

7. Major Dhyan Chand



Saturday, 15 August 1936. It was the day of the Hockey finals during the Olympic events held in Berlin, Germany. Germany had defeated several teams to enter the finals against the Indian team. They were the hosts of the Olympics, and they were sure of their victory. Perhaps that was the reason why their ruler Hitler had himself come to watch the match.

All the day before, it had rained heavily. The entire field had become water-logged. But 15th August being the last day of the Games, it was not possible to postpone the match any further. The Indian team was a little under pressure as they had lost to Germany in the practice match and they were not very comfortable with the wet ground.

About forty thousand people had gathered in the hockey stadium to cheer

Germany against India. The Maharaja of Baroda State, the Prince of Bhopal and a few other Indians had also come to support the Indian Team.

The match started exactly at 11 am. The German team had adopted a novel strategy of using the Indian technique of short distance passes against the Indian team itself. They had resorted to a very aggressive play. The Indian team was offering an equally strong resistance. No team could make a goal during the first half hour. During the 32nd minute, Roop Singh scored the first goal, hitting the ball towards the goalpost from a difficult angle.

In the second half of the match, the Indian team found a firm footing. The entire team played as one and made three more goals against Germany. Two of them were made by the Captain of the Indian team, Dhyan Chand. However, the German players were also trying their level best to win. They, too, succeeded in making one goal.

Now, only a few last minutes were left. Dhyan Chand had resolved to win



the match at any cost without allowing Germany to make any more goals. His spiked shoes were making it difficult for him to run fast on the wet ground. He removed the shoes and the socks and began to run barefoot. Using his amazing skill of dribbling and his near-magical game, he began to send one pass after another to the players in the 'D', that is, in the defenders' or opponents' area from where they could make goals. They, too, did not let the passes go waste. The Indian team scored three more goals. Dhyan Chand could have easily made the goals himself from his own position, but he never played a selfish game. Skilfully, he took the ball away from the German defenders and made it possible for the players in the D to score goals.

The German strategy had proved fruitless. A defeat stared them in the face. Some of the frustrated German players then resorted to a rough game. The German goalkeeper pounced on Dhyan Chand and hurt him. But Dhyan Chand was a true soldier. After a little first-aid, he immediately returned to the field and held the spectators spellbound with his game. At last, he scored the last goal of the match just as the game drew to a close. The Indian team had won third time in a row. It was a hat-trick. Indians were the third time winners of the Olympic gold medal.

Although Hitler left the stadium before the match was over, he was impressed by Dhyan Chand's game. It is said that the German dictator had offered Dhyan Chand a higher salary



and rank in the German army, if he agreed to play on behalf of Germany, but Dhyan Chand turned down the offer. After the celebrated victory in the Olympics, Hitler awarded a special gold medal to Dhyan Chand.

You may be aware that hockey is our national sport. Major Dhyan Chand's birthday, August 29 is celebrated as National Sports Day in India. The famous national stadium in Delhi is named after the great hero 'Dhyan Chand'. Who knows, perhaps one of you may carry the legacy of Dhyan Chand further and win great glory for our country.

– Adapted from 'Major Dhyan Chand' by
Sanjay Dudhane, Sports Writer.

The lifeless hockey stick used to come alive in the hands of Dhyan Chand. When he dribbled, the ball just wouldn't leave his stick. Some people even stole his sticks and broke them open to see whether they contained a special glue or magnet. Dhyan Chand was even made to play with other 'ordinary' sticks but even then his play was as charismatic as ever.

Dhyan Chand's real name was Dhyan Singh. He was a soldier in the Indian Army. He couldn't practise his game during the day because he used to be busy on his duty as a soldier. That is why he used to practise at night in moonlight. It is believed that his coach fondly began to call him Dhyan Chand, 'Chand' meaning moon. The name stayed with him.

Things to do :

1. Guess the meaning of the following words.

* water-logged * postponed * novel * barefoot * fruitless * pounced

2. Name the following.

- (1) Hosts of the 1936 Olympic Games
- (2) Ruler of Germany
- (3) Not comfortable with the wet ground
- (4) Scored the first goal in the match
- (5) Did not let the passes go waste
- (6) Captain of the Indian Team
- (7) Pounced on Dhyan Chand and hurt him
- (8) Third time winners of the Olympic gold medal for hockey

3. Activity

- Find out how the following games are played.
 - * Lawn Tennis * Table Tennis * Kabaddi * Kho-Kho
 - * Hockey * Football * Badminton

4. Language Study (See pages 84-88.)

Read the highlighted words. They are **verbs**.

The goalkeeper **pounced** on Dhyan Chand and **hurt** him.

Now find at least 5 other verbs from the passage.

5. Use the following phrases in your own sentences.

* be sure of * try one's level best * at any cost * turn down the offer.