

# GAME PLAN TO WIN

FOOTBALL WORLD CUP



SIJIN BT & DR INDULEKHA R



# GOAL 2066

ONE DREAM | ONE GOAL

We dream of the day thousands of Indians invade the lush green football ground by waving the 'made in India' tricolour flag; Indian players toss their sweat-wet blue jerseys in the beautiful blue sky; an Indian player kicks the 'Made in India' world cup ball to the gallery where thousands of Indians stand by raising their fists and billions of Indians dance in front of the different 'Make in India' live streaming screens, while the final whistle of the finals of a world cup blows and all roars together "We won the World Cup."



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**DREAMS  
WITHOUT GOALS  
ARE **JUST DREAMS****

DENZEL WASHINGTON



**SPORTS**  
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**GAME  
PLAN  
TO WIN  
FOOTBALL WORLD CUP**

**SIJIN B T & DR INDULEKHA R**

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**GAME  
PLAN  
TO WIN**  
**FOOTBALL WORLD CUP**

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**THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO**

*Indian football fans died without watching  
India wins the football world cup*

*Indian football fans live to watch  
India wins the football world cup*

*Indian football fans yet to born  
to win the football world cup for India*



# INTRODUCTION

One question lay at the very heart of the **Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI)**:

**“Why can’t India win the Football World Cup?”**

That question began to haunt me when I chose sports not merely as entertainment, but as a serious pursuit of research, career, and life, long after the immature years of cheering for France and Germany during World Cups. As my understanding of the game deepened, so did my conviction: supporting others was easy; building India’s path to victory was the real challenge.

Watching India lift the Football World Cup slowly transformed from a distant fantasy into a personal dream.

**“Game Plan to Win Football World Cup”** was born from that dream. It is a compilation of rigorous studies, debates, field research, and ideas developed by me, my dear **Indulekha**, and my colleagues and students at the Sports & Management Research Institute. Together, we attempt not to predict miracles, but to design systems—to understand what it truly takes for a footballing nation to be built from the ground up.

This book is not about hope alone. It is about preparation, structure, and belief backed by research.

Sincerely in Sports,

**Sijin B T,**

An Indian Football Fan



# **WE HAVE BEAUTIFUL DREAMS**

**“All our dreams can come true,  
if we have the courage  
to pursue them.”**

**Walt Disney**

# THE DREAM & THE PLEDGE

*We dream of the day thousands of Indians invade the lush green football ground by waving the 'Made in India' tricolour flag; Indian players toss their sweat-wet blue jerseys in the beautiful blue sky; an Indian player kicks the 'Made in India' world cup ball to the gallery where thousands of Indians stand by raising their fists and billions of Indians dance in front of the different 'Make in India' live streaming screens, while the final whistle of the finals of a world cup blows and all roars together "we won the world cup."*

*We know that we must wake up from our sleep; we must share our dream with fellow Indians; we must make them believe in our dream, and we must work together to realise our dream.*

*We have the courage, conviction and commitment to chase our dream.*

**I CAN. INDIA CAN.**



## **SINCERE GRATITUDE TO**

**Our Parents ...** B Thankappan Nadar, Baby J,  
Vijayappa kurup, Rajalekshmi Amma

**Our siblings ...** Nijil, Aswathi, Chithralekha, Ajith

**Our next generation ...** Nivedita, Nirjana, Nirupama,  
Navaneet, Navadhwani

### **Our teachers**

**Our Classmates ...** Vinod, Binulal, Vinosh,  
Mohammad Shafi, Deepesh, Pradeep P Madhu,  
Najeeb, Sajith Chandran, Pramod Prothasis

**SMRI family members ...** Jibu Gibson, Raju Joy,  
Rakesh Raku, Shibin Shekhar, Bhavana Srinath, Rahana  
P Nair, Sheetal, Amalnath, Sreekanth, Preethy, Saira  
Banu, Aravind Shankar, Arvind Raj, Alan Jose, Arun  
Mulloth, Rashid, Raseeque, Vinaya Surendran, Labeeb,  
Mridhula B Pai, Nimra Zakir Hussain, Devi, Dhanesh,  
Tharun Rajasekhar, Vishnupriya ....

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IF WE CAN **DREAM** IT, WE CAN **DO** IT.



WE EMPOWER INDIA TO **DREAM** AND **DO**

**11** SPORTY YEARS OF  
TRANSFORMING  
INDIAN SPORTS



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# 1

## LET'S DREAM WINNING FOOTBALL WORLD CUP

### **WHEN WILL INDIA WIN FOOTBALL WORLD CUP?**

When we asked this question to hundreds of footballers and football experts, the majority were not even ready to bluff a year. Some were so 'cruel' to say, "not in our lifetime". Why do we not believe that India can win the football World Cup?

**A champion mindset is a must for those who want to be a champion. They must believe that they can win anyone.** They will not be content with their mediocre achievements. Being number two or runner-up is not the winner for them. If you think reaching the semi-finals or finals itself is like being a champion, then you are not destined to be the champion. The champion is the champion; the runner-up is just the runner-up. Runner-ups can't claim the glory of the champion with any kind of justification.

**India lacks the champion mindset.** We, players, coaches, administrators, press, politicians and even the fans have many reasons to justify our mediocre performance. We are satisfied with it. Being 98 in the world football ranking from 99 itself is a big reason for us to celebrate. But when we fell to 142 from 98, we kept silent. Such an approach will not make real champions.

The main reason for such a mindset is a lack of confidence or belief in our ability. We don't believe in ourselves, our people and our resources. We don't believe in our achievements in other sports and other domains. Let's start by discussing the significance of mindset change, which is required for India to win the football World Cup.

**Let's get ready to change our mindset.**

## 2

# LET'S BELIEVE IN OUR DREAM

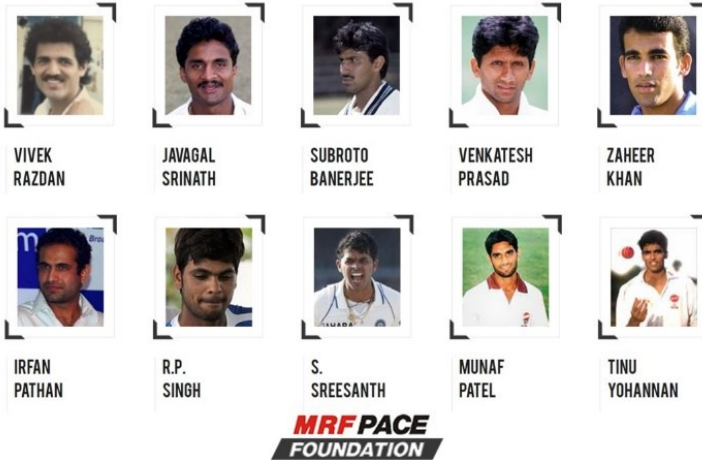
**“Why India can’t win the football World Cup?”** We asked this question to a famous footballer, and he said, *“You please talk about something which will happen.”* Why will it not happen? Why can’t India win the football World Cup? The Indian cricket team defeated the cricketing giants Australia, South Africa, England, West Indies and New Zealand so many times. In 1983, the Indian cricket team won the ODI World Cup by defeating the invincible West Indies. Sportspersons like **Prakash Padukone, Viswanathan Anand, Geeth Sethi, Pankaj Advani, Leander Paes, Abhinav Bindra, Saina Nehwal, Sania Mirza and P.V Sindhu** defeated many top foreign players. Then what’s the problem with football?

When India won the cricket World Cup for the first time in 1983 under the legendary captaincy of **Kapil Dev**, India was nothing in cricket. Kapil and his devils defeated the cricket goliaths of that time West Indies, to win the World Cup for India. At that time, no one, not even the hardcore Indian cricket fans, expected

India to be victorious. It was not a miracle. Kapil Dev and his team members were determined to win the World Cup.



Now, India has a great cricketing culture, system and facilities developed by the **BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India)**. They marketed cricket well with business acumen. They built playgrounds, practice nets and stadiums. They conducted regular tournaments. Moreover, private academies like **MRF Pace Foundation** created world-class pace bowlers not only for India but also for the world. The lack of quality pace bowlers was once considered the main weakness. **Every child born in India now is born into a great culture of cricket.**



Similarly, we need a strong football culture. **Like in Europe and Latin America, we need exclusive football stadiums to give maximum football experience to the players and football fans. We need regular tournaments of small, medium and large sizes. Mere coaching will not bring competency. Only regular competitions will make them win and guide them to learn from their failures. Indian footballers must develop a style that suits our physical features, capabilities and limitations if they are to win the Football World Cup.**

Today, the only consoling information is that India is ranked 141 and Pakistan 199 in the FIFA world rankings. But our neighbour, China, in the 93rd position, is holding a better position in world football when compared to us. We can change this situation.

**How many of us know that the Indian football team was ranked among the top 20 teams in the world in the 1950s and 1960s?** India won the 1951 and 1962 Asian Games and



finished fourth in the 1956 Olympics. India was qualified to play in the 1950 FIFA World Cup. But we could not participate due to a lack of resources, financial constraints and some other internal issues.



In August 2008, the greatest leg spinner India has produced and the then Indian cricket team captain **Anil Kumble** shared with his teammates his roadmap to be the number one cricket team. He planned to make India the number-one team in the next two

years. In December 2009, India became the number one test team. Anil Kumble retired in November 2008. But his dream and the roadmap inspired the Indian cricket team to become number one. **Why can't we inspire the Indian football team to qualify for the Football World Cup and to win the Football World Cup?**

Often, people argue that it is the Indian players' physical inability when compared to European, Latin American and African players that makes them underperform in the matches. But we are not ready to believe in it.

It is often considered that basketball is for tall people. The height of the players during the 1985-2006 period had an average of 6.7 feet, according to the National Basketball Association. As per the NBA's records, both Gheorghe Muresan from Romania and Manute Bol from Sudan had the highest recorded heights of 7.7 feet.

The shortest players, as the NBA mandates, include players like Tyrone Muggsy Bogues (5.3 feet), Earl Boykins (5.5 feet),



Anthony Spud Webb (5.7 feet) and Greg Grant (5.7 feet). But they never let their lack of height stand in the way of their dreams; instead, they continued to play and overcame their shortness with excellent performance in professional basketball. So, it is important to let go of physical inabilities and not cite them as reasons for non-performance. These reasons and excuses will not work in the long run. Moreover, **history always remembers heroes who were brave and successful.**

We always blame our players for not having the physical fitness to play for 90 minutes. And this is true to a certain extent. Because most of our players come from poor families that do not have enough financial resources. Inadequate nutrition during pregnancy and a lack of balanced and healthy foods during childhood are common occurrences. Combine all this with unscientific training, making it impossible for the players to perform to their fullest capacity. Most of the players get introduced to sports nutrition only when they get into professional football clubs. Even so, most of the professional clubs in India do not have a sports nutritionist at all.

Once, **Dan Gable**, a famous American wrestler, said, **“Gold medals aren’t really made of gold. They’re made of sweat, determination, and a hard-to-find alloy called guts.”** It is true. Mental toughness and the psychological preparedness to sweat, face defeats and manage roaring fans supporting you or your opponents are important today. But most of our football clubs do not have sports psychologists to give them that ‘guts’.

We need to find solutions for such problems to realise our dream of winning the football World Cup.



WE EMPOWER INDIA TO **DREAM** AND **DO**



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**KNOW  
YOUR  
LIMITS  
BUT  
NEVER  
STOP  
TRYING  
TO EXCEED  
THEM**

# 3

## LET'S PLAY 90 MINUTES

### WHY DO INDIAN FOOTBALLERS FAIL TO PLAY 90 MINUTES?

When the Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI) was searching for answers to some of the questions caused their origin, like **“Why India can't win the FIFA World Cup?”**, **“Why an Indian football club can't defeat Manchester United in game and fame?”** and **“Why India can't create Messi?”**, many commented that the Indian players don't have the stamina to play 90 minutes.

Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI) has conducted a series of studies to find out “Why Indian footballers can't play 90 minutes?”, the common reason our sports experts cite to explain the failure of Indian footballers to get recruited to top football leagues of the world. The primary studies our team has conducted reveal the root causes behind the failure of Indian footballers to play 90 minutes. Among them, the most important causes are as follows:

## PROBLEM 1

The majority of Indian footballers play football in dusty, bare land during their formative years. The dust particles which rise in the air reach the lungs of players and lead to the following health issues:

Reduced lung functioning, which in turn limits their capacity for oxygen intake. Oxygen is indispensable to processing the sugars and fatty acids in our cells to produce energy. This situation limits the capacity of a footballer to take in adequate oxygen to play for 90 minutes.



This leads to chronic lung disorders like Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and aggravate asthma.

(Data collected from 43 former football players and 9 doctors. No medical test is executed. Exclusive medical research is required to substantiate the finding.)

## PROBLEM 2

The majority of Indian footballers play football on the hard ground during their formative years. While they play on grass turf for the first time, they experience the difference in ball movement and player movement. The footballer who learned football on hard ground will face difficulty in judging the ball movement and self-movement on grass turf, and it will badly affect their performance. Balls travel and bounce differently on different surfaces.

					
Asphalt	60.1 cm	Synthetic grass	54.2 cm	Soil	51.5 cm
					
EPDM	50.6 cm	Parquet	49.1 cm	Natural grass	44.9 cm

Bouncing of Football ball in different surfaces

## PROBLEM 3

The knees, Achilles tendons, shins, and arch of the foot are at risk if a footballer regularly plays on hard surfaces. Ligament injuries in the knee, such as the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL),



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are high among our footballers. Even the early symptoms of these injuries affect their performance badly. Moreover, these types of injuries blow the final whistle on their football career. It is very common in our country that even professional footballers are playing on non-FIFA standard artificial football turfs and paddy fields (wet or dry) without taking care of their future. Many promising future football stars already left football forever due to ligament injuries.

## PROBLEM 4

During the formative years, the majority of Indian footballers played football on grounds that were smaller in size compared to FIFA specifications. When they play football on FIFA-standard football pitches, it badly affects their game in many ways. For instance, a footballer who plays on FIFA-specified pitches runs more distance compared to one who plays on smaller pitches. A



typical footballer will run anywhere between 9.8–11.8 km in a game under standard FIFA-specified game conditions (Ground size and time frame). But our players run fewer kilometres on small grounds. As per the study conducted by the students of the Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI), our players run anywhere between 5.5 and 7 km. So, when they play in FIFA, with specified ground conditions, they face difficulty running 9.8 – 11.8 km. Their body is tuned to run only 5.5 to 7 km. After that, they face difficulty finishing the match.

## **PROBLEM 5**

When players, who regularly played or practised on non-FIFA standard football fields, play in FIFA standard fields, their misjudgements regarding positions and distance will lead to more missed passes during the game. For example, a cricketer who delivers beautiful yorkers on a less than 22-yard pitch (below the ICC specified pitch standard) fails to deliver the same in ICC specified 22-yard pitch. Sometimes, his Yorker balls will become full-length balls in standard conditions. Like this, a goal kick that aims to cross the centreline will fall somewhere on his own team's side if the goalkeeper regularly practises on small football fields.

Moreover, the players who practice on small football fields will have difficulty playing in the wings and playing long passes.



## **PROBLEM 6**

The majority of our players are playing or practising football without taking adequate water and food. Water regulates body temperature and lubricates the joints. It helps transport nutrients to give energy and keep the athlete healthy. If the athlete is not hydrated adequately, it will lead to dehydration and will decrease physical activity performance and may adversely affect health. Dehydration can also lead to heat exhaustion, heatstroke, muscle cramping/fatigue and breakdown of skeletal muscle. These are very common in our playgrounds/practice grounds.

## PROBLEM 7

In Football, there are different positions (roles) like striker, midfielder, goalkeeper, and defender. Each position and player need customized exercise and nutrition for their performance based on their role and body composition. For example, in Athletics, the body structure of Sprinters and marathon runners is different and also their performance is different. A Sprinter requires strong and bulky muscles to improve their performance, and the muscles in their body have to release energy faster. But in the case of Marathon runners, they don't require bulky muscles. Their muscles have to store more energy that has to be used while running. So, both players have to undergo different training and different nutrient foods as per their requirements.



This tactic is a classic 4-4-2 tactic. The positions may be different in other tactics though the names remain the same.

### Forwards

Their main role is to score goals. Sometimes they are called **strikers**.

### Midfielders

Players in the middle that help defend and also try to get the ball to the forwards.

### Defenders

Their main role is to stop the other team from scoring goals.

### Goalkeeper

The only player that can use his/her hands in the penalty area. They try to stop goals.

Similarly, in football, players in different positions have to play differently. The striker has to run faster than the others. The midfielders have to run long distances, and defenders should be strong. Hence, different types of high-performance training (strength and conditioning) have to be given to different positions. Even the nutritional level in the body is different for different players. So, each player needs a different nutrition menu for their performance.

Unfortunately, most of our football academies don't have a player-specific fitness training plan or nutrition menu. These factors limit the future career prospects of our skilful footballers. Their careers are being ruined by traditional glucose water and general gym training.

## **PROBLEM 8**

Our football clubs, academies and associations generally follow 'one-day' selection trials with hundreds of footballers. Many highly talented players fail to perform in a one-day selection trial due to many reasons, such as anxiety, stage fright and poor coordination with the unknown co-players.

A highly talented striker will not get sufficient passes to make a scoring move if his team members are not very talented and if the mutually known players pass the ball among themselves. When a hundred or two hundred footballers are participating in the selection trial, each one gets very little time to exhibit their talent in front of the selectors. The 'lucky best performers of the day' get selection. The rejected talents miss the chance of playing for better clubs, and that leads them to psychological

problems. Surely by this one-day selection, we have missed many Messi and Ronaldo.



## **PROBLEM 9**

Compared to international footballers, during the formative years, Indian footballers are involved in much fewer hours of football-related activities such as practice, casual play and formal matches. Indian footballers get very little formal match experience during their formative years and even during their professional careers due to the limited number of football tournaments and matches in India. Moreover, most of the district-level football league matches in India finish within 60 minutes.

Football players should play as many matches as possible to enhance their competitive skills. Playing a lot of matches with different teams will help the players to improve their athleticism and competitiveness.



## PROBLEM 10

Psychological and nutritional support from family, especially from mothers are important in the making of a footballer. Unfortunately, **Indian footballers get limited support and encouragement from their families during their formative years compared to international footballers.** Most footballers



play without the knowledge or permission of their parents. Parents normally think that their children spoil their lives by playing football. Due to this, our young footballers do not get the most needed psychological support, such as appreciation, pacification and motivation. **Parents are the first fans of their kids, especially mothers.** But most of our kids are alone when they win or fail.

During the formative years, footballers need nutritious food. Due to the ignorance of parents and children about the right nutrition, our kids miss the fuel and lubrication required for them to perform at their best and for long. The right nutrition is essential for injury prevention, a good immune system, a high energy level and increased focus and attention span. When they miss the right nutrition at the right time, they face difficulty playing 90 minutes with high energy and are also forced to retire early due to injury and low energy levels.

Moreover, Indian footballers who play even in football clubs get very limited psychological training and support from sports psychologists compared to footballers from developed countries.

## **PROBLEM 11**

In India, the majority of footballers who play at the top level are coming from middle-class or lower-class families. The general carelessness of Indians regarding 'reproduction' is too high among couples of middle-class and lower-class families (even upper-class couples). They approach reproduction casually and without any preparation. The risk of many inborn health issues is too high among the children of couples who did not prepare physically and mentally for reproduction. Even though these kids acquire elite football skills in future due to the maximum

footballing opportunities they get due to their family and social backgrounds. But the inborn defects adversely affect them in many ways, such as poor stamina, high injury levels and early burnout.



## **SOLUTIONS**

Our present football environment has already destroyed many Messi and Ronaldo. The number of youths who take medication for football-related ligament injuries and other football-related injuries raise day by day. To prevent this situation from becoming a crisis, we need effective actions.

Our study group recommends the following actions to control this issue and to make India's journey to be a football superpower easy.

## **1. MAXIMUM FIFA STANDARD FOOTBALL FIELDS**

FIFA regulations stipulate that teams must play and train on a consistent surface. We need the maximum number of football fields with the FIFA-specified size and surface specifications. If possible, the present fields which fall below FIFA standards have to be upgraded to FIFA standard fields.

## **2. GRADING OF PLAYGROUNDS AND STADIUMS**

All the playgrounds and stadiums must be graded based on the specified standards by certified sports engineers. The details of the ground and the grade must be displayed in the playground to help the players to understand the nature of the pitch they play on. Safety precautions, which are to be taken on that particular surface, must be displayed to reduce the incidence of sports injuries.

## **3. USE SPORTS & EXERCISE SCIENTISTS, SPORTS NUTRITIONISTS AND SPORTS PSYCHOLOGISTS**

Even most of our coaches are not aware of the roles of Sports & Exercise Scientists (High-Performance Coaches or Strength & Conditioning coaches), Sports Nutritionists and Sports Psychologists in enhancing human performance. Sports Associations and other sports agencies must raise awareness to coaches, players and parents about the roles of high-performance coaches and sports nutritionists in the making of elite athletes. The government also set up institutes to produce enough world-class high-performance coaches, sports nutritionists and sports psychologists in India.

#### **4. DEVELOPING HYBRID TURF GRASS VARIETY**

We need football surfaces with grass. But the cost of managing grass turf is a major constraint for many to go for natural grass. A FIFA standard natural grass turf needs 26,417 US gallons (100,000 litres) of potable water daily. Apart from this, regular mowing is required to maintain the grass's height. It increases the cost of maintenance. But for winning football, we need grass turf. One of the best ways to solve this issue is to develop a hybrid sporting grass variety.

#### **5. STRONG TALENT IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM**

European football clubs employ professional scouts and are connected with local clubs to identify the right talent for their clubs and academies from their neighbourhood and even from abroad. They frequently visit the playgrounds in their catchment area to watch the matches and collect performance data.

When clubs conduct selection camps for their academies, the young footballers recommended by their partner clubs and scouts are invited to those selection camps and find out the best talents by giving them maximum opportunities to show their talents. Some clubs train the applicants for a couple of weeks with a team suitable for their age group before finalising the selection.

During the selection camps, clubs are testing many skills, such as mental skills and fitness, apart from footballing skills. Indian clubs and academies should follow this kind of talent identification system to ensure that the best talent is never missed by chance.

## **6. SPECIAL CURRICULUM FOR FOOTBALL KIDS**

A strong talent identification system will help to identify the best talent for Indian football. But to transform these best talents into elite footballers, they must get maximum football hours. It must include practice, casual play, formal play and playing other games. A special curriculum for the footballers, which provides maximum footballing hours and all essential football-related knowledge, skills, ability, aptitude & attitude will be suitable for it. We hope the National Sports Education Board (NSEB), the new initiative of the Government of India, will serve the purpose.

The football governing bodies at various levels must ensure that all formal football matches are played for 90 minutes and that the players also get adequate time for recovery and rest in between the matches.

## **7. RESPONSIBLE CONCEPTION, RESPONSIBLE PREGNANCY AND RESPONSIBLE PARENTING**

Our youth must be educated on the importance of preparing mentally and physically for conception and the importance of a safe and smart pregnancy. It will ensure a smart next generation which is fit to play elite football for India.

Parents must get psychological training to appreciate, pacify and motivate their kids. They must also get guidance on the proper food their kids need to be the next Messi or Ronaldo. We should also ensure the support of professional sports psychologists for footballers during their formative years and throughout their careers.

“Nothing in the  
world is more  
**dangerous**  
than **sincere**  
ignorance and  
conscientious  
**stupidity.**”

# 4

## LET'S KNOW OUR GAME FOOTBALL

**Indian football is like a footballer with the ball, who does not know what to do next.**

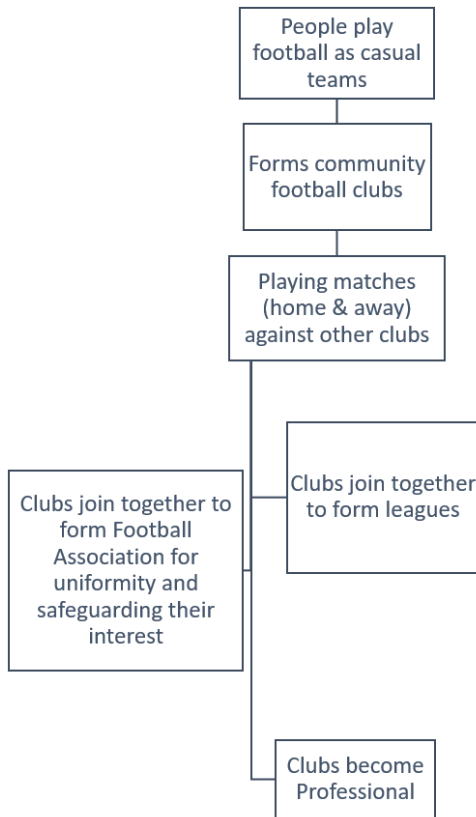
India is rich with great resources like wonderful football fans, infrastructure and knowledge. But Indian football does not have a common goal. The Indian football fraternity plays football without goalposts and not as a team. Football is not cricket. In cricket, one batter or bowler can change the game. But football is teamwork, and teamwork only wins the game. Indian football fraternity must define their goals, must prepare the gameplan and must execute it as a team to win the football World Cup.

This session is analysing the defects of the Indian sports ecosystem which prevent the natural growth of football in India.

# FOOTBALL ECOSYSTEM

## Natural Evolution of the Football Ecosystem

**Football is a people's subject. It is driven by people, passion, professionalism and profit.** In the majority of the top footballing nations, football has grown naturally without any government intervention. The following chart shows the natural evolution of the football ecosystem.



In the initial years, the development of football was driven by people and passion. Gradually, professionalism and profit took football to higher levels. **Fans, players and clubs, the 3 masters of football, are the real forces behind the development of football in the world's top footballing nations.** In contrast to this, in India, football is driven by football governing bodies and governments (Sometimes even courts). **The 3 masters of football are just spectators in the Indian football ecosystem.**

## INDIAN FOOTBALL ECOSYSTEM

### FANS

Globally, football fans want great matches to watch, great players to love, and great clubs/teams to belong to. Indian fans are also not exceptional in it. The majority of the world's top clubs were started by football fans, and still today, many of them are owned by the fans. But Indian football does not have such big stories to highlight.

A large number of Indians are fans of European clubs, European and Latin American national teams and star footballers like Messi and Ronaldo. Although there are not enough football clubs in India, many European clubs have fan clubs in India with tens of thousands of football enthusiasts as members.

**Malappuram** district of Kerala is known as the 'Mecca of Football' and is famous for the football-loving people and widespread sevens (7-a-side) football tournaments. During the last football World Cup, football fans of Malappuram spent more than 3 crore rupees to print flex for erecting banners and hoardings for their favourite football teams such as Argentina,

Brazil, Germany, France and Italy. Even with all these tributes, Malappuram does not have a professional football club. This is the biggest irony of Indian football.

Most Indian football fans know everything regarding the 90 minutes of the football game, but most are ignorant about what is happening beyond those 90 minutes in football.

### **Development of the European Football Ecosystem**

In the initial years of the Industrial Revolution, workers were forced to work more than 12 hours. During that time, **Robert Owen**, the founder of Utopian Socialism and Cooperative Movement, raised the demand for an '**eight-hour working day**' with the slogan "**eight hours labour, eight hours recreation, eight hours rest**". Initially, industrialists adopted a '10-hour working day' and gradually an 'eight-hour working day'. This gave the workers more time for recreation. During the recreation time, they started playing football and started football clubs. (**Manchester United- Railway workers, Arsenal- munitions workers**)

Till the working-class teams started dominating English football, amateurism was the norm. **In 1885, professionalism was formally legalised in England.** In 1888, 12 English football clubs under the leadership of **William McGregor**, director of Aston Villa F C, came together to form the **English Football League**, the world's first football league.

In Europe, the majority of football clubs are started by commoners such as workers and students. Later, many of these football clubs faced financial troubles and some of these clubs survived and excelled with the support of their fans (FC Barcelona) and some with private investment (Manchester United FC).

## PLAYERS

Footballers need great opportunities, great support and great fame and fortune. They are getting it from their clubs. The world's top professional clubs make local football talents, global football superstars. In the world's top footballing nations, football academies owned or managed by the local football clubs and professional football clubs identify young talents and nurture them as top-class footballers.

But in India, we don't have a good system for talent identification and talent development. **'Football Academy boom'** started in India after the inception of the Indian Super League (ISL) in 2015. Like a mushroom, thousands of academies sprouted in India. Affluent parents taking their kids to academies in posh cars is a common scene in our major cities and towns.

**Even though thousands of kids join every year in our academies, we don't have enough clubs and leagues to offer these kids decent opportunities to show their talents and give them a decent livelihood from football.** Just a handful of footballers are living in India with income from football. Others are playing for nothing or giving money to clubs for playing.

## CLUBS

**"Football is nothing without fans"** is an amazing quote which highlights the power of fans in the existence of football. But the reality is that **"Football is nothing without clubs."** Football players get great opportunities, great support and great fame and fortune due to football clubs. Clubs offer them big salaries, the best training and other support for the best performance throughout their career. These clubs are identifying and nurturing young talents. They supply footballers for the World

Cup playing nations without getting anything from the National Federations. For example, Messi is not identified or nurtured by the Argentina Football Association, but by Barcelona FC. But for World Cup qualifiers, Copa America and the World Cup, Barcelona loaned Messi to Argentina.

**Football fans get great matches to watch and great players to love because of these clubs.**

In India, we have very limited football clubs which satisfy the hunger of the fans and the needs of the players. **If our clubs cannot identify and nurture young talents, and if our clubs cannot develop world-class players, India will not win the football World Cup.**

**Why Don't Even the Grand Old Indian Clubs Grow Like Foreign Clubs?** The reason is very simple: **they don't want to grow.**

Many Indian football club owners are not afraid of failure; they are afraid of growth itself—because growth threatens their control and power. Remaining small allows them to stay unquestioned and unaccountable. They are comfortable with the status quo. If financial support comes without scrutiny, performance metrics, or demands for results, they are more than happy to accept it. Accountability is what they fear most.

Collaboration with other club owners is seen as a risk, not an opportunity. Instead of building collective strength, they prefer isolation and dependence. For almost every decision, they wait for approval from football governing bodies, surrendering initiative and leadership. This mindset kills innovation, ambition, and long-term vision.

Until Indian clubs replace fear-driven ownership with growth-driven leadership, they will remain clubs in name, but never institutions in stature.

## **POOR LEAGUE SYSTEM**

The **pyramidal league system** (with promotion and relegation) is one of the major factors which accelerated the development and influence of football in Europe. Various leagues at various levels offer more football regularly to the clubs, players and fans. In India, no one is clear about the purpose of our leagues. The district leagues, which are at the bottom level in India, are not regular. Associations complete the leagues within a few days. Matches finish within 60 minutes. Teams play two or three matches a day. How will these kinds of leagues help grassroots football in India?

Our national top league (ISL or I-League) and most of the state-level top leagues are not represented by the winners of the bottom leagues. You can enter these leagues if you have money to waste. How will these kinds of leagues help Indian football to grow at European levels?

## **FOOTBALL GOVERNING BODIES**

In Europe, football associations are the guardians of football, and they behave like referees. But in India, football associations behave like the bosses of football. The associations are represented mainly by paper club representatives. The owners or office-bearers of the active clubs don't have a voice in the associations. Moreover, Indian clubs do not dare to challenge football associations like the European clubs did or do.

## GOVERNMENTS

Governments have played a big role in preventing the natural growth of football in India. The emergence of government-funded departmental clubs sounded the final whistle for many private-community football clubs in India. The best players of these clubs joined the departmental clubs for job security. The glory of many private-community football clubs declined when they were forced to compromise with mediocre players.

On the other hand, in many departmental clubs, players were forced to do daily office work and got less time for football. That made top talents mediocre gradually. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many departmental clubs stopped their operations, and others are just participating in departmental tournaments. Many talented footballers turn out to be mediocre when they get a government job, either due to content or due to less time to focus on football. Thus, efforts of our governments to promote football in India through promoting departmental clubs and offering government jobs ended up destroying the natural growth of Indian football.

Governments must always remember the side effects of **the ‘tampering by pampering’ policy** whenever they think about promoting sports, especially football.

## INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE AND I-LEAGUE

Indian Super League (ISL) was a real game-changer and the saviour of Indian football. Across India, people started taking football seriously due to the ISL. As mentioned earlier, thousands

of football academies mushroomed, and even affluent parents started to accompany their kids to football academies due to the ISL's impact. Indian footballers started getting huge salaries. Ultimately, Indian football was revived due to the ISL.

Even if starting a network of football academies is a major grassroots activity of an ISL franchise, their contribution alone is insufficient for the development of grassroots football in India.

Strong football grassroots is the blend of community clubs, academies and community leagues, which give maximum footballing opportunities to its community in terms of playing opportunities, training opportunities and growth prospects for commoners, coaches and budding footballers. As Kohzo Tashima, technical director of the Japan Football Association (JFA), rightly said, **“You cannot have a strong national team without grassroots.”** True. **Grassroots have the responsibility of inducting kids into football, identifying the best talents and introducing them to elite football. These kids are going to play for the nation in future.**

With the present structure of ISL and I-League, we cannot comment on the abilities of the teams/clubs that play in these leagues to transform Indian football. These teams never reflect the real strength of Indian football because if you have millions, you can play in the I-League, and if you have billions, you can play in ISL.

Let's relieve ISL from the responsibility of building a strong football ecosystem in India. ISL is a good business. Let them make money and give the best remuneration to Indian footballers. Let them allow Indian footballers to play with and against the elite international footballers of the recent past and present.

It is evident from the experience of the different world cup winning and qualified nations that strong clubs and leagues are the common factors which support their achievements. If we

don't learn from their experiences and develop a customised game plan by considering Indian realities, we will remain fans of other football giants such as Argentina, Brazil, Germany, France and Italy. Indian youth who should shout 'Jai' for India and wear the tricolour on their faces, shout 'Jai' for foreign countries by waving their national flags, because not getting a chance to do so for India is a national tragedy.

(Read the book '**GREAT INDIAN FOOTBALL COMEDY**' to know more about the present ISL & I-League crisis)

## **FOREIGN CLUBS AND LEAGUES IN INDIA**

Today, many foreign clubs and leagues are operating in India in collaboration with Indian clubs, academies and business houses for 'strengthening Indian football'. **None of the foreign clubs and leagues like to strengthen Indian football by strengthening Indian football clubs and leagues. If that happens, the European leagues and clubs will lose a good number of viewers of their matches and customers of their merchandise.** So, if we are seriously thinking about strengthening Indian football, please keep the foreign clubs away.

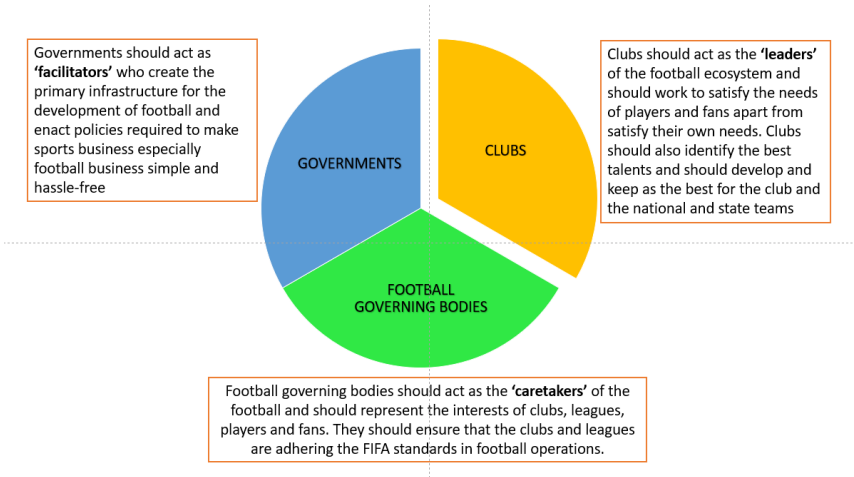
**India needs a strong pyramid league system and a top league which must represent the real Indian football talent. Then, winning the football World Cup will be easy for India.**

# 5

## LET'S CHANGE OUR GAME

If India wants to win the football World Cup, we must prepare ourselves for a drastic change. With our present game plan (playing without a game plan), we will reach nowhere in world football. The following recommendations are the outcome of extensive and intensive research by our experts.

### EXPECTED ROLES



The above picture shows the roles that the various stakeholders of the sports ecosystem have to play to make India a football superpower and enable India to win the football World Cup.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments don't have much role in football development, because **sports/football is not a union subject, state subject or concurrent subject. It is a people's subject.** Since we cannot expect organic people-driven sports development in India, governments have to play a crucial role in empowering our community to drive sports/football.

1. The government should declare **Sports as an industry** and should support its fast growth by enacting policies required for making the sports business easy, such as a single-window approach for registration, licenses and affiliation; low-interest loans; tax-free years, etc.
2. The government should promote **sports entrepreneurship (sportups)** to encourage and empower Indians to start more football clubs and to start other sports-related businesses.
3. Government should consider **sports as a priority sector** and should give **medium- and long-term low-interest sports loans** to football clubs and other sportups through banks. A minimum of one year should be given as the gestation period for loan repayments. This loan should be utilised from the amount earmarked for sports in the central government budget. The repayment should go to the government reserves, which should be used again for sports lending.

4. Sports loans to clubs should be given **without collateral security and on the surety of the office bearers and members of the club.**
5. The government should encourage **fan-owned cooperative football clubs (Sports Cooperatives).**

- World's top football clubs, such as **Real Madrid, FC Barcelona** (Spain), **Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund** (Germany), **SL Benfica** (Portugal), etc., are owned by their fans.
- In the UK, the **Supporters' Trust** is a formal, democratic and not-for-profit organisation of fans who attempt to strengthen the influence of supporters over the running of the club they support. There are over 140 supporters' trusts across England, Wales and Scotland. Supporters Trusts own more than 50 clubs in the UK.
- **Supporters Direct** is an umbrella organisation set up originally by the British government to provide support and assistance for Supporters' Trusts to secure a greater level of accountability and deliver democratic representation within football clubs and within football's governing structures. It is also funded by UEFA to work in football across Europe.
- In the **German Football League**, the **50+1 rule** states that to obtain a license to compete in the Bundesliga, a club must hold a majority of its voting rights. The rule is designed to ensure that the club's members retain overall control, by way of owning 50% of shares, +1 share, protecting clubs from the influence of external investors.

6. The government should **make the registration of sports cooperatives simple and uniform across the country** by fixing the minimum number of promoters to register the club as 10 and by ensuring the registration within 30 days of filing the application or registration by default.
7. The government should give a **5-year tax-free period** to football clubs and sportsups to ensure their smooth working.
8. The government should **promote community football clubs** registering under the Charitable Societies Act and should encourage companies to invest (not spend) their corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds in these clubs.

A **community amateur sports club (CASC)** in the United Kingdom is an amateur sports club eligible for favourable treatment for taxation purposes, with some similarities to charitable status.

The main criteria for registration are:

- The club must be open to the whole community
- The club's main purpose must be to provide facilities for sports and to encourage people to take part in them
- The club must be organised on an amateur basis.

9. Government and the CSR donors should **ensure the return on investment (ROI)** in terms of the number of sporting days created for the community, talent

identified and developed, employment created, revenue generated and infrastructure management.

10. Governments / All India Football Federation (AIFF)/ State Football Associations should ensure a **minimum of one community club from a village to ensure maximum football experience** (opportunity to play, enjoy and belong) to every one of that village.
11. If football clubs are already active in a village, their strength and nature should be assessed, and these **clubs should be encouraged and empowered to become community clubs or fan-owned cooperative clubs.**
12. Various community clubs and traditional clubs belonging to one taluk should join together to start and manage the **Taluk Football League (TFL).**
13. **The optimum number of clubs in one TFL should be 8-12 clubs.** If the number of clubs exceeds 12, then the league should be divided into two clusters and the toppers of the clusters should decide the TFL winner.
14. A minimum of **one taluk should be the area of operation of one cooperative football club.** A cooperative football club should have approximately 3 to 6 lakh people. If a taluk has more than 6 lakhs in population, another cooperative football club shall be formed. Their names should reflect the identity of the taluk.
15. Community clubs of a particular taluk should be connected with the cooperative football club of that taluk, and the **community clubs should act as feeder clubs** that provide the raw talent to the academies of cooperative football clubs.

16. Community clubs can also connect with cooperative sports clubs and can act as their feeder club.
17. In the first 10 years, the cooperative football clubs should **recruit 70 per cent of their players only from the community football clubs coming under their area of operation** to ensure maximum sporting opportunities for the local talent.
18. Cooperative Football Clubs and corporate football clubs of one district should jointly organise the **District Football League (DFL)**.
19. The toppers of the district football leagues should play in the **State Football League (SFL) jointly organised by the state football association and the SFL-qualified football clubs**.
20. The toppers of the state football leagues should play in the **National Football League (NFL) jointly organised by the AIFF, State Associations and the NFL-qualified football clubs**.
21. Direct entry to the State Football Leagues and National Football Leagues should be eliminated.
22. Governments should give the **facility management responsibility of the existing stadiums and playgrounds** owned by the government, departments, local self-governments and education institutions in good condition **to the cooperative football clubs and community football clubs under revenue-sharing conditions**.
23. In case of scarcity of adequate facilities, **one sports facility should be given to multiple clubs** by establishing a consortium to manage the facility.

24. The **clubs should act as the facility managers** of the stadium/playground and ensure the effective utilisation of the facilities.
25. Governments should also **strengthen the school-level and college-level football system by introducing the USA model school and college football leagues in India.**
26. Governments should **not pamper the natural development of the Indian football ecosystem by giving non-refundable financial aid** to associations, clubs and tournaments, etc.
27. Governments should provide only repayable grants to football governing bodies based on the **performance outcomes** mentioned in the PRIZE MODEL.



**PRIZE MODEL**  
**(SPORTS ASSOCIATION PERFORMANCE MODEL)**

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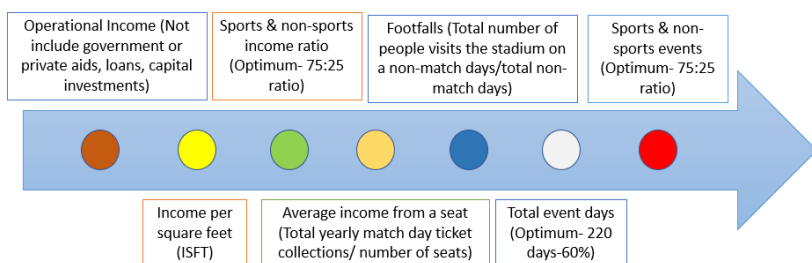
28. The government should not invest / support / interfere in any football clubs and academies.
29. **Football associations should be held accountable and responsible for raising our football ecosystem to European standards** at the state and national levels by empowering football clubs, leagues and sports facilities.
30. Clubs should be considered as **Strategic Business Units (SBU)**, and the **Performance of the clubs should be assessed** with the STRATEGIC SPORTS BUSINESS RANKING (SSBR)



## STRATEGIC SPORTS BUSINESS RANKING (SSBR)

© Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI)

31. **Stadiums should be financially viable** and should be utilized maximum for sporting activities.
32. The performance of the sports facilities should be assessed with the SPORTS FACILITY HEALTH CARD



**SPORTS FACILITY HEALTH MODEL**

© Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI)

33. Large corporate houses should form **corporate/company clubs** with workers and facilitate their development as professional clubs by following the success models of former company/workers clubs such as **Manchester United, Arsenal, West Ham United, Bayer 04 Leverkusen & PSV Eindhoven**

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MAKING INDIA SPORTS SUPERPOWER

# 6

## LET'S MAKE OUR GAME PLAN

Below is the game plan prepared by experts and students of the Sports & Management Research Institute to prepare India to win the World Cup in 2066. We would like to take your good suggestions for the final game plan.

### INDIA'S GAME PLAN TO WIN THE FOOTBALL WORLD CUP

#### 1| GOAL 2066

India will win the football World Cup in 2066. That should be our goal. Winston Churchill once said, **“He who fails to plan plans to fail”**. The same is true for us. If we fail to plan to win the World Cup, we will never win the World Cup. Some of the questions that came up during the discussions we had to come up with a game plan to win the World Cup in 2066 were interesting. *What if we don't win the World Cup in 2066? Will win it in 2070, or will win it in 2074! What if we win the World Cup in 2050?* It will be achieved in 2066 as well. That's it. In any case, the efforts we are making to win the World Cup will bring Indian football to European standards. That's for sure.



In 1983, Lord's Cricket Ground in England was invaded by thousands of Indians. **“We dream of the day thousands of Indians invade the lush green World Cup football finals ground by waving the tricolour flag.”** This should be our dream, and that dream should not allow us to sleep until that dream becomes a reality. As our beloved APJ Abdul Kalam said, **“Dream is not that which you see while sleeping, it is something that does not let your sleep.”**

## 2 | I CAN. INDIA CAN

Most of us think I can't or India can't. Indian youth queuing up in front of the embassies of many countries for visas to go abroad is a sign of this. We need to do things to help Indians believe in India's ability to win the World Cup by highlighting India's winning legacy. In 1741, Travancore, a small Indian princely state, under the leadership of **King Marthanda Varma**, defeated the major European military power, the Dutch, in the Battle of Kulachal. In 1983, under the leadership of **Kapil Dev**, India, which was nothing in cricket, won the Cricket World Cup by defeating the leading cricket power of that time, the West Indies. In 2009, India overtook the cricketing powerhouses Australia and South Africa to become the number one in Test cricket. Our ancestors have managed to make the seemingly impossible possible. So have our contemporaries. We can, and so can the next generations. We must believe and act.



The 'I CAN INDIA CAN' campaign is to remind us of our power, just as Jambavan reminded Hanuman of his forgotten power. **"I CAN, INDIA CAN"** should be our daily mantra. As American artist **David Blaine** said, **"In truth, the only restrictions on our capacity to astonish ourselves and each other are imposed by our own minds"**.

**"Sare Jahan se Achha, Hindustan Hamara"** by **Mohammed Iqbal** rightly depicts the emotions that every proud Indian should keep in their minds.

### 3| SPORTS COOPERATIVES

Fan-owned cooperative sports societies offer the most sustainable and democratic pathway to building world-class football clubs in India. Structured like cooperative societies, these clubs would be owned, governed, and managed by their members, the fans themselves.

India's greatest advantage is its population. No country in the world has a larger potential fan base. If even a fraction of this population becomes active stakeholders rather than passive spectators, India can create a football ecosystem that is financially resilient, culturally rooted, and socially inclusive.



This model is not theoretical. Some of the world's greatest football institutions, such as **Real Madrid, FC Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund, and SL Benfica**, are fan-owned clubs. Their success proves that football excellence does not require billionaire owners; it requires strong membership, democratic governance, and community loyalty.

Imagine starting one fan-owned cooperative football club in every Indian district with two or more societies in larger districts. Each club would draw its strength from local identity, local pride, and local participation. Thousands of such clubs could emerge organically across the country.

These district-level clubs could then federate to form state-level leagues, and later inter-state competitions. This bottom-up structure would dramatically increase the number of competitive matches played every year, something Indian football critically lacks.

More clubs mean:

- More matches
- More playing minutes
- More local heroes
- More talent discovery
- More football culture

Above all, this model guarantees maximum match experience for Indian footballers, which is the single most important factor in producing elite players.

Fan-owned cooperative clubs would not just build teams, they would build communities, identities, and football cities. If India truly wants to compete with the world in football, the revolution must begin not in boardrooms, but in districts owned by the people, powered by passion.

#### 4| SMART START

**We have a unique and beautiful responsibility of nurturing the next generation.** We need to take action to promote **smart conception, smart pregnancy and smart parenting** among Indians to ensure a smart next generation capable of winning the football world title for India. Thus, we can create physically, emotionally and intellectually strong future generations. "Whoever the enemy is, you have a successor," was the advertisement slogan of 'Pingami', a famous Malayalam movie. If we produce the best successors, they will make our dream of winning the football World Cup a reality.



## 5| FOOTBALL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM

**"Football is nothing without football clubs"**. We need world-class football clubs to make us fit enough to win the football World Cup. We should plan various programs to encourage the start of new football clubs and to ensure the growth of existing clubs to the next level, to ensure the availability of the maximum number of football clubs across the country, and to ensure maximum opportunity for our children to experience football. Through that, the money and time spent by our countrymen for other countries and the fan clubs of foreign clubs should be used effectively for the clubs of our country.

## 6| GO GREEN

We must act to ensure maximum FIFA standard natural grass football fields across the country to give our footballers maximum hours of football experience on FIFA Standard fields by developing a **hybrid sports grass variety**, which needs minimum watering, has controlled growth and has a high tolerance to the interventions of God and humans. Our agricultural universities can do that. Through this, we can build and maintain FIFA-standard natural grass football fields at a low cost, and our players will get maximum football experience on FIFA-standard grounds.

## 7| FOOTBALL MOTHERS

**Parents, especially mothers, are the first fans of a footballer.** Our budding footballers should get the most needed psychological support, like appreciation, consolation and

motivation from their families. We must take up the task of empowering our families, especially mothers, to support our future footballers physiologically and psychologically through proper nutrition and proper motivation during their formative years.



## **8| JUNIOR FOOTBALL SCHOOLS**

We have to create a formal sports education system, like the Junior Technical Schools, to identify and nurture the right talents during their formative years and to give them the right knowledge, skills, Attitude, aptitude and ability to be elite football players and/or competent football professionals. Football, sports management and sports science should be included in their curriculum along with essential languages, mathematics and science. A student must be fit enough to look for other football-related jobs in the future if he fails to build a player career due to injury or poor performance. Junior football schools should be linked to professional football clubs. Existing academies must be facilitated to become junior football schools.

## 9| PITCH FOR FUTURE

Currently, colleges have good playing fields in our country. But most of them are not well-maintained. We should promote the **USA model of college sports** in India to help colleges make and maintain FIFA-standard football fields to ensure the maximum number of FIFA-standard football fields. It will generate revenue for the colleges to build and maintain the grounds. These grounds should also be used by other colleges, new professional clubs, community clubs and amateur clubs.

## 10| CATCH THE FOOTBALL KID

At the lower primary school level, let the children grow up playing the games they like and the way they like. We should promote football at the Upper Primary School level to give our kids maximum formal (coaching & matches) and informal (casual games) football experience to identify the best talents and categorise them as '**elite talents**' and '**probable talents**'. Elite talent should be recruited into junior football schools and trained to play in professional clubs. Probable talent should be facilitated to pursue football in school and college settings, play in college football teams and play in club teams. Football-loving children who do not belong to these two categories should be entrusted with the management of upper primary, high school and higher secondary level school football clubs and inculcated in them the knowledge, ability, capacity and passion to start and run football clubs.

## 11| HAMARA FOOTBALL

Indian coaches should be empowered to develop a style of football that will enable Indian footballers to win the Football World Cup. The view that good coaching can be provided only by foreign coaches should be changed. India won the Cricket World Cup in 1983 under the tutelage of PR Man Singh. Surely Indians can do it. We have to convince our coaches that **“I can do it”**. **In the last century, we Indians were discussing the beauty of European football and Latin American football. Let's talk about the business of football in this century. Let the world discuss the beauty of Indian football.** We can produce world-class football managers like Alex Ferguson, Rinus Michaels, Pep Guardiola and Johan Cruyff who are capable of developing the Indian style of football. India can.

## 12 | COLLEGE SPORTS LEAGUES & SCHOOL SPORTS LEAGUES

Strong College sports leagues & School sports leagues made the USA the sports superpower of the world. India needs such college sports leagues and school sports leagues to make India a football superpower.

This system will help India to

- Identify the best talent from the vast population
- Develop the talent by giving the best coaching and maximum match experience
- Give Indian kids, teens and youth the maximum opportunities to develop and exhibit their talents

These leagues will be the right and best pathway for our talents to reach professional football.

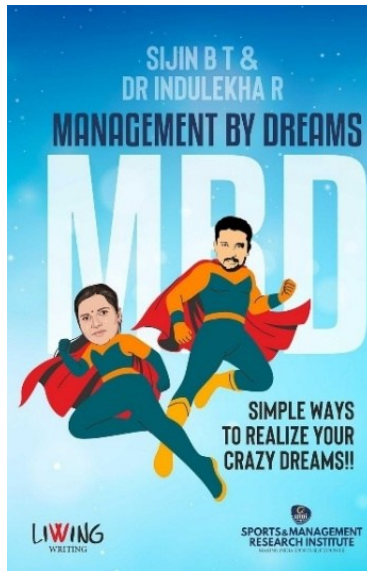
**Jeff Bezos**, the founder of Amazon, has predicted that the “**21st century is going to be the Indian century.**” Let’s work together to make **the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the century of Indian Football.**

A  
**DREAM**  
WRITTEN DOWN WITH A DATE BECOMES A  
**GOAL**  
A GOAL BROKEN DOWN INTO STEPS BECOMES A  
**PLAN**  
A PLAN BACKED BY  
**ACTION**  
MAKES YOUR DREAMS  
**REALITY**

# 6

## LET'S DECODE OUR GAME PLAN

The **Game Plan to Win the Football World Cup** is developed based on the **Management By Dreams (MBD)** framework conceptualized by **Sijin BT and Dr Indulekha R**. Management By Dreams explains five simple yet powerful stages through which any seemingly impossible dream can be transformed into reality. India winning the Football World Cup is not a fantasy; it is a **managed dream**.







## 1| SLEEPLESS STAGE – RECOGNISING THE PAIN

### **The journey begins with sleepless nights.**

We lose sleep when we see Indian football fans celebrating the Football World Cup by waving the flags of foreign countries, erecting massive cut-outs of Messi and Ronaldo, while India's FIFA ranking slips year after year and many talented Indian footballers remain unemployed or under-employed, struggling to survive despite their skills.

This discomfort is not weakness; it is the beginning of a mission.

*"If we can really understand the problem, the answer will come out of it, because the answer is not separate from the problem."*

Jiddu Krishnamurti

# The Guardian

THE POLITICAL  
ANNUAL: EMERGING RISKS  
Monday 19 July 2026

## India wins the World Cup!





## 2| DREAMING STAGE – VISUALISING VICTORY

### **From pain emerges the dream.**

We dream of the day when thousands of Indians flood lush green football grounds, waving the 'Made in India' tricolour. Indian players, drenched in sweat, throw their blue jerseys into the blue sky. An Indian footballer kicks the 'Made in India' World Cup ball into the gallery as fists rise in the air.

Across the nation and across the world, billions of Indians dance in front of 'Make in India' live-streaming screens. The final whistle blows. One roar echoes everywhere:

**“We won the World Cup.”**

*“Nothing happens unless first a dream.”*  
Carl Sandburg





### 3| BELIEVING STAGE – TRUSTING THE IMPOSSIBLE

**Dreams survive only when belief begins.**

When **India won the Cricket World Cup in 1983** under the legendary leadership of **Kapil Dev**, India was considered a nobody in world cricket. Kapil and his devils defeated the mighty West Indies not by miracle, but by unshakeable belief and determination.

Belief transforms dreams into plans.

*“To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.”*

Anatole France

SIJIN B T & DR INDULEKHA R  
**GAME PLAN**  
TO WIN  
FOOTBALL WORLD CUP



"We dream of the day thousands of Indians invade the lush green world cup football finals ground by waving the tricolour flag"



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## 4| SHARING STAGE – SPREADING THE DREAM

**Dreams grow only when they are shared.**

The Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI) published the book **“Game Plan to Win the Football World Cup”**, a compilation of research studies aimed at realising the dream of India winning the Football World Cup in 2066.

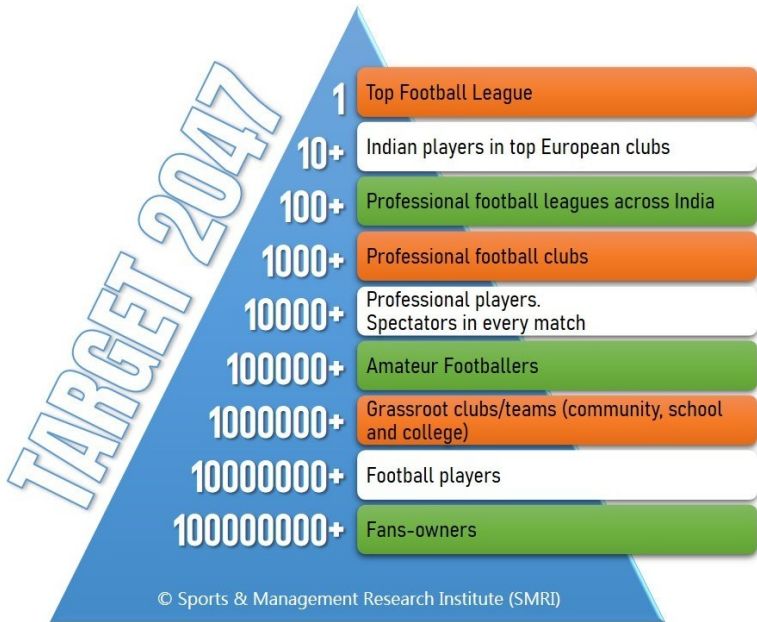
The book does not merely dream; it details what India must do to make this dream achievable, actionable, and measurable.

*“Throw your dreams into space like a kite, and you do not know what it will bring back—a new life, a new friend, a new love, a new country.”*

Anais Nin

# GOAL 2066

ONE DREAM | ONE GOAL





## 5| WORKING STAGE – BUILDING THE ECOSYSTEM

**Dreams become reality only through work.**

SMRI actively promotes:

- **Community Football Clubs**
- **Fans-Owned Cooperative Football Clubs**
- **School Football Leagues**
- **College Football Leagues**
- **Corporate Football Leagues**

This is not about creating a few star players; it is about building a **strong, inclusive football ecosystem**. When the ecosystem is strong, world champions emerge naturally.

*"If you can dream it, you can do it. Always remember that this whole thing was started with a dream and a mouse."*

Walt Disney

India winning the Football World Cup is not an accident waiting to happen. It is a **dream being managed**, a **belief being shared**, and a **system being built**.



**LET'S DREAM.**

**LET'S BELIEVE.**

**LET'S WORK.**

**LET'S MAKE THOSE DREAMS COME TRUE.**

# CONCLUSION

This book reflects the dreams of millions of Indian football fans. The central governments, state governments and football governing bodies should work together with the stakeholders of Indian football (Clubs, players and fans) to realise the dreams of millions of Indian football fans in their lifetime.

Globally, **football is a big industry**, which is driven by the extraordinary passion of ordinary people. It contributes billions of euros as revenue and creates millions of jobs and thousands of entrepreneurs in the European economy without any government intervention. In India, football is still an unexplored opportunity to create billions of rupees as revenue, to create millions of jobs and thousands of entrepreneurs. What we need to do is **just prepare the field for a fair game and enjoy the game.**



WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT  
YOUR **NEXT MOVE** IN  
**BUSINESS**  
THINK

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# BEHIND THE PROJECT

## **SPORTS & MANAGEMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SMRI)**

Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI) is a premier sports education and research organisation that offers world-class education, training, propaganda and consultancy in different domains of sports such as Sports Management, Sports Engineering, Sports Science, Sports Coaching and Sports Culture. Established with the objective of "Making India a Sports Superpower", SMRI supports people and organisations beyond Indian boundaries to excel in sports. SMRI strongly believes in the power of sports to transform lives and economies. As many of us think, sports is not just a few minutes of entertainment or winning a few medals. For us, sports is a fast-growing and sustainable industry that can create ample employment opportunities and revenue for economies. Sports gives employment, entertainment, earnings, empowerment, engagement, exercise and education. We focus on helping countries build strong and sustainable sports ecosystems through new knowledge and well-trained sports professionals.

## WHAT SMRI DO TO HELP INDIA TO WIN FOOTBALL WORLD CUP?

1. Conducting regular studies and propaganda to strengthen the Indian sports ecosystem
2. Preparing tomorrow's world-class sports professionals, who are competent to work in any sports ecosystem, especially sports ecosystems of developing and underdeveloped countries
3. Promoting **FAN-OWNED COOPERATIVE SPORTS CLUBS**
4. Promoting **COMMUNITY SPORTS CLUBS**
5. Promoting **COLLEGE SPORTS LEAGUES**
6. Promoting **SCHOOL SPORTS LEAGUES**

## LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO WIN THE FOOTBALL WORLD CUP

We invite you to join us in our efforts to lead India to win the World Cup. If you are interested in working with us, **scan the QR Code** to know how



# YOU CAN

Many people often ask us, “**What can we do for Indian football?**” They share problems, limitations, and excuses.

Our answer is simple—and actionable.

## THE SOLUTION

1. **Play** football.
2. Go and **watch** football in your locality. Choose a team. Support it.
3. Become a **member** of a local club and **volunteer** your time and skills.
4. **Help** your club grow—on and off the field.
5. If there is no club in your place, **start** one. And if you cannot start one alone, influence others to start it together.

Do these five things sincerely. Everything else will happen beyond your imagination. Indian football does not need more opinions. It needs more players, more clubs, more volunteers, and more believers.

The revolution begins where you stand.



## SIJIN BT & DR. INDULEKHA R

Authors of 'Oru Football Bhranthante Diary (Diary of a Football Freak)', winner of Kerala State Sports Council's Best Sports Book Award 2018

### >> SIJIN B T

Sports Management Guru, Business Coach, Corporate Trainer, Author, Sports Promoter & Consultant

Founder of **Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI)** and School of Seniors

### **Books in English >>**

- Business Panchtantra
- Sports Revolution
- Great Indian Football Comedy



## >> DR INDULEKHA R

Management Expert, Sports Management Researcher

Director-in-Charge, Institute of Management  
Technology, Alappuzha

### Books in English

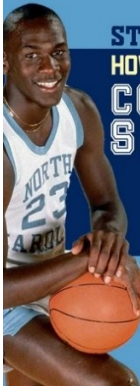
- Sports Career

### Books authored by Sijin & Dr Indulekha R in English

- Management By Dreams
- Study in India: How College Sports Can  
Change Indian Campus
- Game Plan to Win Football World Cup
- What's Sports: What Your Mom Never Told  
You About Sports



SIJIN BT  
DR INDULEKHA R



**STUDY IN INDIA  
HOW  
COLLEGE  
SPORTS  
CAN CHANGE  
INDIAN  
CAMPUS**

*The first whitepaper  
for the beginning of  
COLLEGE SPORTS INDUSTRY  
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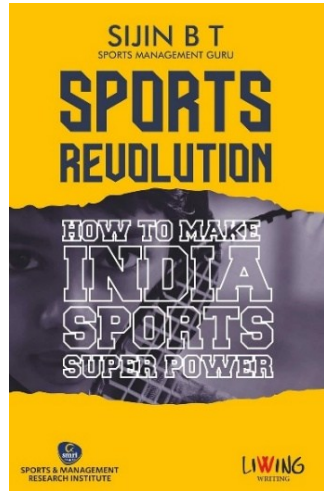
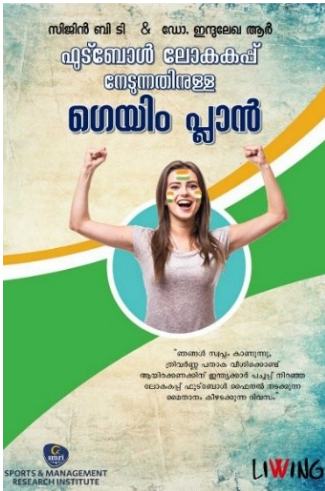
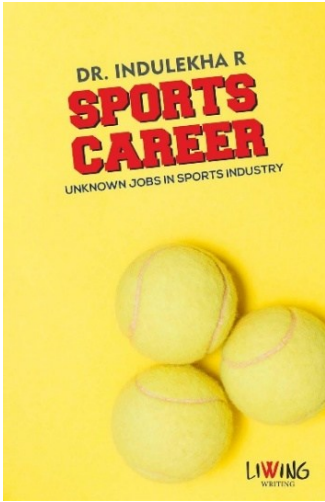


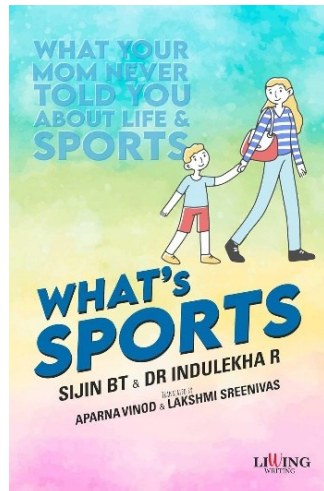
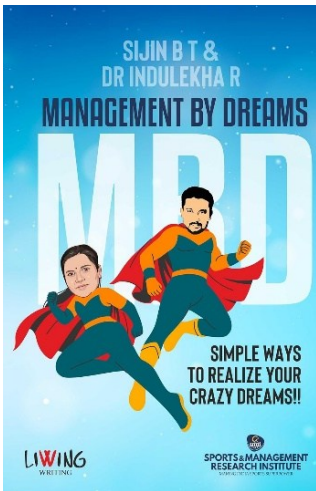
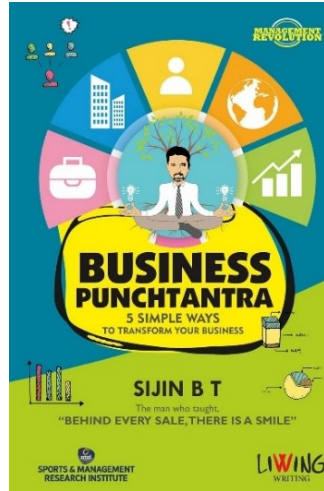
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**STAY FOCUSED, GO  
AFTER YOUR DREAMS  
AND KEEP MOVING  
TOWARD YOUR GOALS**

**DREAM IT**  
**THEN**  
**I make it**  
**HAPPEN**



**WE CREATE**  
**SPORTS MANAGERS,**  
**SPORTS ENGINEERS &**  
**SPORTS PSYCHOLOGISTS**  
**SKILLED TO WIN**  
**FOOTBALL WORLD CUP**



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DREAMS WITHOUT GOALS  
ARE JUST DREAMS



# GAME PLAN TO WIN

FOOTBALL WORLD CUP

**DR INDULEKHA R**

**SIJIN B T**

Winners of the Kerala State Sports Council's  
Best Sports Book Award

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