

Rovers Jolly And Counting at 50 Years

by Ashok Venugopal

Chennai: Running a cricket team for 50 years without a break, especially in the TNCA senior division league is laudable. That's what Chemplast has been doing in running Jolly Rovers.

There are clubs in the city that have completed half-century mark, but what separates Jolly Rovers is that almost every cricketer from Tamil Nadu who has played for India has represented the club. Also, they have never been relegated.

Jolly Rovers was initially

TROPHY CABINET

First Division: 18

VAP Trophy (TNCA limited overs): 5

YSCA Trophy: 2

Moin-ud-Dowla Trophy: 6

KSCA Trophy: 3

Corporate Trophy (BCCI): 1 (2013)

Hindu Trophy (Madras CA): 8

Corporate Trophy (Mumbai CA): 1

Buchi Babu Trophy: 3

Canara Bank Centenary: 1

CCFC T20 Tournament, Kolkata: 1

Ariem Trophy, Goa: 2

supported by the late KS Narayanan, founder of Chemplast and co-founder of India Cements. Now his sons N Sankar and N Kumar are carrying on. The third generation is represented by Vijay Sankar.

"We take pride in spotting and nurturing talent. We like giving opportunity to budding cricketers. The first win in 1966-1967 was special. So was the second, when we won 10 of 11 games," recollected Sankar.

From former captain S Venkatraghavan to Murali Vijay, many have played for the club. "One will be surprised to know Harbhajan Singh turned up for our club in his formative years. We create an atmosphere where players can give their best," says Sankar.

Former keeper Bharath Reddy says the management's care plays a key role. "When L Balaji and Tamil Kumaran were out with injuries, the company kept giving them remuneration. This speaks volumes of the club's commitment," he recalls.

The club played a role in shaping the career of Vijay, who was spotted by Bharath and groomed by the club.

Despite offers, Vijay has stuck to his club.

They also have a tradition of promoting outstation players, Dinesh Mongia and Piyush Chawla being examples. "It's like the English county system. It increases competitiveness and lets fans see some of the best talents," says

Sankar. They have taken care to provide high-class infrastructure. Decades ago, they sponsored the University Union ground before making Vivekananda College ground their home. Now, they have one of the best grounds in the city, IIT-Chemplast, inaugurated by legendary Australian cricketer Neil Harvey. Even the national team has practised there.

They have also taken over Alwarpet CC. "Our aim is to ensure both teams win many league titles," says Kumar. No wonder Rovers have won the first division 18 times. The sobriquet 'Mumbai of Chennai league' isn't misplaced.

ROVERS TO INDIA

S Venkatraghavan, B Arun, Bharath Reddy, VB Chandrasekar, Hemang Badani, S Ramesh, TA Sekhar, Robin Singh, TE Srinivasan, Sujith Somasundar, L Sivaramakrishnan, L Balaji, Dinesh Karthik, S Badrinath, R Ashwin, Murali Vijay, Dinesh Mongia, Piyush Chawla, M Venkatramana, Harbhajan Singh.



Sanmar's N Kumar And N Shankar | *Sanpatbhoosar*