

**THE CUP IS OURS:** Indian players celebrate with the trophy after winning the 2011 Cricket World Cup in Mumbai. India beat Sri Lanka by six wickets to lift the cup



# THE ROAR OF SUCCESS

From World Cup to Formula One, the sports scene remained full of excitement because of events that made the country stand up and cheer. A few hits, many misses and much infighting also marked the year in Indian sports

By Jaideep Ghosh

**T**HE Indian sports calendar for 2011 will largely be remembered for two dates — April 2 and December 8. The first was when India won the World Cup in Mumbai, completing an era of domination. The second was when Virender Sehwag scored 219 to carve out the highest-ever individual score in One-Day International, something which raised him to an unparalleled pedestal in the sport.

Bracketed amid these two events were a few hits, many misses and much infighting, especially off the hockey turfs and the corridors of power as the government tried to leash the fiercely independent sports associations and federations, albeit without much luck.

While cricket, as always, ruled the roost, some other individuals and teams also won laurels, though the overall situation in Olympic sports didn't see any marked improvement, despite some fine individual showings.

The other significant event in the sporting arena was the arrival of Formula One racing to India. The Buddh International Circuit hosted the extravaganza. But while it was a runaway success in its first year, one will have to wait and see how it fares over the next few years, given the huge financial commitments involved. The hockey team did some good by winning the Asian Champions Trophy in September. The hockey heroes beat Pakistan 4-2 via a penalty shootout in the finals at Ordos in China. But soon, a rather silly incentives' package announced by sports officials spoilt the players and hockey lovers' party. The players promptly rejected the meagre incentives offered to them.

At the same time, Hockey India (HI) and the Indian Hockey Federation (IHF), with the sports ministry playing broker, once again showed how personal egos and agendas take priority over the sport in India. While HI was given approval by the International Hockey Federation (FIH), forcing the government to follow, IHF was hell-bent on completing the World Series Hockey (WSH) Tournament. The IHF signed up players, paid them money, and went to town with its achievements. HI countered the move by waving around a letter signed by some of the WSH-contracted players, stating that they had been misled and would rather play for India in the Olympic qualifiers and other international-level tournaments.

The qualifiers, however, were another story. FIH decided to take the Champions Trophy away from New Delhi and also threatened the Olympic qualifiers, set for the same venue. Its ire had to do with the IHF and the unsanctioned 'rebel' league, as well as the infighting in hockey. But eventually, the qualifiers stayed in Delhi. On the shooting arena, Ronjan Sodhi once again made a mark, defending his World Cup title in Al-Ain in the United Arab Emirates, becoming the first Indian ever to do so.

Indian football meandered along as always, though the win in the SAFF tournament in New Delhi in December was a little bit of a boost. The team had been struggling ever since English coach Bob Houghton had been shown the door, with incumbent Savio Madiera facing the music. Now he has some breathing space, as does the sport.

Cricket, however, was a long success



**F1 ARRIVES:** India's first Formula One race at the Buddh International Circuit made heads turn as thousands turned up to watch the action. A host of Bollywood celebrities also descended on the venue

story, barring a disastrous tour of England where the team managed to lose every match that was completed. It also threw up a series of injuries, carried forward from the Indian Premier League (IPL). Many players fell on the wayside and some of them made a rather inglorious exit, including Harbhajan Singh, who may now face the wilderness for a while. But the World Cup team and Sehwag were something all could smile at. In today's scenario, it's difficult to see any other team, apart from India, winning the World Cup. On the other side, Sehwag showed what he is capable of.

But the Test series wasn't so flattering. India escaped with pride intact against South Africa and, then, managed to get past a much weaker opposition in the

West Indies. But once England got on the act, they never recovered. The home series against the West Indies fell tantalisingly short of a 3-0 margin, but that reflected India's bowling weakness.

Sachin Tendulkar is yet to score his 100th international century. He came close to it on a couple of occasions, but now it seems to have been postponed, at least for this year.

Sehwag wrapped up the events with another superb innings while Rahul Dravid again showed how he is still the 'Great Wall' of India.

The cricket team now heads for Australia for another stiff test, in Australia, with the Boxing Day Test beginning on December 26. That, however, will find its mark in history later.

## NEWSPICK



### Sehwag's double delight

Virender Sehwag made the highest score in an ODI when he hit 219 against the West Indies in Indore. Sehwag became the second batsman in history to score a double century in a One-Day International after Sachin Tendulkar, who scored 200 against South Africa in Gwalior last year.



### Marathon centenarian

Fauja Singh, a 100-year-old Briton, became the world's oldest marathon runner after finishing a race in Canada. Fauja, from Ilford, east London, ran the Toronto Waterfront Marathon in eight hours, 25 minutes and 16 seconds.



### The doping shame

Doping hit Indian sports in a major way as many athletes tested positive throughout the year. The controversy not only hit the players, but also took some sheen off India's highly successful Commonwealth Games campaign, as many from the women's relay team that had won the Gold, tested positive.

## HITTING BULL'S EYE



Shooter Ronjan Sodhi did what no Indian had done before him — he successfully defended his prestigious World Cup Final title. The Delhi-based double-trap marksman held his nerve in a 'roller-coaster' of a final to clinch the Gold in Al Ain (UAE) to cap a fine year during which he touched the pinnacle in world ranking.

## NO END TO BHAIJI'S MISERIES



Harbhajan Singh was dropped from the Indian cricket team following a run of indifferent form. He missed the disastrous England Tour due to injury.

## BOXING AWAY TO GLORY



Boxer Vikas Krishan lost in the welterweight (69 kg) semifinals of the AIBA World Championships and had to settle for the bronze medal. The 19-year-old, who had earlier won Gold at the Asian Games, went down 12-15 to Ukraine's Sava Sheshetyskyuk. But he did equal Vijender Singh's feat at the Milan World Championships.

## DIPIKA'S SQUASHING VICTORY



Squash player Dipika Pallikal claimed her third WSAFPA title of the year when she overcame a spirited challenge from Joey Chan to win the 7th Crocodile Challenge Cup squash tournament in Hong Kong. The number one Indian female racketeer from Chennai defeated Chan in a thrilling final.