

Amsterdam Olympics, 1928

Olympic Debut for India and Route Chart for Gold Medal by Dhyan Chand

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ABSTRACT

The Olympic debut and the first ever gold medal for India came in 1928, at the Amsterdam Olympics. It was the Hockey which brought the medal. The team of thirteen players sailed for Amsterdam, via London, from Bombay, and three student players joined the team at London only. Only three people – two officials of Hockey federation and a solitary journalist were present on the historic occasion to see the first national Hockey team leave the shores of India.

A total of nine teams namely Austria, Denmark, Belgium, Switzerland, India, Germany, France, Spain and Netherlands participated in this game, which were divided into two pools. India along with Austria, Denmark, Belgium and Switzerland were in Pool-A; and the host Netherlands along with Germany, France and Spain were in Pool- B. A total eighteen matches were played and sixty-nine goals were scored, in all.

The three top scorers of the tournament were all Indians, Dhyan Chand – 14, George Marthins – 6, and Feroz Khan – 4. It was Dhyan Chand who was the center of attraction at the Amsterdam and the real hero who helped India win the first ever Olympic Gold Medal by defeating the Netherlands in the final match by 3-0.

INTRODUCTION

Every year, August 29th is celebrated as the National Sports Day in India. The President of India, in a ceremony at Rastrapati Bhawan, honors the outstanding sportspersons for their contribution in the field of sports, by giving them awards like Rajeev Gandhi Khel Ratna, Arjuna

Award, Dronacharya Award etc. This day is the birthday of the wizard of Hockey Major Dhyan Chand. The Government of India, decided to celebrate his birthday by declaring the 29th August as the National Sports Day; and also to immortalize his memory, has established Dhyan Chand Award, which is conferred each year to

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sportspersons who not only contribute quality through their performance but also contribute towards sports after their retirement.

Actually speaking, it was only Major Dhyan Chand who in 1928, at the Amsterdam, for the first time brought India on the Olympic map and in the headlines of the foreign media. The journey for this Gold Medal started on March 10th, 1928, when a 13-member Indian team for the 1928 Olympics (with 3 students joining in London) set sail from Mumbai for London.

The total team included Richard Allen, Dhyan Chand, Maurice Gateley, William Goodsir, Leslie Hammond, Feroz Khan, George Marthins, Rex Norris, Broome Pinniger, Michael Rocque, Frederic Seaman, Shaukat Ali, Jaipal Singh, Sayed Yusuf and Kher Singh Gill.

Only three people – 2 officials of the IHF and a solitary journalist – were present on this Historic occasion, to see the first national Hockey team leave the shores of India. The team landed at the Tilbury docks near London on March 10th, 1928, en route to Amsterdam where the ten-day Hockey competitions, along with the Football, were held in the first part of these Olympics in May, two months before the rest of the Olympic events. The team was captained by Jaipal Singh, a student at the Oxford University.

A total of nine Hockey teams participated in these Olympics, which were divided into two pools, A and the B. In the pool A there were five teams: India, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, and Austria. The pool B had Netherlands, Germany, France and Spain.

The teams in pool A played a total of ten matches, through the league process. The first match was played between the Switzerland and Denmark, in which Denmark defeated Switzerland by 2-1. The second match was between India and Austria, on 17th May, where India defeated the opponents by 6-0. It was Dhyanchand who scored the three goals, in the fourth and the sixth minute of the game, and the rest three goals were scored by Marthin and Shaukat.

In the second match against Belgium, on 18th May, it was again won by India with a score of 9-0, in which Firoz Khan scored four goals, Seaman and Marthin two each and Dhyan Chand one.

In the third match against Denmark, Indian team registered their victory with a score of 5-0 and it was again Dhyan Chand who led the team by scoring a hatric. In the last pool match against Switzerland, the score was 6-0 in favour of India, where again it was Dhyan Chand who scored four goals and the team reached in the finals by topping the Pool.

Table-1 : Statistics of the 1928 Hockey Olympics Pool – 'A'.

Rank	Team	Pld	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts	IND	BEL	DEN	SUI	AUT
1.	India (IND)	4	4	0	0	26	0	8	X	9:0	5:0	6:0	6:0
2.	Belgium (BEL)	4	3	0	1	8	9	6	0:9	X	1:0	3:0	4:0
3.	Denmark (DEN)	4	2	0	2	5	8	4	0:5	0:1	X	2:1	3:1
4.	Switzerland (SUI)	4	1	0	3	2	11	2	0:6	0:3	1:2	X	1:0
5.	Austria (AUT)	4	0	0	4	1	14	0	0:6	0:4	1:3	0:1	X

In the second pool it was the host team Netherlands, which topped the pool defeating France by 5-0, Germany 2-1; and with Spain, it was a draw, with 1-1.

Table-2 : Statistics of the 1928 Hockey Olympics Pool – ‘B’.

Rank	Team	Pld	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts	NED	GER	FRA	ESP
1.	Netherlands (NED)	3	2	1	0	8	2	5	X	2:1	5:0	1:1
2.	Germany (GER)	3	2	0	1	8	3	4	1:2	X	2:0	5:1
3.	France (FRA)	3	1	0	2	2	8	2	0:5	0:2	X	2:1
4.	Spain (ESP)	3	0	1	2	3	8	1	1:1	1:5	1:2	X

The Bronze medal match was played between the Germany and the Belgium, where Germany won the medal by scoring 3-0.

Jaipal Singh, the Captain of the Indian team, couldn't play the final and left for England; and Eric Pinniger, the Vice Captain, was promoted as the captain for the finals.

The final was played between the host team Netherlands on May 26, 1928, at *Olympisch stadion*, where more than 24,000 spectators, till then the biggest crowd, witnessed the match. The Indian team's better players Feroze Khan, Ali Shaukat and Kher Singh were on the sick list and Dhyan Chand himself was ill. However, even with

a skeletal side, India defeated Netherlands by 3-0 to win its first Olympic Gold Medal, and its first ever victory in a world tournament. All the three goals were scored by Dhyan Chand. The goal keeper of the Indian team, Richard Allen created a unique record of not conceding a single goal.

A total of thirtyone players scored sixty-nine goals in eighteen matches and Dhyan Chand was the top scorer of the tournament, by a large margin, scoring 14 goals in 5 matches. Not only this, the top three scorers of the 1928 Olympic were all from the Indian team, and they were Dhyan Chand – 14 goals; George Marthins – 6; and Feroz Khan – 4 goals.

Table-3 : The top goal scores in Hockey, at 1928 Amsterdam Olympics.

Rank	Name	Nation	Goals	Against	BEL	DEN	SUI	AUT	NED
1.	Dhyan Chand	India	14		1	3	4	3	3
2.	George Marthins	India	6		2	1	1	2	X
3.	Feroz Khan	India	4		4	X	X	X	X

The Amsterdam Games became the first stage, for the wizardry of Dhyan Chand. The wizardry was not only meant for the spectators, but also for the opponents; for during several

moments, the opponents were like spectators, with sticks and jerseys, as they could only watch Dhyan Chand's magic and could do nothing about it. Dhyan Chand was the favourite of all at

the Amsterdam Games; dazzling spectators and critics alike.

An awe-struck Dutch journalist wrote *'The Indian ball seems ignorant of the laws of gravity. One of those tanned diabolical jugglers stares at the ball intently; it gets upright and remains suspended in the air. This is no longer the game of Hockey. It is a juggling turn. It is splendid.'* The Indian team's performance revived

interest in Hockey, and overnight it became a world sport.

A newspaper report about India's triumph said, *'This is not a game of Hockey, but magic. Dhyani Chand is in fact the magician of Hockey.'*

On returning to India, the team was received by thousands of people at the Bombay harbor, compared to the 3 people who had seen them off.

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