

Celebrating Independence Day through football



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India has just celebrated the 67th Independence Day on 15th August. There has been much talks about Narendra Modi's speech countered after the Prime Minister's speech, news about blast in Manipur, blast in Kokrajhar, the burning issue of separate state demand, and articles being published in news papers about how true is our freedom in true sense, and also organisations and news makers congratulating people on the occasion on the I-Day.

Keeping aside all these political talks, even personal problems, in Guwahati, a section of people celebrated the Independence Day through football in the spirit of the game without any differences and politics in their minds, what can be a more better way to celebrate the I-Day in such a holistic manner.

In general the celebrating the Independence Day in Guwahati, begins much ahead of 15th August and the celebration begins with the commencement of various football tournaments being held across Guwahati, besides other parts of the state which does not go unnoticed. Football tournaments are organised by various clubs, localities villages, individuals etc. that sets the festive mood for the celebration of the I-Day for both the football lovers and the general public. To put it rightly, these days football tournaments have become synonymous with Independence Day celebration in Guwahati and its adjoining areas. "Off late there are lot of football tournaments organised on the occasion of I-Day, and it is very good to see people enjoying it, and through it a lot of young talents get a platform which is encouraging for the new generation" says, Dhruva Hazarika, Director of Sports and youth affairs, Assam, who had come to inaugurate the football tournament in Lokhra. "We also use to play a lot of football matches during our times while celebrating the Independence Day", he added.

There are hundreds of football tournaments organised on the occasion of Independence Day, and hundreds of teams move here and there playing football, not only promoting the Game but promoting unity, understanding and peace, and thus celebrating Independence in the right spirit. The football trend some years back was not as good as it is being seen in the present time, and it is good to see people going back to football tournaments to celebrated Independence Day. "These days are really good to see so many football tournaments being held in Guwahati during the Independence Day celebration, but things were not that good may be some 10 years back. There are lot of good players i can see in this small tournaments, we need a lot of sponsors to groom these young talents" added Sagar, who had played for Mohan Bagan, and now plays for Railways. He had came to play for a amateur club, at Janta Bhawan on the occasion of Independence Day.

During this time, people from all walks of life, people doing Jobs, Business, Vegetable vendors, meat sellers,, Rikshaw pullers all participates in football tournaments for the love of the game and a positive environment is being created on the occasion of Independence Day celebration. Since the militant groups call Bandhs and boycott the Independence Day, people find a better way to celebrate the Independence Day through playing football.

"It is nice to play all over during the Independence Day time, and we love to play, there are so many tournaments", said Chandra Boro, who,s team has come all the way from Nalbari district to play a local Football tournament in a hilly village in Sonaighuli.

Mr. Suren , who owns a meat shop has taken out time to join a Independence Day celebration football tournament in Lokhra, and says that they have been celebrating Independence Day through Football since long time and that since there are bandh calls during the I-Day through out the State of Assam, so they prefer to celebrate I-Day through football.

"We have to develop our team to play in these tournaments during Independence Day and have to participate in more tournaments during these season" Said Jadu Gogoi, a veteran Referee, who had also joined a team to play a local football tournament, while his juniors are shocked to see Jadu Gogoi, playing at the age of 63. Another veteran player Mr. Gajen who is much popular in the local tournaments because of his skill and stamina even at the age of 51, who is a regular participant in football tournaments while his son also joins his father in the team. The Lokhra Udyan Sangha, this time felicitated this veteran player and asked him to reveal his secrets, while encouraging young players." We want you to play till the age of 60" said one of the member of the Lokhra Udyan Sangha.

Tournaments are organised in categories like, playing with Boots and also Bare foot tournaments, 7 side tournaments, 11- side, and also 9-side tournaments depending upon the capacity of the Playground. Prize money are as high as 50,000, and can come down to even Rs.3000 as per capacity, there are also prizes like a Goat, a Pig besides giving away Cups and Cash awards. Matches organised between the Non-Married boys and Married people, and in some place women football matches are also being organised. Football tournaments during the I-Day celebration in a true sense caters the need of all sections of people in the society that creates the mood for celebrating Independence Day. May be in days to come the popularity of this I-Day football tournaments might be recognized as a " Independence Day football festival", and trophies are named after local freedom fighters.

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