



#SpursInTheBlood @SpursInTheBlood
Spurs fans singing 'it's happened again, it's happened again, Jack Wilshere, it's happened again' as he goes off injured. Class.

Footy Accumulators @FootyAccums
Harry Kane has now scored 20+ leagues goals in his last three consecutive season for Spurs. "One season wonder" #COYS

Broken Cricket @BrokenCricket
Andrew Tye: 2015: Warmed his bench for CSK 2016: Warmed his bench for GL 2017: Hat trick and fivefer on debut Waited for 34 matches!

Despite World League Round 2 triumph in Canada, skipper Rani feels team needs to improve in lots of aspects

Focus on mind games after promising returns

RAVI IYER @Chennai

WHILE the win at the Women's Hockey World League Round 2 was expected, the next step in the Indian women's hockey team's road to the World Cup, in London 5 next year, is a lot tougher.

The triumph in West Vancouver helped the team advance to the next round of the World Cup qualifiers, the Women's Hockey World League Semifinals in Johannesburg from July 8 to 22. But with teams like England, Argentina, Germany and USA in the mix, the journey is full of roadblocks.

Captain Rani Rampal knows they have to work hard. "The Round 2 final should not have reached the shootout. We dominated Chile, but somehow contrived to fall behind, and could only equalise late in the game. So there's a lot to be improved on, but we're confident we have the ability to keep getting better," she told *Express*.

New coach Sjoerd Marijne had reiterated that mental aspect was something the squad had to work on. Rani agreed, saying the girls still felt a certain 'inferiority complex'.

"We need to work on the mental aspect, on and off field. Many times, even before we play one of the perceived big teams, the fear of losing engulfs us. That has to change,

Modern hockey is so fast, one has to concentrate throughout the game. These are just some of the things we have to work on," the 22-year-old opined.

The fact that the women made the Olympics in Rio after 36 years

has given the squad a boost. "The thought that we were the ones to break that jinx gave us confidence. Though things didn't go to plans, we realised we could beat anyone on our day. This will help us in our quest to make the World Cup, the previous edition of which we missed in 2014.

"From the current squad, only three or four girls played in 2010, so there is motivation to experience the feeling of playing in a World Cup, now that we've played at the Summer Games," the girl from Shahabad Markanda in Haryana noted.

After a week's rest, the women will get back together for a camp in Bengaluru starting April 19. And Rani is making the most of this break. "I came back home just in time for the inauguration of my new house. But such is the nature of our scheduling that these off days get over in a jiffy. I'm trying to make the most of this phase, and it helps if I can relax and get back to national duty as my mind remains fresh and ready for the challenges. The other girls too are ensuring they make the

SUNDAY SPECIAL

Upcoming tournaments for women

2017

May 12 to 24 Tour of New Zealand

July 8 to 22 World League Semifinal, South Africa

October 25 to November 5 Asian Cup, Japan

2018

Apr 4 to 15 Commonwealth Games, Australia

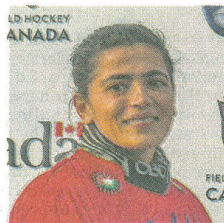
July 7 to July 21 World Cup, England

August 18 to September 2 Asian Games, Indonesia

October 20 to 28 Asian Champions Trophy, TBC



The Indian women's hockey team after clinching the Hockey World League Round 2 crown recently in West Vancouver. The team advanced to the next round thanks to this achievement | TWITTER



Under previous coaches, we didn't give much importance to shootouts, but that's what Marijne sir brings

Lazy beginnings to wall between sticks

RAVI IYER @Chennai

NOT many will disagree with the fact that India clinched the Women's Hockey World League Round 2 thanks to one person, thus also keeping them on track for the World Cup. That player is Savita Punia, one of the best custodians in the world. She credits new coach Sjoerd Marijne for her heroics in West Vancouver.

thanks to the new coach. He made us do a lot of shootout practice during training, and that came in handy during the final. Under previous coaches, we didn't give much importance to shootouts, but that's what Marijne sir brings to the table. Fresh ideas and a new direction. Thanks to that training, I wasn't nervous and that helped a great deal in shutting out the opponents," Savita beamed.

Singh's insistence, I tried out the game and soon joined the SAI Centre in Hisar. My coach there, Sunder Singh Kharab, told me to become a goalkeeper.

"In the beginning, I disliked keeping, as it meant my kit bag was the heaviest, and I had to lug it around everywhere. I even skipped training a few times under the pretense of being sick so that I didn't have to carry the bag.

that advice," the 27-year-old revealed. One thing that still rankles her is the fact that despite being promised a job, she is yet to be employed. "It is very difficult for girls to make a name in sports in Haryana. Still I have come so far. In 2013, the Haryana government had promised me a job, but I'm yet to hear from them. What else can it be but apathy," questioned the girl from Jodhka vil-