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The game-changer

Harmanpreet Kaur's power-hitting and athletic fielding have been at the forefront of revolutionising women's cricket in India

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Growing up in Moga, Punjab, all Harmanpreet Kaur wanted in life was to be a cricketer. Since hardly anyone in her hometown – or most of the country, for that matter – followed women's cricket at that time, she used to get teased.

"What will you do – open with Sehwa?" her younger brother would ask her. She may not have walked out to bat with her idol, but

changed women's cricket in India forever.

Not since Kapil Dev's unbeaten 175 against Zimbabwe in Tunbridge Wells at the 1983 World Cup has an innings made such an impact. Two years after her epic 171 not out off 115 balls, Harmanpreet remembers every shot, every moment.

"I am grateful to god that I could play that innings," she told *The Hindu* in Surat on the day she became the first Indian cricketer to play 100 T20Is.

"Earlier, I used to have talks with senior players like Jhulan Goswami about the lack of interest in women's cricket. We used to wonder when people would start coming to watch us play. I am glad that I could play a role in making that happen before I retired."

The innings may never have happened – she had feared that her World Cup was over when she injured her left ring finger earlier in the tournament. But for team physio Tracy Fernandes, she may have been sent home.

Biju George, India's fielding coach at the time, says it was a privilege watching Harmanpreet's innings at close quarters. "It is the best innings – by a man or a woman – I have ever seen in 50-over cricket," he says. "All of us in the dressing room knew that we were watching something special."

Snehal Pradhan, who played alongside Harmanpreet for India before becoming a journalist, says the feeling inside the press box was similar.

"That was the time when no Indian media house sent reporters for women's matches, but there were several from England and Australia, and we were discussing whether this was the greatest innings in ODIs," she says.

"It was after that match that I started getting calls from people wanting to know about women's cricket."

Snehal first saw Harmanpreet during the 2008 Challenger Trophy at Ahmedabad. "She was my India-B teammate and was included as a medium-pacer," Snehal says. "But even in that match, she showed her ability as a hard-hitter though she had come in at No. 9."

Harmanpreet was trained to strike the ball hard. Her first coach, Yadwinder Singh, would make her hit 100 to 150 sixes per day. This regimen enhanced her wiry strength and innate timing.

Biju says her high back-lift and smooth swing add distance to her hits. It's no surprise then that at just 19, in her first year of international cricket in 2009, she was turning heads with the might of her ball-striking.

"I have never seen any

woman hitting a cricket ball with as much power," says R.P. Singh, a Chandigarh-based coach who has worked with Harmanpreet. "I had only to suggest some slight changes to her technique and help her become mentally strong."

The combination of skill and will has contributed towards making her one of the biggest names in the game. She remains among the fittest in the squad – her yo-yo test scores are consistently high. With 2,372 runs from 99 ODIs and 2,032 runs from 103 T20Is, she is much sought-after in T20 leagues overseas.

Harmanpreet believes it is time India had a league of its own. "I think we are ready," says India's T20I captain. "Look at the way crowds responded to the Women's T20 Challenge at Jaipur a few months ago; there were full houses."

She says there is enough talent in India to have four or five teams in an IPL-like league. "There is already a group of 40 talented players in the domestic pool," she says. "Look at the case of Shafali Verma."

Shafali was discovered at that four-match series in Jaipur. Last weekend, during the first T20I against West Indies in St. Lucia, the 15-year-old became the youngest Indian to score an international fifty, breaking her idol Sachin Tendulkar's record.

"We will get more stars like Shafali if we have a women's IPL," says Harmanpreet. "Such a league will reduce the gap between domestic and international cricket for our players."

The very fact that the BCCI has started to think about the possibilities of a women's league shows how much ground the sport has covered in the country. "Now people are coming out to watch women's matches and we are covered extensively by the media," she says. "The quality of our cricket has also improved drastical-

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ly, the fielding in particular."

Harmanpreet herself is a prime example of the fast rising standard of India's fielding. At the beginning of this month, she took an absolute blinder to send back West Indies' Stafanie Taylor in the first ODI at Antigua. She leapt high into the air and held a one-handed catch at long-on.

It was one of the finest catches you will ever see. Clearly, Harmanpreet knows how to change the game and entertain all at once, even without bat in hand.

Round 20: Brazilian GP AUTODROMO JOSE CARLOS PACE

SPEED KMH: 130 (BRAKING), 163.3 (T3), 108.2 (T1)

GEAR: 3

SECTOR TIME: 16.3 (T3), 108.2 (T1)

DRS ACTIVATION: [Icon]

DRS DETECTION: [Icon]

MARSHAL POSTS: [Icon]

LIGHT PANELS: [Icon]

FIA MEDICAL & SAFETY CARS: [Icon]

SECTOR 1 (Blue), SECTOR 2 (Red), SECTOR 3 (Green)

SPEEDS AND GEARS BASED ON 2017 AND 2018 DATA | SOURCE: FIA

NUMBER OF LAPS: 71

CIRCUIT LENGTH: 4.309KM

RACE DISTANCE: 305.909KM

RACE NOTES

- Interlagos is one of the sport's iconic circuits: drivers love the compact, 15-corner anticlockwise layout and the party vibe during the race weekend
- It's an old-school track without much run-off; mistakes during overtaking can prove costly
- The unpredictable weather – the race has experienced some of the hottest track temperatures of the season and torrential rain – adds to the mix
- Pirelli has chosen its hardest possible combination of compounds, with an aim to limit tyre degradation and help drivers push during each stint
- Lewis Hamilton's one-stopper was the winning strategy last year, but the race saw a range of approaches



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the dashing former India opener once tweeted: "An innings of a lifetime, Harmanpreet Kaur...Fan!"

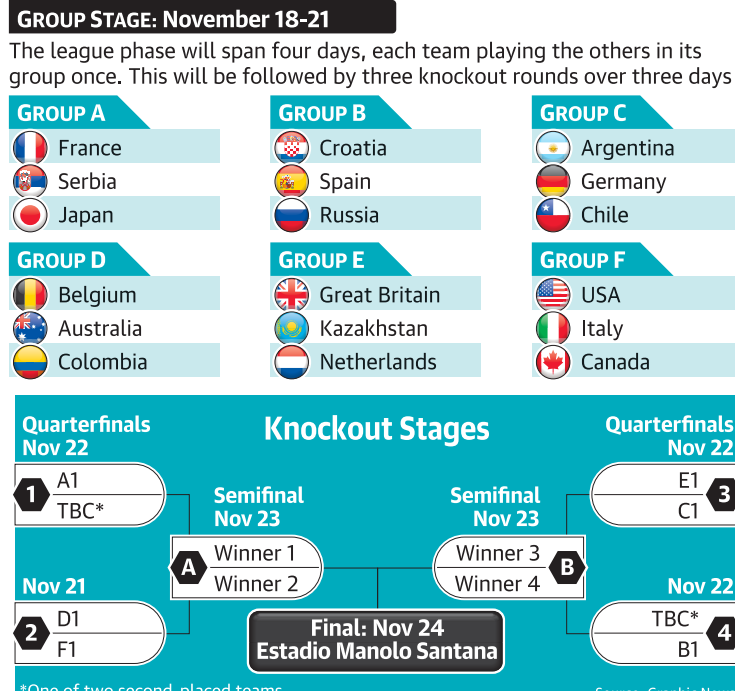
Sehwa was referring to the innings widely regarded as the greatest ever in the women's game and among the finest overall. That knock, against Australia in the semifinal of the 2017 World Cup at Derby,

GAME THEORY

New world order

Madrid will host the first edition of the revamped Davis Cup Finals from Monday. The format of tennis' premier men's team event has changed dramatically. Here's everything you need to know:

- The World Group, renamed the Davis Cup Finals, will be played over a single week in a World Cup-style event with a league and knockout
- The 18 teams are divided into six round-robin groups of three teams each, with the group winners and the two best second-placed teams advancing to the quarterfinals
- The teams will each play two singles matches and one doubles match, instead of the previous best-of-5 series. The matches themselves will drop from best of five sets to best of three



THE DAVIS CUP IN NUMBERS | A look at some of the tournament's records & milestones

<p>8 Australia's Roy Emerson holds the record for the most titles as a player</p>	<p>43 India's Leander Paes has won the most doubles matches</p>	<p>23 Australia has the record for the most consecutive appearances in finals, having made the title round uninterrupted between 1946 and 1968</p>
<p>120 Italy's Nicola Pietrangeli has won the most matches overall, including a record 78 singles rubbers</p>	<p>32 The USA has won the most titles, four more than Australia's 28</p>	<p>1900 The year the event was first played, at the Longwood Cricket Club in Boston, Massachusetts, as a challenge between Great Britain and the USA (which won the contest 3-0)</p>

STACKING UP

ATP Men's Top 15

#	PLAYER	AGE	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Rafa Nadal	33	9,585	16
2	Novak Djokovic	32	8,945	16
3	Roger Federer	38	6,190	16
4	Daniil Medvedev	23	5,705	23
5	Dominic Thiem	26	5,025	21
6	Stefanos Tsitsipas	21	4,000	26
7	Alexander Zverev	22	2,945	23
8	Matteo Berrettini	23	2,670	25
9	Roberto Bautista Agut	31	2,540	23
10	Gael Monfils	33	2,530	21
11	David Goffin	28	2,335	27
12	Fabio Fognini	32	2,290	24
13	Kei Nishikori	29	2,180	16
14	Diego Schwartzman	27	2,125	25
15	Denis Shapovalov	20	2,050	26

Top Indians

Prajesh Gunneswaran Rank 95 ▼ 1 spot

Sumit Nagal Rank 127 ▲ 2 spots

English Premier League Standings

#	TEAM	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Liverpool	12	11	1	0	28	10	18	34
2	Leicester	12	8	2	2	29	8	21	26
3	Chelsea	12	8	2	2	27	17	10	26
4	Man. City	12	8	1	3	35	13	22	25
5	Sheffield	12	4	5	3	13	9	4	17
6	Arsenal	12	4	5	3	16	17	-1	17
7	Man. United	12	4	4	4	16	12	4	16
8	Wolves	12	3	7	2	16	15	1	16
9	Bournemouth	12	4	4	4	15	15	0	16
10	Burnley	12	4	3	5	17	18	-1	15
11	Brighton	12	4	3	5	17	17	-2	15
12	Crystal Palace	12	4	3	5	10	16	-6	15
13	Newcastle	12	4	3	5	11	18	-7	15
14	Tottenham	12	3	5	4	18	17	1	14
15	Everton	12	4	2	6	13	18	-5	14
16	West Ham	12	3	4	5	14	20	-6	13
17	Aston Villa	12	3	2	7	17	20	-3	11
18	Watford	12	1	5	6	8	23	-15	8
19	Southampton	12	2	2	8	11	29	-18	8
20	Norwich City	12	2	1	9	11	28	-17	7

Spanish La Liga Standings

#	TEAM	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Barcelona	12	8	1	3	33	15	18	25
2	Real Madrid	12	7	4	1	25	9	16	25
3	Atletico Madrid	13	6	6	1	15	8	7	24
4	Sevilla	13	7	3	3	17	14	3	24
5	Real Sociedad	13	7	2	4	21	14	7	23
6	Athletic Bilbao	13	5	5	3	13	8	5	20
7	Getafe	13	5	5	3	18	15	3	20
8	Granada	13	6	2	5	19	17	2	20
9	Valencia	13	5	5	3	19	18	1	20
10	Osasuna	13	4	7	2	16	13	3	19
11	Villarreal	13	5	3	5	26	19	7	18
12	Levante	13	5	2	6	16	16	0	17
13	Real Valladolid	13	4	5	4	14	17	-3	17
14	Alaves	13	4	4	5	14	18	-4	15
15	Eibar	13	4	3	6	14	21	-7	15
16	Real Mallorca	13	4	2	7	12	19	-7	14
17	Real Betis	13	3	4	6	15	23	-8	13
18	Celta Vigo	13	2	3	8	7	19	-12	9
19	Espanyol	13	2	2	9	7	23	-16	8
20	Leganes	13	1	3	9	7	22	-15	6

WTA Women's Top 15

#	PLAYER	AGE	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Ashleigh Barty	23	7,851	15
2	Karolina Pliskova	27	5,940	19
3	Naomi Osaka	22	5,496	17
4	Simona Halep	28	5,462	17
5	Bianca Andreescu	19	5,192	15
6	Elinav Svitolina	25	5,075	22
7	Petra Kvitova	29	4,776	17
8	Belinda Bencic	22	4,685	24
9	Kiki Bertens	27	4,245	27
10	Serena Williams	38	3,935	10
11	Aryna Sabalenka	21	3,120	24
12	Johanna Konta	28	2,879	17
13	Madison Keys	24	2,767	15
14	Sofia Kenin	20	2,740	24
15	Petra Martic	28	2,617	18

Top Indians

Ankita Raina Rank 185 ▼ 1 spot

Riya Bhatia Rank 381 ▲ 2 spots

Italian Serie A Standings

#	TEAM	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Juventus	12	10	2	0	20	9	11	32
2	Inter Milan	12	10	1	1	26	12	14	31
3	Lazio	12	7	3	2	28	13	15	24
4	Cagliari	12	7	3	2	23	12	11	24
5	Atalanta	12	6	4	2	30	18	12	22
6	Roma	12	6	4	2	20	14	6	22
7	Napoli	12	5	4	3	21	15	6	19
8	Parma	12	5	2	5	18	15	3	17
9	Fiorentina	12	4	4	4	18	19	-1	16
10	Verona	12	4	3	5	10	11	-1	15
11	Torino	12	4	2	6	15	17	-2	14
12	Udinese	12	4	2	6	8	18	-10	14
13	Sassuolo	11	4	1	6	21	21	0	13
14	AC Milan	12	4	1	7	11	16	-5	13
15	Bologna	12	3	3	6	16	20	-4	12
16	Lecce	12	2	4	6	15	25	-10	10
17	Genoa	12	2	3	7	14	26	-12	9
18	Sampdoria	12	2	3	7	7	19	-12	9
19	Spal	12	2	2	8	7	18	-11	8
20	Brescia	11	2	1	8	10	20	-10	7

German Bundesliga Standings

#	TEAM	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	M'gladbach	11	8	1	2	24	11	13	25
2	RB Leipzig	11	6	3	2	29	12	17	21
3	Bayern Munich	11	6	3	2	29	16	13	21
4	SC Freiburg	11	6	3	2	20	12	8	21
5	Hoffenheim	11	6	2	3	16	14	2	20
6	Dortmund	11	5	4	2	23	15	8	19
7	Schalke	11	5	4	2	20	14	6	19
8	Leverkusen	11	5	3	3	17	15	2	18
9	Frankfurt	11	5	2	4	21	16	5	17
10	Wolfsburg	11	4	5	2	11	10	1	17
11	Union Berlin	11	4	1	6	13	17	-4	13
12	Hertha Berlin	11	3	2	6	17	21	-4	11
13	Dusseldorf	11	3	2	6	15	19	-4	11
14	Werder Bremen	11	2	5	4	18	24	-6	11
15	FC Augsburg	11	2	4	5	13	24	-11	10
16	Mainz	11	3	0	8	12	30	-18	9
17	Cologne	11	2	1	8	10	23	-13	7
18	Paderborn	11	1	1	9	11	26	-15	4