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## Modern warriors: The pro kabaddi

**Rohit Mamgain**

### Abstract

Pro Kabaddi, a first significant initiative of Mashal Sports, takes our truly indigenous sport of Kabaddi to levels of new professionalism, which will benefit all stakeholders involved in the ecosystem of the game, Kabaddi, most of all, the players themselves, who will become the new role models for the youth of India. This bold step will highlight the new, modern, international and competitive face of Kabaddi throughout the length and breadth of the country, and beyond. From villages, from cities, from all walks of life, these warriors have emerged and made a name for them in this brutal sport. And now they are leading entire teams in the most thrilling kabaddi format yet. Meet the warriors leading the charge- The Pro Kabaddi high-octane Kabaddi action.

**Keywords:** Modern warriors, pro kabaddi

### Introduction

From villages, from cities, from all walks of life, these warriors have emerged and made a name for them in this brutal sport. And now they are leading entire teams in the most thrilling kabaddi format yet. Meet the warriors leading the charge- The Pro Kabaddi high-octane Kabaddi action.

Pro Kabaddi, a first significant initiative of Mashal Sports, takes our truly indigenous sport of Kabaddi to levels of new professionalism, which will benefit all stakeholders involved in the ecosystem of the game, Kabaddi, most of all, the players themselves, who will become the new role models for the youth of India. This bold step will highlight the new, modern, international and competitive face of Kabaddi throughout the length and breadth of the country, and beyond, Pro Kabaddi is an eight-city league with games to be played on a caravan format with each team playing each other twice in July and August, 2014. In a significant value addition to Kabaddi, these games were carried live on prime time TV by the international broadcaster, Star Sports for millions to view across India and the world. This unique effort has the formal backing by the International Kabaddi Federation (IKF), the Asian Kabaddi Federation (AKF) & the Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India (AKFI), who will be closely associated with the organization and delivery of this event.

### Origin of the game

The origin of the game dates back to pre-historic times, played in different forms. The modern Kabaddi game was played all over India and some parts of South Asia from 1930.

The first known framework of the rules of Kabaddi, as an indigenous sport of India was prepared in Maharashtra in 1921 for Kabaddi competitions, combining the patterns of Sanjeevani and Gamini.

The All India kabaddi Federation was formed in 1950 to look after the promotion of the game and the Senior National Championship started in the year 1952. The new body, Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India (AKFI) came into existence from the year 1972 affiliated to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) with a view to popularize the game in India and neighbouring countries of Asia. After the formation of this body, Kabaddi took a new shape and National level competitions started for Junior and Sub-Junior boys and girls. A separate competition, the Federation Cup, was introduced for men and women for the elite teams (best eight) of the country.

The Asian Kabaddi Federation (AKF) was formed in 1978. The 1<sup>st</sup> Asian Kabaddi Championship was held in 1980.

Kabaddi was then included as a demonstration game at the 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Games, New Delhi in 1982. The game was included in the South Asian Federation (SAF) games from the year 1984 at Dhaka, Bangladesh. Kabaddi was included as a regular sports discipline in the 11<sup>th</sup> Beijing Asian Games 1990 where India won the lone Gold Medal for Kabaddi- Its only gold medal at Beijing. The Indian team continues to create history by winning the gold medal at each succeeding Asian Games held thereafter: Hiroshima 1994, Bangkok 1998, Busan 2002, Doha 2006 and Guangzhou 2010.

### Events of development of Kabaddi

1918: National status in India.  
 1936: Demo sport at Berlin Olympics  
 1950: All India Kabaddi Federation  
 1972: Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India  
 1978: Asian Amateur Kabaddi Federation  
 1980: First Asian Championship  
 1982: Asian Games Demo Sport  
 1985: Debuts at SAF Games, Dhaka  
 1990: Debuts at Asian Games, Beijing  
 2004: International Kabaddi Federation constituted

### International platform for Kabaddi

The International Kabaddi Federation (IKF) was formed during the 1<sup>st</sup> Kabaddi World Cup in Kabaddi 2004 at Mumbai in India. India won the World Cup by beating Iran in the finals. The 1<sup>st</sup> Asian Women's Championship was held at Hyderabad in 2005 and India won the gold medal. Women's Kabaddi was included for the first time in the South Asian Games held in Colombo, Sri Lanka 2006. Women's Kabaddi was finally introduced at the Asian Games in Guangzhou 2010, where the Indian women created history by winning the gold medal.

There has been a gradual but significant change in the trends of the game over the past fifty years. What was once considered a game of brawn in not so now? The introduction of mats, shoes, new techniques and changes in rules has made the sport infinitely more athletic and interesting. The modern, international, competitive avatar of Kabaddi has evolved into a spectacular, hugely popular sport in an ever-growing list of countries from around the globe.

Indigenous contact sport Kabaddi, received a major boost with the launch of Pro-Kabaddi League (PKL). This comes close on the launch of IPL-style hockey and football leagues. The popularity of Kabaddi can be gauged from the fact that there will be another league to complement each other.

### Pro Kabaddi League

For long Kabaddi has been dismissed as an indigenous rustic sport not strictly fit to be an Olympic discipline. India had to fight hard to keep it as an Asian Games sport and won all the seven gold medals ever since it was introduced in 1990. Dubbed to be another super-hit sports league Pro Kabaddi League has lived up to its expectations with many film stars and corporate bidding for the franchise rights.

The Pro Kabaddi league is being organised by the International Kabaddi Federation, Asian Kabaddi Federation and Amateur Federation of India. Star Sports will be the official broadcast partner for the event, where top kabaddi players from across India and the globe will participate in a show of intense competition.

The tournament will have eight teams: U Mumba, Bengaluru Bullus, Jaipur Pink Panthers, Patna Pirates, Telugu Titans,

and Puneri Paltan. The final match of Pro Kabaddi League will be played on August 31 & League winner is Jaipur Pink Panthers.

### TV rebirth

But now Kabaddi is finally getting it. Sharma has teamed up with India business tycoon Anand Mahindra to Launch India's first Pro Kabaddi League, based along the lines of Indian cricket's successful Indian Premier League (IPL). There are eight franchises owned by corporate czars and Bollywood stars, and matches are played indoors on a large mat. In another huge boost for kabaddi, major broadcaster Star Sports decided to screen these matches live every night on prime time television. "The network felt the need to foster a multi-sport culture in India," says Uday Shankar, CEO of Star India. It's a gamble. Will audiences tune in to watch a sport that India has ignored for years? It seems they're intrigued. Star Sports says the inaugural game – played in a stadium packed with celebrities, smoke machines and loud music – was watched by 66 million viewers across the country. That's 10 times higher than the Indian figures for the FIFA World Cup opening match between Brazil and Croatia. "Everybody thinks of kabaddi as a very rural, basic, aggressive sport, you play on the Grass or in the Mud, but when you see international Kabaddi today, it's exhilarating," says Bachchan.

Rakesh Kumar, One of India's most celebrated Kabaddi players says he can't believe his sport is enjoying such resurgence. "In my dreams I never thought I'd see a day like this."

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