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### **Lecture Title**

#### **Punjab's Contribution to Sports in India - Sportspersons**

##### **Athletics**

Hello and welcome to yet another module on Physical Education. Now we are talking about the contribution of Punjab in sports and we are going to discuss the prominent sports persons who have contributed immensely towards the cause of sports. First we talk about Athletics.

Dalip Singh (April 27, 1899)

To the late Brigadier Dalip Singh goes the credit of being the first Sikh to represent India in the Olympics. The 1924 Olympic Games were held in Paris in which India sent a contingent of seven athletes. In this seven-man squad, two Sikhs, Dalip and Palam made their debut.

The Sikh had missed the bus only four years ago when six Indian athletes had participated in the 1920 Antwerp Olympics. Dalip Singh could not have made to the Paris Olympics Games but for the patronage and help coming in from the late Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala. It may be recalled that Dalip Singh besides being a fine athlete was a good hockey player also. When the trials were to be held at Lahore (now in Pakistan) for the Paris Olympics, Dalip Singh was scheduled to play for Patiala Tigers, a hockey team. It was here that the Maharaja of Patiala came to recognise his worth and helped him take a well-deserved place in the seven -man athletic team. It is true that the team then did not bring home any laurels, but it is on record that two among the Indian athletic team performed really well, and one of them was Dalip Singh. In the long jump event, he narrowly missed a mark which could have earned him a place among the first six.

Another honour which went to Dalip Singh was that he was the first Indian, and a Sikh, to be the torchbearer at the inaugural Asian Games at Delhi in 1951.

Born at Dolon village district, Dalip Singh had his schooling in the Mission School, that he joined Forman Christian College and Law College, Lahore. Even at School he showed potential of a good sportsman, nay all-rounder. In fact, he emerged as a fine athlete, showing great skill in

100, 200, 440 yards, 120 yards hurdles and long jump during the university days. He played hockey and cricket too.

But he got the real breakthrough when he was selected to be representing India in the 1924 Paris Olympics he was the captain of the Indian athletic team.

In fact, Dalip Singh can be described as a very distinguished man, In World War II, Dalip served the Patiala Infantry. He had joined the Patiala army in 1924. For his services, he was awarded M.B.E ( Medal for British Empire).

### **Milkha Singh**

Milkha Singh can be described as one of the most extraordinary athletes of our times. Milkha Singh was a genius and a genius is never trained. Without any formal training, without any financial reward and without any emotional support (he lost his parents during Partition, Milkha Singh had only an elder brother and a sister to look for help) Milkha Singh took on the greatest athletes of his time and proved himself as good if not better. The burst of speed with which he broke the previous Olympic Games record of 5.9 seconds in 400 meters is now a part of folklore in Punjab. The fairy tale is repeated as part of Punjab's rich heritage. Milkha is no less popular than Pele in Brazil and Maradona in Argentina. Generation after generation in India will remember fondly his exploits with which he set the tracks ablaze whenever and wherever he ran. Rarely has it happened in the Olympic history when so many athletes went on to break the greatest race of his time, this he had to, since he had to, since he had on blocks with him world's greatest athletes of his time. Who would have dared to challenge their might, expect Milkha, who though respected them yet never feared them. He simply ran-SUPERB.

In the first heat in the Rome Olympics Milkha Singh clocked 47.6 seconds to finish second. In the second round heat Milkha cut off a few second to finish second to Karl Kaufman of Germany with a timing of 46.5 seconds. In the semifinal Milkha ran shoulder to shoulder with Ottis Davis of the USA to Finish once again second but he further clipped a few more seconds from his early timing (45.9). In the final Milkha Singh went off the blocks and took an early lead. Midway he slowed down a bit. This proved his undoing because other athletes went past him. Realising his miscalculation, Mikha drew out every ounce of energy for the final burst but failed to retrieve the lost ground. How fiercely was the race run by runners of such high order can be gauged from the fact that the winner Ottis Davis and Kaufman clocked 44.8 seconds to finish first and second in 400 meters while Mel Spence of South Africa timed 45.5 seconds to finish third. Milkha Singh who actually led the pack was untimely fourth, timing 45.6 seconds, a difference of just 0.1 second from the bronze. Thus upto the final he clocked 47.6, 46.5, 45.9 and 45.6 seconds, clocking a better timing in every outing.

Born at Lyallpur, now in Pakistan, on October 8, 1935, Milkha Singh shot into limelight during the National Games at Patiala in 1956. Two years later he shattered the 200 and 400 meters record in the National games at Cuttack. The same year he established new records in the 200

and 400 meters in the Asian games at Tokyo. He followed it up with a gold in the Commonwealth Games at Cardiff in 1958. How did he come to be known as the "Flying Sikh"? Milkha Singh was participating in the Indo-Pak dual meet at Lahore when he outran Asia's most celebrated athlete in the 200 meters, Abdul Khaliq of Pakistan. It was said that Milkha did not run the race but he flew.

## **Cricket**

The sportsperson from Punjab who did well in this area are:

Lall Singh

He had the honour of playing India's first test. One Test, 2 innings, 44 runs, h.s. 29 and avge. 22.00, one catch and no bowling.

Yadavindra Singh : (MAHARAJA OF PATIALA)

He played one Test against England at Madras in 1933-34 scoring 60 and 24 runs and held two catches. No bowling.

A.G.S. Kirpal Singh

Born: August 6, 1933, Living in Madras, son of A.G. Ram Singh and elder brother of Test player A.G. Milkha Singh. Scored a century on debut in Tests.

Bishan Singh Bedi

A bowler of extra-ordinary potential with extra-ordinary sight, a fine patka over his long hair wound in a knot at the top. Bedi bowled and baffed many a great bat in the world. In a clockwork precision, Bedi bowled overs as no other bowler would do, maintaining a computerised length and direction, weaving a magic web with his vicious deliveries around the players' legs. He razed to dust the reputation of some, while he made other stalwarts look pedestrians before him. He flighted the ball giving it a lot of air. And the batsmen who plundered runs at will before, were suddenly found lacking in the art and science of the game when Bedi came to bowl.

He played against all cricket playing countries : England, Australia, the West Indies, New Zealand and Pakistan. With 266 wickets in the bag, he was at one time the fifth biggest wicket-taker in the history of the world. At another time some strongly believed that had he not been sidelined unceremoniously by the Board of Control for Cricket in India, he would have gone on to become the top wicket-taker. He led India in 22 Tests in a row which in itself is a record for India as previously Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi held the distinction with 21 Tests. Bedi is also the only Indian bowler to claim over 1500 wickets in first-class cricket.

If Bedi's contribution to Indian cricket is great, to Delhi it is ever greater. Helping those with no godfathers is another of Bedi's pastime. He has helped many a budding player to hit the

headlines. In Delhi, he harnessed cricket potential to a great extent, making it emerge as the premier side on the national cricket scene.

### Navjot Singh Sidhu

Navjot Singh Sidhu is Punjab's answer to Tamil Nadu's K. Srikkanth, both India's dashing opening batsmen and both hard-hitters of the ball. Both cannot be tied down no matter of what country the pace attack they are facing, both like to leave the crease to lift the ball into the stands for glorious sixes, sometimes even on demand. In the sixties all round Salim Durrani delighted the crowds, spraying sixes on all sides. In the seventies and eighties both Srikkanth and Sidhu were the star performers on the Indian cricket scene. If Srikkanth was a folk hero in Tamil Nadu, Sidhu is a hero in Punjab. Navjot Singh Sidhu hit the maiden test century (116) against New Zealand led by John Wright. In five Test innings Sidhu aggregated 198 at an average of 49.50. So he was able to establish himself as a successful Test cricketer from Punjab.

But in the three one-day internationals against New Zealand Sidhu scored 25,67 and 14 which gave him an average of 35.53. In the 1987 Reliance Cup Sidhu had time and again hammered the opposition into submission. However, against the Kiwis he was less authoritative. At the Cuttack international where he hit 67 runs, he ducked awkwardly to give a rising catch to wicketkeeper Ian Smith. It had given rise to the view in certain quarters that Sidhu was vulnerable against rising deliveries. However, the opinion was not well founded going by his scores in the Reliance Cup. In that World Cup Sidhu hit 73 against Australia, 75 against New Zealand, 51 against Australia again, 55 against Zimbabwe and 22 against England. So overall a very explosive player.

### Football and Hockey

#### Inder Singh

The celebrated king of soccer, striker Inder Singh will go down in the annals of Indian football as a legend. He has been rightly described as "Pele" of Punjab. He is one Sikh footballer who has brought immense glory to the state. Speed and skill were the chief weapons of his choice. He pounced upon the ball like a panther and when he went on an attacking spree he put any defence out of gear. He trapped the ball with remarkable skill and scored from acute angles. It was with this nerve that in the 1974 National Football Championship was won.

He earned the distinction of leading the Indian football team thrice. In 1969 he became the first Punjab player to play in the Asian All-Star team. He was presented the Arjuna Award in 1969. Inder Singh studied at Government High School, Phagwara. He attended his first Punjab school soccer camp in 1959 where the camp-in-charge was Joginder Singh. He was quick to learn. From 1959 to 1961 he represented Punjab in the All India school Games. In 1960 and 1961 he was declared the best player and highest scorer in the School Games. In 1962 he joined Leaders Club (Jalandhar). The same year he represented Punjab in the Santosh Trophy at Bangalore. In 1963

he was selected in the Indian team which played in the pre- Olympic meet in Iran and at Calcutta. The same year he played in the Asia Cup at Tel Aviv where in the final Israel defeated India 2-0. Then he played in Merdeka soccer at Kuala Lumpur where India finished second. In 1966 Inder Singh toured Burma and played in the Asian Games at Bangkok. In 1969 he was named skipper of the Indian team to play in Merdeka soccer. Next year's Merdeka turned unlucky for him as he badly injured his knee.

## Hockey

### Udham Singh

Sansarpur village on the outskirts of Jalandhar is well-known for producing top hockey players for India. One whose stickwork dazzled and fascinated the people was Udham Singh, the centre forward of India's battle. He could have become the only Indian, a Sikh, to represent India in five successive Olympic Games but that was not to be, injury prevented him from acquiring that honour. Now after Lesile Claudius, he is the only Indian player who has donned national colours in four successive Olympics. These were 1952 Helsinki Olympics (under D.S. Babu) , 1956 Melbourne Olympics (under L. Claudius) and Tokyo Olympics (under Charanjit Singh).

Udham Singh has been known to be a versatile forward. He could play at left -inside, right -inside, centre-forward or click at centre-half position too. This man has dedicated and devoted his entire life to sports and still, he maintains himself as fit as during his heydays. B.S.F. had the hockey team full of renowned Olympians such as Ajit Pal, Baldev Singh and others. It is on record that once when his team was trailing in a tournament he got himself into the playing kit and turned the tables.

Before joining the B.S.F. he served in the Punjab Police. One thing which surprises one is how and why so great a player just failed to lead the country in any Asian or the Olympic Games. His hockey career spans from 1949 to 1964, and during this period, he led India thrice, first in 1953 when the Indian team went on a tour of Warsaw (Poland). Secondly Udham was the captain on Indian's East African and European tours in 1959. Last time he led the Indian team on Australian and New Zealand tours.

However, giving full recognition and respect to his services which he rendered to the nation, the Indian Government awarded him the coveted Arjuna Award.

### **Ajit Pal Singh and Conclusion**

Ajit Pal Singh was rightly acclaimed as "one of the best centre halves in the worlds" during his time. He led India to a sensational victory in the third World Cup Hockey Tournament at Kuala Lumpur in 1975. But next year with practically the same team he saw India crashing to the seventh place in the Montreal Olympics Games.

Born on April 1, 1947, Ajit pal Singh learnt the alphabet of hockey in his native Sansarpur village, the bastion of hockey during that time. A number of players from this village had already represented India in the Olympics and a number of international tournaments.

He first played in an international hockey tournament at Bombay in 1960. Later he represented India in Japan in 1966. Having finished his studies at the school, Ajit Pal Singh joined Layalpur Khalsa College, Jalandhar, which had honour of a number of star hockey players. Ajit Pal Singh got the first real break when, as student of B.A. Part-I, he was selected in the Indian team to play in the Pre-Olympic Hockey Tournament permanently on the rolls of Indian hockey team. Next year Ajit Pal Singh gave a dazzling show of stickwork in the Mexico Olympic Games. He showed what a fine sense of distribution he had and how he helped make the half-line function smoothly. Ajit pal Singh showed much dexterity and skill at his position that he was included in the World Hockey teams of 1971,72 and 73. He next represented India in the 1974 Asian Games at Teheran. Consequently he was included in the Asian All-Star Hockey XI the same year.

But he reached the pinnacle of glory in 1975 when he led India to the third World Cup victory in Kuala Lumpur in the most trying circumstances. The Punjab Government had borne all expenses prior to the participation by organising a camp for the team in Punjab. The whole country was in great jubilation. For the first time hockey seemed to get priority over cricket in the country.

I hope that by getting the knowledge of these stalwarts of sports you must have got valuable insights into how they were able to perform such feats. Thank you so much for watching.