

The Resurrection of Pakistan's Field Hockey: A Qualitative Approach

Muhammad Talha Iftikhar, School of Human Movement and Nutrition Sciences, University of Queensland, Australia. Email: muhammادتalha.iftikhar@uq.net.au

Muhammad Tahir Nazeer, Assistant Professor, Department of Sports Sciences & Physical Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. Email: tahir.sspe@pu.edu.pk

Zia-ud-Din Khan Barki, Department of Health, Physical education & Sports Sciences, University of Karachi, Pakistan

Muhammad Awais Saeed, Assistant Director. Youth Affairs and Sports Department, Government of the Punjab, Pakistan

Shagufta Akhtar Khan, Lecturer, Department of Sports Sciences & Physical Education, The University of Lahore

ABSTRACT- The current study aimed at providing a strategic plan for the restoration of Field Hockey in Pakistan. A qualitative approach, employing in-depth individual interviews, was used to explore the strategies that can supplement in the resurrection of Field Hockey in Pakistan. *Method:* Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted which includes field hockey veterans (n=6), sport sciences research (n=3) and sports analysts/ reporters (n=3). Participants were considered to have significant knowledge and experience to share that might be used to improve the standards of field hockey in Pakistan and they were willing to describe in detail the insights of their strategic plans. Deductive and inductive analyses were conducted to capture the core themes. *Results:* Possible strategies were explored in six different categories: Administration & Management, Talent Hunting & enhancement of talented pool, Coaches / Umpires / Technical Officials (TOs) / Players Education, Sports Sciences & Research Wing, National Coaching / Training method policy and Media & Marketing Wing. *Conclusions:* It may be difficult to understand these strategies outside the paradigm of Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) but these strategies may help in building the primary strategic plan for better performance in all the six categories of PHF that are explored in this research. In addition, author highly appreciates how people shared their life experiences and detailed strategic plans and interventions that could also facilitate future research in related area.

Keywords: Field hockey, Resurrection, Strategies Plan, Pakistan

I. INTRODUCTION

The dramatic slump of Pakistan field hockey was not as sudden as it seems today. It actually began when the mighty "Team Pakistan" was ranked 11th out of twelve teams participating in the 1986 World cup. Some crucial changes were made in the team management right after this major setback, resulting in better performance in early 90's and winning the world cup in 1994. But the damage was already done at the school and college level, due to the lack of proper interest and planning, our national sport died in schools & colleges and failed to get media and corporate attention (Paracha, 2015), resulting in the demise of field hockey in Pakistan. Now the time has come when Pakistan hockey team is struggling to even qualify for the Olympics. Looking at this devastating circumstances a strategic plan is required that can work as a pillar to support Pakistan field hockey and restore its lost glory.

Definition of Field Hockey

"A team game played between two teams comprising of eleven players each, using hooked sticks with which the players try to drive a small hard ball towards the goals at opposite ends of a field is called Field Hockey." (www.sportpedia.co)

History of Field Hockey

There are different views about the origin of hockey in the world. Some believe that the game was originated 4000 years ago in Egypt where the archeologists found few drawings of men playing a game similar to hockey in the Nile Valley (www.sportpedia.co). While others depict that Indian tribes from America played game like hockey five hundred years ago with a ball usually made of wood or deer skin and the stick using the leg of deer (Mukhtar, 1990). However, the modern game of hockey emerged in England in the mid-18th century and is largely attributed to the growth of public schools. (www.fih.ch)

Hockey was first included in the Olympic Games in 1908 held in London, England. Teams from England, Scotland and Ireland competed in the Mega Event (Jabalpuri, 1998). However, hockey was dropped from the next editions of 1912 and 1916 Olympics. Hockey again found its way back into the 1920 Olympics in

Antwerp and once again was omitted from the Paris Olympics in 1924 on the pretext that the sport needs an International Federation (www.sportspedia.co).

The first Hockey Association was formed in the UK in 1876 and drew up the first formal set of rules. In 1909 England and Belgium's National Associations agreed upon recognizing each other mutually to regulate international hockey affairs, later the French joined hands. However, it was not adequate enough to join the Olympic family. This was the beginning of a long journey ahead towards the formation of International Federation. After the exclusion from the 1924 Olympics, the hockey playing countries started consultations to form their world body. In 1924, Frenchman, Paul Léautey took initiative and invited seven representatives from seven National Federations of Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Hungary, Spain and Switzerland to Paris and founded the Fédération Internationale de Hockey (FIH). Paul Leautev became the first President of FIH. After the formation if the international body thing started shaping up and right from the beginning the federation started growing rapidly. In 1925, Denmark; 1926, the Dutch; 1927, the Turkish and in 1928 (the year of the Amsterdam Olympics) India, Portugal, Poland and Germany join hands with the international committee. India was the first non-European country to become a member of international committee. By 1964, 50 countries and 3 Continental Associations - Africa, Asia and Pan America were affiliated with the FIH. By 1974, 71 countries became member and today the Fédération Internationale de Hockey consists of 127 member associations in five Continental Associations (Africa, Pan America, Asia, Europe and Oceania) (www.fih.ch).

History of Field Hockey in Pakistan

The history of Field Hockey in Pakistan is as old as that of the country itself. Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, was a great admirer of sports. He fully realized that sports could play a vital role in building discipline and cohesion among the nation. During a meeting for First Pakistan Olympic Games, Karachi, Quaid-e-Azam advised Mr. Ahmad E.H. (first president of Pakistan Olympic Association) that "Dedicate yourself to sports promotion, for when you and I are gone, leadership will go into the hands of Youth, and Youth is our wealth, a raw material that must be hammered into shape, into burnished steel to strive and smite in defense - the defense of the integrity- and solidarity of Pakistan the defense of the ideology of Pakistan" (Jamil, 2011).



Quaid-i-Azam with the members of the First Pakistan Olympic Association 1948

Hockey is the national sport of Pakistan and Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) is the national governing body of Field Hockey. PHF got affiliation with the FIH in 1948 and Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan (the founder President) and Baseer Ali Sheikh (Honorary Secretary) started the office of the Pakistan Hockey Federation at National Hockey Stadium, Lahore, where it was established into Secretariat in 1971. Soon after affiliation with the FIH, the PHF started its international activities. The newly born Pakistan sent its hockey team to participate in the London Olympics in 1948. Late Ali Iqtedar Shah Dara led the team (Ali, 2014).

In the meantime Pakistan Hockey Team gained tremendous recognition in various international events. Pakistan won three Olympic Gold medals in Rome (1960), Mexico (1968) and Los Angeles (1984); Four World titles, Spain (1971), Argentina (1978), India (1982) and Australia (1994); and a record eight time victory at Asian Games. Twice Pakistan has kept three of the world's most prestigious titles (The Olympics, The World Cup and The Asian Cup) at the same time. No other field hockey playing nation has achieved this feat in the history of the game up till now.



Pakistan national field hockey team, before playing its first match ever against Belgium in London, 1948 during Summer Olympics

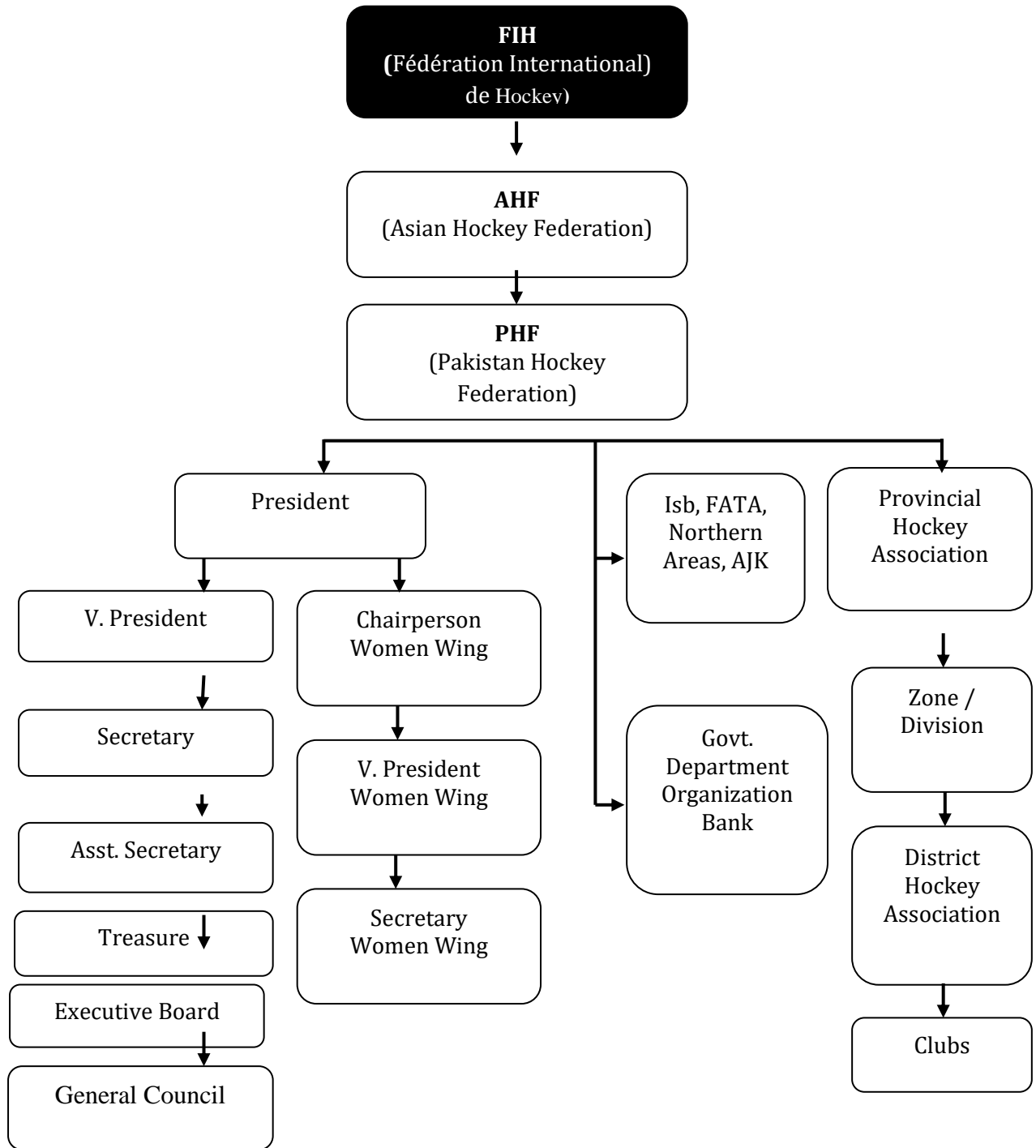
PHF President (1967–69, 1976–84) Air Marshal Nur Khan conceived the idea of Hockey World Cup to FIH in 1969 and founded the Champions Trophy in 1978. It was during the second term as president when Pakistan field hockey entered the golden era after a gap of ten years (Ali, 2014).

Decline of Pakistan Field Hockey

Different analysts have different prospective regarding the decline of field hockey in Pakistan. However, considering the interpretations of this research, decline started the day when AstroTurf was introduced in field hockey and up till 90's, oddly Pakistan had just two AstroTurf stadiums (Paracha, 2015), despite the fact that it was the world's number one side. The problem burst out into the open when a young Pakistani squad led by hockey maestro, Hassan Sardar was routed in almost every game that it played in 1986 World Cup (www.dawn.com). Hockey clubs in the country still play and train their players on grass and these players struggle when introduced to AstroTurf in top level local tournaments. With the change of the surface, science and pace of the game changed dramatically and Pakistan being better at hockey skills was unable to cope up with the required fitness standards of the modern day's field hockey and eventually lagged behind with the passage of time.

With icing on the top, last enthusiastic and hockey loving generation left field hockey in the early 90's, resulting in the occupation of non-technical personals who have no interest in promoting the game and were instead focused on self-projection; Senior veterans from each region gradually expired or stopped working at the grassroots' level as the initiatives or support provided by PHF was reduced or stopped in the late 90's and no efforts or initiatives were offered to revive the grassroots hockey culture yet; favors and dirty politics malfunctioned the whole system and the system is still unable to provide proper planning and talent hunt schemes.

With situation getting worst, Pakistan hockey team hasn't won a single major hockey tournament after the 1994's major victory and a few Asian tittles, the team struggled physically and mentally in every match the team played. The sport in which so much pride and passion was once invested and which became the honored expression of a resilient nation, has sadly been allowed to just wither away.



Research Question: What should be done to restore the standard of field hockey in Pakistan?

II. METHODOLOGY

Purpose of this research was to gain a contextual understanding to restore the lost standards of field hockey in Pakistan. To examine the research question, in-depth interview design was selected; the in-depth design allows interviewer to typically encourage the respondents to talk, ask supplementary questions and asks interviewees to explain their answers (Veal & Darcy, 2014). Ryan (2000) suggested a Phenomenological approach to research where researchers / interviewers are more active in eliciting responses to assist them in achieving an understanding of the interviewee's world-view during the course of the interview. For current study, the focus of the interviews was on future strategies that can assist in the revival of field hockey in Pakistan.

The current study follows a qualitative approach; the approach is suitable because formal, quantified research was not possible. In this approach, the people personally involved in a particular sporting situation are best placed to describe and explain their experiences, motivations and world-view in their own words, and they are allowed to speak without the intermediary of the researcher and without being overly constrained by the framework imposed by the researcher (Veal & Darcy, 2014).

Participants

Reliable with qualitative methodologies (Patton, 2002), Field Hockey veterans (n=6) of ages between 40 and 70 which have played field hockey for at least 15 years; Sport Sciences researches (n=3) of ages 30 to 60 with a research experience of at least 5 years and sports analysts/ reporters (n=3) of ages 30 to 60 with experience of 10 years were selected for the in-depth interviews. All the participants were associated with field hockey for more than 5 years and are committed to the fact that Pakistan will regain its position in Field Hockey. Despite of many challenges these participants have faced during the course of time, they have pledge to work and support field hockey in Pakistan and they were more than just willing to describe their personal experiences and insights in depth that can restore field hockey in Pakistan.

Procedure

Approval was taken prior to collect data from Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF).

Interviews

To elicit the "rich" insight into the participants' perspective, in-depth interviews were conducted to understand what went wrong; how it can be resurrected; and what possible solutions can be implemented with the underlying obstacles associated with it. One to one in-depth interview technique was used in which interviewing interventions by Whyte (1982) were followed. In-depth interviews were conducted individually with senior mentor field hockey players, sports science researchers and sports analysts to examine the core related issues and find possible solutions. The interview questions were made flexible so is to enquire participants' response and to prompt elaboration of view point and deeper insights (Patton, 2002). In the current study, uninhibited and rich accounts of strategies were gathered. Experts in the relative field were selected for this research, which were developed as professionals in the same sport setting. This decision aided in acquiring the best acuties regarding the revival of field hockey in Pakistan. Prior to the interviews, an appropriate location was suggested to all participants or they were asked to specify a place where interviewees might feel comfortable to ensure each could freely share their views.

Interview guide: A check list (Veal & Darcy, 2014) was created for interview format to explore participants' views on the revival of field hockey and to understand a deeper prospective of the remedies that each expert shared in the context to resurrect field hockey in Pakistan. The first author initially designed a check list and potential interview questions to explore the participants' viewpoint. These interview questions were then discussed with other two authors and an interview draft was made, which was then reviewed by a specialist in Field Hockey (Naveed Alam). Following this review, final interview draft was made with consensus of all authors. Opening questions were meant to elicit a participant's introduction and his affiliation with field hockey (e.g. "Kindly introduce yourself sir!") and internal integration (e.g., "How long have been affiliated with field hockey?"). These initial conversations assisted in setting the tone for what was to follow in the interview (Coulter, Mallett & Singer, 2016); for instance, interviewees were encouraged to reflect upon and debate life history related to field hockey deemed important. After the initial introduction, following interview questions were fixated on extracting the core of the research, an understanding of the strategic plans that can play vital role in restoring field hockey in Pakistan (e.g., "What went wrong?" and "What should be done to fix/restore the standards of field hockey in Pakistan?"; "How your suggested plans could be implemented?" and "Where should we start from?"). While taking interviews elaboration and clarification prompts were necessarily used as to treat participants as co-researchers and experts (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). Overall, interviewees were encouraged to share the experiences of

their life and were asked to summarize their thoughts at the end of the interviews. The approximate length of the interviews was 45 mins and all were audio recorded.

III. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Interviews were repeatedly listened and analyzed by all members of the research team to enhance the data familiarity and immersion. Following the guidelines by Miles and Huberman (1994), major categories were highlighted by deductive analysis. For this, all authors were independently involved in analyzing and sorting raw data responses into six broader categories: (Administration & Management; Talent Hunting & enhancement of talented pool; Coaches / Umpires / TOs / Players Education; Sports Sciences & Research Wing; National Coaching / Training Method policy and Media & Marketing Wing). Then following guidelines by Cote et al. (1993), the first author tagged and coded words and phrases concerning perceptions of strategies in order to put them in right category. For example, where a part from the data depicts about assigning the right man for the right job indicates that the administration’s selection is not on merit, so it was provisionally highlighted and tagged as a suggestion for Administration & Management. Following the method used by (Coulter, Mallett & Singer, 2016), codes used to tag data were valid (accurately reflect what is being researched), mutually exclusive (distinct with no overlap) and exhaustive (all relevant data should fit into a code). For example, “unfit for the job” (a common phrase often heard in the interviews) was tagged with a theme labelled as “Right man for the right job”. A third party researcher, well-acquainted in qualitative analysis, aided this process as a critical friend (see acknowledgment) (Creswell, 1998). As the inductive process continues, the categories used were necessarily adjusted with the consensus of all authors. As the research team agreed upon that any discrepancies that require re-examination of the data will not be left behind until such differences were settled (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010). Towards the concluding stages of analysis, individual interviews were analyzed again ensuring appropriate placement of suggestions into categories (Podlog & Eklund, 2007). This final step permitted a refined evaluation and interpretation of strategies that can resurrect field hockey in Pakistan.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

Considering all the data and examining the interviews following suggestions were made.

Categories	Suggestions
Administration and Management	<p>Assigning right man for the right job. Provincial Associations should play an active role in mobilizing their District associations. Intra-District activity, Inter Club / Competitions should be organized with in Districts. District coaches should be assigned for district camps at district stadiums.</p> <p>Possession of grounds that are originally assigned for Hockey but being used for other purposes should be retrieved. Pakistan Hockey Federation’s (PHF) registered Coaches should be given incentives according to their input (e.g. Chance to Travel with the Team in National or International Competitions).</p> <p>Activity calendar for domestic activities should be finalized keeping in view different examinations in country for youth. Educational Department should make it compulsory for every institute to participate in their National Sport during Inter-School Competitions. National level activity calendar should be finalized under the umbrella of Inter-National competitions. Calendar should be displayed on official Website and circulated to all stakeholders. Federation should strictly follow the calendar (it will be helpful to coaches and Hockey players to plan training). Selection should be done on the basis of performance rather than quota system. Selection criteria should be fair and transparent.</p> <p>PHF should have control over players' contracts with foreign clubs so that players could be made available for national duty. PHF can utilize leagues of Bangladesh, China, Malaysia and Oman etc. to give international exposure to our upcoming players. PHF should develop and implement code of conduct for players during camp and tours. Long term as well as the short term goals should be well defined and displayed in each department related to PHF. Administrative posts at the district level can be allotted on the basis of the performance of their clubs.</p>
Talent Hunting & enhancement of talented pool	<p>Competitions / trails for different age groups like U-14, 16, 18, and U-20 (Inter – District / Division / Province, National, Inter School, Inter Collegiate, Inter University and Inter Club etc.) should be observed by mentor / visionary coach’s panel assigned by PHF to find young upcoming Hockey players. These Coaches</p>

	<p>should also keep in view the Physically, Physiologically, Psychologically and sociologically aspects of the players. Pakistan Hockey Federation should concentrate more on Districts with rich hockey culture to find young talent. Government and Private Sector Inter Schools events should be observed for talent hunting. PHF should have collaboration with Higher Education Commission, Educational Boards and Schools to scout young talent.</p>
<p>Coaches/ Umpires / TOs / Players Education</p>	<p>Frequent and maximum Coaching courses should be conducted around the country to equip Coaches with latest knowledge. Umpires and Technical Officials Courses should be conducted around the country so the rules could be observed at grassroots level. Physical Education Teacher's from government and private sectors should be included in hockey courses as they have the biggest pool of players in their institutes. Coaching books and guidelines should be translated in the native language (Urdu) for better understanding for all Coaches. A proper system of coaching registration should be formed where Coaches, Umpires and TOs data can be compiled. Coaching and Officiating should be treated as a respectable profession.</p>
<p>Sports Sciences and Research Wing</p>	<p>We were good when Hockey was purely based on skill. When sports became a science, we were left lagging behind whereas the rest of the world improved by utilizing modern methods of training. Sports scientists could educate coaches in following areas of sports sciences to enhance their knowledge regarding field hockey i.e., Anatomy, Physiology, Nutrition, Biomechanics, Psychology, Sports Medicine etc. PHF should engage group of researchers who could analyze different areas that can contribute in Hockey development in Pakistan (e.g. individual players' performance, team performance, assistance in policy and strategy making etc.). Researchers Group could organize seminars, conferences and different recreation hockey activates in different educational institutes that will contribute in the expansion of Hockey culture around Pakistan. Research wing could analyze International Teams Performance for Foreign Tournaments and Leagues. Research wing could search and suggest safe new hockey sticks, balls and rules for primary and middle school students, so as to make hockey attractive and safe for kids. Research wing could make a systematic scoring system which could help in selection process.</p>
<p>National Coaching / Training Method and policy</p>	<p>A group of Coaches could be formed that can develop a National Coaching manual and Systematic Training Progression for young upcoming players so that when they come into national camp, they are already familiar to the coaching methods. Coaches should keep record of everyone and every training session during National Camp. At the end of camp, they will present development graph statistically of each player. When the National camp is not in progress, National coaches should be in contact with National players regarding their training. (Off season training) Training guidelines (Intensity / Volume / Technique / Tactic / Strategy / Periodization) should be directed by National Coaches Group to district level. It was observed that if a player is not mentally relaxed, he /she will not be able to perform well. That is why instead of central national camps there should be camps at regional centers of Pakistan Sports Board (Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta) during off season. If camps are regional based and national players are participating in it, local upcoming players can also have exposure of training with elite players. Age and Area wise camps for Junior and Senior players can also result in better intra-regional competitions.</p>
<p>Media & Marketing Wing</p>	<p>PHF should form a Media and Marketing wing for promotion of field hockey in Pakistan. PHF should have control and find new avenues for Hockey development through media and marketing tactics. Big Sponsors could be found for hockey tournaments. Big companies can be attracted with Hockey Tournament in their name (e.g. Pepsi National Hockey Tournament etc.). Sports equipment companies, Shoe making companies, Banks and multi-national companies can support Hockey Competitions in shape of equipment & Finance. Media coverage and advertisement will attract sponsorship.</p>

V. CONCLUSION

This study explored a contextualized version of strategies regarding revival of field hockey in Pakistan. It may be difficult to understand these strategies outside the paradigm of Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF), but these strategies may help in building the preliminary strategic plan for better performance of all the six categories nominated by the author. For better output these strategies have to be implemented at a very grassroots' level. All together this work will act as a milestone in sport research towards understanding the strategies that will have great impact in the resurrection of Field hockey in Pakistan.

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