

Turning 50 This Month, Jolly Rovers League Team Has Produced Many Famous Cricketers

Star-studded half century

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The IIT-Chemplast ground could well rank among the most picturesque cricketing venues in the country. Ringed with trees all around, the greenery is testimony to the ever-green Jolly Rovers whose home ground it is.

Not many teams can boast of dominating the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) league circuit as JR, which completes 50 years this month. Initially supported by the late K S Narayanan, founder of Chemplast and India Cements' co-founder, the baton was soon passed on to his sons N Sankar and N Kumar. The third generation is being represented by Vijay Sankar.

The 1966-67 season, which saw the commencement of the association between JR and the family, proved to be a watershed year for the team as they won their maiden TNCA first-division league title and finished runners-up to State Bank of India (SBI) in the Hindu Trophy. "We had a fantastic side with the likes of K R Rajagopal, P K Belliappa, Najam Hussain, K S Kannan, S Venkataraghavan and B Kalyanasundaram among others," said N Sankar, chairman of Sanmar Group.

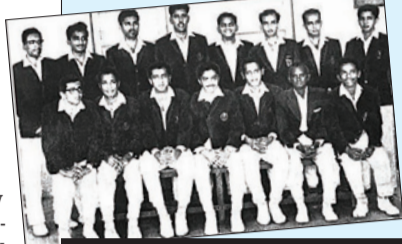
The win that season acted as a fillip for the team, and they never looked back. From 1967-68 onwards, the ensuing four seasons saw JR win two out of the three big tournaments every year — the TNCA league, Buchi Babu tournament and the Hindu Trophy.

The 70s witnessed the mushrooming of other teams in the circuit. The 80s saw former India wicketkeeper Bharath Reddy enter the JR scene. Reddy brought with him a fearless brand of cricket and his never-say-die attitude rubbed off on his teammates.

JOURNEY OF TRIUMPHS

While winning has been a habit with the team, former India keeper Bharath Reddy has instilled consistency in its performances

JR MEN WHO MADE IT BIG: Murali Vijay, R Ashwin, Piyush Chawla, L Balaji, Harbhajan Singh, Dinesh Mongia, Hemang Badani, Munaf Patel, Dinesh Karthik, S Badrinath, M Venkatramana, TA Sekar, Robin Singh, Sujith Somasundar, VB Chandrasekar, S Venkataraghavan, L Sivaramakrishnan, Anil Kumble, Bharath Arun, TE Srinivasan, Harvinder Singh, Debasis Mohanty



QUOTE HANGER Former players who have been part of Jolly Rovers share anecdotes and memorable moments over the years

Murali Vijay | Among the many grounds that I have played, the IIT-Chemplast ground (our home ground) will have to be one of the finest. It's picturesque and is right at the heart of the city



B Kalyanasundaram: During a Buchi Babu match in 1971, a crowd of over 6,000 had gathered at the Loyola grounds since Sunil Gavaskar was playing in that game for ACC. The



BEYOND BOUNDARY: Picturesque IIT-Chemplast ground of Jolly Rovers. (Left) The team that won the TNCA league in 1966-67 boasted of stars like P K Belliappa

cops were finding it difficult to manage the crowd and they refused to let me in since they didn't recognize me. Fortunately, the Jolly Rovers marker Manickam told the policeman that I was a player and should be allowed in.



Bharath Reddy: Jolly Rovers winning the BCCI Corporate Trophy at Indore during the 2012-13 season has to be the best moment for us. We beat the best corporate teams in the country and it was a huge high.

More importantly, the Reddy era saw the emergence of some fine talent from the state in leg-spinner L Sivaramakrishnan, medium-pacer Bharath Arun, V B Chandrasekar and Robin Singh. "The side provided the right platform for youngsters to express themselves not just in local events but also in all-India tournaments," Arun had said in an earlier interaction with TOI.

The eighties and nineties saw JR continue their march towards tour-

naments wins. "In each phase of its journey, JR has had the right cricketers for the right role. More importantly, the team never shied away from going for players out of the state," pointed out former player B Kalyanasundaram.

The last decade-and-half too has been fruitful as the team has continued to produce results on a regular basis. "I feel the best phase for us has been in the last decade when we won consistently," noted Sankar.

The USP of JR, according to

Sankar, lies in the talent-scouting skills of Reddy. "He has been instrumental in getting some of the best into the side and that has helped us dominate the scene for long," he said.

A side that has packed itself with the best in business and played to its potential is bound to rule the scene as JR has done so far. But, there seems to be a flip side to it as well. "There was so much dominance that, on many occasions, the crowd would turn up and support the opposite teams. Even if there is a team from

Mumbai, the spectators will be cheering for them," added Sankar.

As JR raises its willow on its half-century, those who have had the pleasure of watching them play will be more than happy to doff their hats off to a side that has been a torch-bearer when it comes to consistency.

Email us your feedback with full name and address to southpole.toi@timesgroup.com

TALK BACK

"For poachers, vermin tag can be cover for overkill" (July 2) said that allowing the free culling of wild boar as vermin without a proper study of the population would lead to unrestrained killings of the animal.

A WILD IDEA

The claim of the rising population of wild boars is questionable as the Tamil Nadu government does not have any process of monitoring it. Even if a survey is conducted now it cannot be conclusive since only long-term data on variables population size, mortality, birth rate,

age and stage structure of an animal can determine their population growth. Furthermore the present methods for monitoring animal population have to be improved as they ignore problems such as detection probability and spatial sampling. Wild boar numbers have been known to swell and plummet in response to

environmental factors such as rainfall. This natural activity of the species finds mention in the acclaimed naturalist late E R C David's book, 'Whispers from the Wild'. It must be noted that field research is a pre-requisite for conservation and management of wildlife populations and singular decisions to tackle a problem

seldom work. In the case of wild boars, which constitute an important prey for carnivores like tigers, wild dogs, leopards and wolves, their culling would disturb the food chain. The decline in the number of wild boars could also trigger a human-carnivore conflict.

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