committee, Switzerland, has articles of renowned authors of sporting journalism, some of them termed as princes of sporting journalism, with analysis in which the author's erudition is equalled only by his elegance of style, his eye for the essential and his meticulous attention to detail. There are articles by eminent specialists who present in his impid fashion the knottiest of technical and scientific problems, that is in other words science made simple. The former champions of different fields with verve, competence and talent relive and recreate with their readers their memories and experiences.
"Our world today, and sport, which is a major expression of it need the spirituality and ideas inherent in Olympism to struggle effectively against violence and cheating, the excesses of materialism, the vulgarity of chauvinism and the mercantilism which threatens to undermine them", expressed — Juan Antonio Samaranch President of the International Olympic Centre. The experience of the President of the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles at the Olympic Village may be quoted here: "It was there that I realized that excellence comes in every shape, size, race and sex. It was there that I realized that an Olympian is one who can respect every individual based on the effort that it takes to become an Olympian. It was there that I learned that each sport takes a special skill and determination for a person to ascend to the top".

Fédération de International Tir à l'Arc (FITA) the official archery bulletin is dedicated to developing archery in more number of countries and adding the countries as active FITA members. "We must increase our membership to over 100 countries before 1996 and the total must be without counting the newly formed countries resulting from the break-up of some European Countries". FITA now stands at 87 Member Associations. The development programme is critical for archery to remain popular enough
to be a part of the Summer Olympic Games. The bulletin encourages reproduction of their articles and news items. It binds the entire fraternity of archery world with its problems and prospects to be equally shared. That was how the New Olympic Round was introduced at the Barcelona Olympics with its effort to put on a professionally orchestrated archery event that is a challenge for the archers and an interesting and exciting competition for the broad-casters and spectators.

The magazine dealing with sports published in our country do not specialise in one particular discipline of sports. There are a few bulletins of different associations which have very few subscribers and scanty circulation. Consequently in dealing with multifarious disciplines the scope of research based reporting remains a dream yet to be fulfilled by the Indian authors. Another reason for not delving into the root cause may be because of the standard of performance of the teams and athletes/players, whereby the vision of reporting is never broadened by the pursuit of performance by excelling when confronted with adversity.

Sportstar, published by the Hindu is a well circulated sports magazine covering or rather reporting on the national and international sports including Institutional meets. An article states, "The standard of Indian swimming
is slowly going from bad to worse specially in the light of the clear pointers emerging from the recently held National junior and sub-junior aquatics championships. The article then goes to describe the winners and losers of the meet in a reportage fashion. The definite comment, however, so confidently placed is not substantiated with facts and figures. There are no timings comparing and analysing the conclusion drawn. In the same article it is found. "If the junior meet was a lack lusture affair, the sub-junior championship, luckily enough, produced some sterling performances in both the boys and girls sections." The question automatically springs to the mind of the reader that if the base performers, the sub-juniors show a steep ascending graph why should the standard of Indian swimming be stated as 'going from bad to worse'?

One also finds revenue earning games in the Indian soil like football always finding a prominent place. Even if the standard of the game gives nightmares the game is elaborately covered to satisfy the readership. It becomes necessary for the journalists to stress home the point to its readers and create an awareness of the reality.
The National Hockey team was far away from winning any significant tournament for a long time and the Invitation tours and friendly matches before the Olympics cannot be the barometer for the highest competition of the world, and time has proved that. The failure of the hockey team at the 1992 Olympics was the biggest disappointment of the nation. And how has this expectation been planted in the minds of the millions? The audio and the visual and the print media in a joint campaign made the Indians hope for a medal, certainly a misplaced optimism based on inadequate data about other teams progress.

Like the 'Sportstar', the 'Sports world' is another sports magazine (Anandabazar Publication) which again deals with all disciplines of sports. Automatically during the Wimbledon it is Tennis, football during the World Cup Soccer, Cricket when a test match is on, and a special issue when there is the Grand Olympics with its aura of supremacy over all sporting events of the world. An Ex-cricketer of repute Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi is the editor, setting the trend in India to instill a spirit of sports journalism in sports persons.

There are features from different parts of the world by Indian and foreign journalists and photographs supplementing the different articles. The Sports World serves more as a past time reading on sports. The calendar of the
year for particular sport, the results, the camps, the coaching, the equipment, the experiences, the expectations, the preparations, the problems, the facilities added/improved upon, scholarships, the books, the letters to the editor - that enthral one in a different world of one particular sports, is not found when all sports are covered together.

The Sportstar carries action photographs and statistics worth preserving. There are also interesting articles from agencies and writers of the World, specially at times like the Olympic games, World Cup Soccer, and the Wimbledon. It may be considered as a quality sports magazine and useful to sports persons.

Some of the leading newspapers of the world like 'The Times' from London have a distribution of 7 sports pages in a total of 36 pages of the paper. The sections are divided into the major sports news like Racing, Football, Rugby, Athletics and the other sports news are in general sports page form. Results and tables of different teams are included in most reports where a clear comparison can be immediately made.

The Independent, a British 36 pages newspaper has 8 of its pages marked for sports section. The page making is a little different because the entire page is not allocated to a particular game. Different games are reported upon with byeline of the reporter and the
competition reported upon. The results and tables are always there for analysis, comparison and assessment of the participating teams.

Sports journalism through the daily newspaper gained fillip in India specially in and around the time when Asian Games was held in 1982 at Delhi. There were stadia being constructed, estimates being approved, the Prime Minister taking active interest, sports persons getting prepared, camps being held, foreign coaches being assigned, and finally the details of the success and failures of the various countries participating. To cover the details for which the readers were interested, the space had to be increased. At times when there are great events like the Olympics and the Asian Games, the sports news spills over to the pages meant for the other items. When India performs well, the sports news now occupies the front page at times.

One aspect of sports journalism which show a diminishing trend has been in the area of sports magazines. The long time editor of such a magazine feels that there are not enough people interested in spending money to buy and read only sports. Specially when there is sufficient scope for the interested persons to view sports through the audiovisual media, read sports along with all other news, to go indepth of the sports and sports persons
background or for any other minute detail, the number interested is very few. "It is difficult" feels the editor "to publish a magazine with this minority section of interested persons." 14

There have been a few magazines in regional languages which has also met with the same fate. The only two magazines that are published now are from Madras and Calcutta. The sports magazine from Bombay known as Sports Week discontinued their publication a few years ago. As has been discussed in this chapter the sports magazines now available are the Sportsworld from Anandabazar Publication and the Sportstar from publish of Hindu. The Sportsworld has recently turned fortnightly in place of weekly under the present demand/supply curve.

The other reason as to why the magazines are more costly to publish is because the readers now want attractive colour photographs like the live pictures of the audio-visual media. While talking to a veteran photographer who has attended three Olympic Games - Mr. Nikhil Bhattacharya, feels that a sports magazine which is published weekly, to be actually appealing must have real good action photographs. 15 At the same time there has to be material which consists of information in addition to
those read in the newspapers and viewed over television. Sportstar has a special appeal and requirement to those who are fond of preserving records. A consolidated form of results after a major international/national meet is available in this magazine. Though newspapers often publish the same results in a slightly different form the magazines get more time to furnish it complete in all possible ways.

Besides all the magazines and papers discussed in this Chapter another interesting point which need to be mentioned is that there are small booklets available of many countries, giving the full detail of the development of sports. How and when it did become successful in the international venture, with the details also of the infrastructural facilities added step by step, the number of persons involved in different sports, or only for physical training, for health, etc.

Mainly the medal winning countries with Govt control have descriptive and statistics oriented booklets like the ones mentioned above. The similar information about United States of America and other European Countries is also not difficult to obtain, because the official data for players in schools and colleges are always readily available being widely published. After this stage the students become established players or no players at all, attracting
sponsors and private clubs for their training facilities. The coaches have their own facilities which are made available to the sports persons if and when they choose to train with the particular coach. The training is mostly paid for by the sponsors, or from scholarships, or paid by the players themselves. The system prevalent in America goes to prove that privatization of sports also can bring about an all round development of sports. The demand for this type of facility has been also voiced from among the Indian players from whom data have been collected for this work.
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