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*Jewels  
of India's  
Sporting  
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*Jewels of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## Aditi Ashok

Young Indian golfer, Aditi Ashok had taken the golf world totally off guard. Aditi Ashok has qualified for the season-ending CME Group Tour Championship on the LPGA - becoming the first golfer from the country to play in the prestigious meet. The 19-year-old prodigy is one of the eight rookies to make it to the Tour Championships in what is one of the strongest fields in women's golf. Aditi has succeeded in keeping her LPGA card for 2018 after a sterling rookie season. With a string of creditable performances, including a Top-10 and starts at all five Majors, it has been a landmark year for the Bengaluru golfer, who won two LET events in 2016 and one in 2017. In 2017, Aditi has played 20 events on the LPGA and made the cut in 13 of them with tied 8th at the Marathon Classic as her best result. Winner of 3 Ladies European Tour titles, she also had creditable results at Cambia Portland, where she was T-15 and Walmart, Arkansas, where she tied 25th.

**JAN 2018**

MTWTFSS	MTWTFSS	MTWTFSS	MTWTFSS	MTW
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	8 9 10 11 12 13 14	15 16 17 18 19 20 21	22 23 24 25 26 27 28	29 30 31





*Jewels of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## Ajay Thakur

Ajay Thakur is a professional Indian and international kabaddi player. He was the star player of the 2016 Kabaddi World Cup final. India won the 2016 Kabaddi World Cup due to his stunning performance combined with a great team effort. He was also a key player in the Indian kabaddi team that won the Gold medal at the Incheon Asian Games in 2014. Thakur has over 14 years of professional experience in Kabaddi. Ajay Thakur has been described as one of the best Indian raiders of all time. Just like many other Kabaddi players across the cricket crazy nation, Pro Kabaddi League was a life changing experience for him as well, but few can accept it as candidly and honestly as he did – “Pro-kabaddi has changed everything for us. Earlier the situation was not that good for kabaddi players in our country but now it has change completely for us. . . . I am using an SUV (Bolero) these days. From auto-rikshaw to my own vehicle, the journey was long and tough but I am very happy about where I am right now.”

**JAN 2018**

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*Jewels of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## Anup Kumar

Anup Kumar is one of India's finest kabaddi players. He is the vice-captain of the national team and captains the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) franchisee U Mumba. He was a key member of the all-conquering, gold-winning Indian kabaddi team at the Asian Games in 2010 and 2014. His record for U Mumba has been extraordinary, which has made him one of the most successful raiders in the sport's history. But life hadn't been always so easy for this man in the formative years, as he remembers his bittersweet childhood memories – "My father and brother used to ask me to stop playing and wanted me to concentrate on studies. But, I was not interested in studies and slowly I got into kabaddi around the age of 17. . . My father is no more, but my brother is very happy that I have made them proud. Before, they used to hit me and ask me not to play, but now they are very proud and happy."

**FEB 2018**

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*Jewels of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## C S Santosh

Being the finest off-road racer in the country, he has a huge fan following and is considered to be the epitome of human endeavor. It's no easy task to achieve what he has achieved when one is from India, a country where off-road motorsports is still a niche sport. The determination that he has shown to National and Foreign Championships, not only silenced his critics but also helped him to realize his true potential. Santosh, the first and only Indian to compete and complete the world's toughest rally -- the Dakar. The sign of true greatness is consistency and that is something C S Santosh is endowed with. His success mantra has helped him establish his name as one of the sport's best ambassadors from India for many years to come -- "When I am on the stage I am just thinking of what the top guys are doing on the stage. When I am going through a tough stage I just think the top guys are just going to pin it through these stages. So, I think about that and try and go as fast as I can."

FEB 2018

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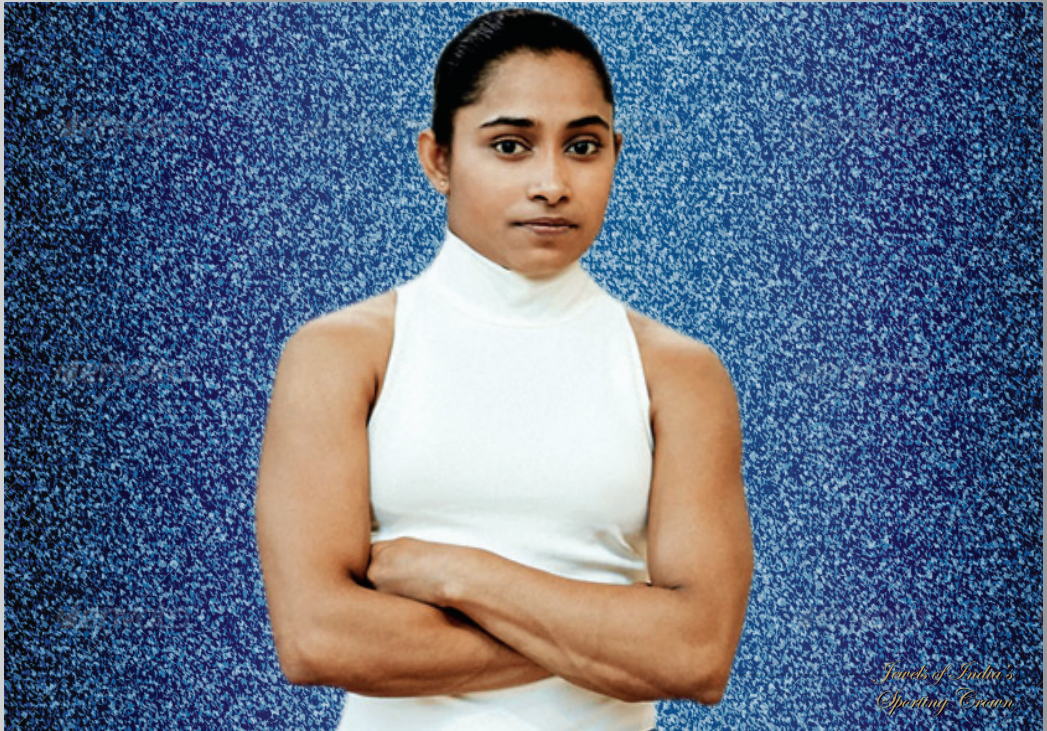
## Devendra Jhajharia

Devendra Jhajharia is one of the shining names that won Gold medal for this country in Rio Paralympics 2016. The man of steely determination, who has lost his left hand when he was only 8 years old - certainly that didn't stop him for achieving such international recognition. It was the first time in the mentioned field when an Indian won the gold medal for the country. He took the world of paralympics by storm in the year 2004, when he won first gold medal in Paralympics. He also made a world record of throwing at a distance of 62.15m. In 2013 he participated in IPC world championship in France and won another Gold medal for the country there as well. Following that in 2014 he won silver in Asian para games and again in 2015 he won another silver medal in IPC world championship in Doha. In 2016, the man again left everyone open mouthed and won another Gold medal in Paralympics in Rio. This is his third gold medal for the country and 2nd for the Paralympics. In 2016 IPC world championship in Dubai, he again won a gold medal for javelin throw.

MAR 2018

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## Dipa Karmakar

When she finished 4th in the finals of the 2016 Rio Summer Olympic games – for the 1.25 billion in her homeland the joy was no less than what it would have been if she had won the Gold. While the memory of losing an Olympic medal by just 0.15 of a point in the fateful final continues to haunt her, the 23-year-old knows what she achieved in Rio could be the start of something big for Indian gymnastics. “I want to inspire the next generation so that in 10 to 15 years, India can send a full gymnastics team to an Olympics and not just one athlete.”. The BMW-lit red carpet with shower of cash awards from all corners that welcomed her after the Olympics was not there when she started her preparations for the game with her coach. When the duo embarked on their dream to make Karmakar a world-class gymnast, they had no funding, no equipment and no guidance. All they had was a determination to succeed and a brainwave to build makeshift apparatus from a pile of crash mats and discarded parts of a second-hand scooter. Such hardships will be totally alien to the three gymnasts who finished ahead of Karmakar in Rio - but it is thanks to the Indian trailblazer that future generations will have an easier start to their careers.

MAR 2018

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*Jewels of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## Harmanpreet Kaur

An all-rounder and star of the Indian Women Cricket Team Harmanpreet Kaur made her One Day International debut in 2009 at the age of 20. She was a crucial part of the Indian's Women's Cricket team in the ICC Women's World Cup 2017. The Indian team performed brilliantly throughout 2017 Women's World Cup. Harmanpreet Kaur scored an unbeatable 177 runs in 115 balls against Australia in the semifinal of 2017 Women's Cricket World Cup. She is the record holder of the highest individual score for India in the history of Women's World Cup. She is known for her hard-hitting style. As her sister reminiscence – “Harman is always positive. On field she always behaves like Virat Kohli and is aggressive like him. However, off-field, she is quite calm and composed. Right from her early days, she treated Virender Sehwag as her batting idol and even bats like him”.

APR 2018

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*Jewels of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## Kidambi Srikanth

Born in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, Kidambi Srikanth burst on to the scene when he won silver at the 2011 commonwealth youth games in Isle of Man. The 23-year-old, who is currently fourth in the world badminton rankings, has gone from strength to strength, becoming only the third Indian male player to enter the top 5 in world badminton rankings after the legendary Prakash Padukone and his guru, Pullela Gopichand. Srikanth's fortunes changed when in 2009, he joined Pullela Gopichand's badminton academy in Hyderabad. Presently the world No. 2, he has his foot grounded – "Nothing has changed, I feel. People will definitely start expecting more from me now, but that's about it. The improved recognition is not just because of me, it is because the sport is growing. At the end of the day, we all have to perform at this level for the sport to be popular and I believe that's happening now. If we consistently do well, things will only get better." – voice of a man who would definitely take Indian Badminton to new heights.

APR 2018

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## Mann Kaur

Well – life can begin at 100! If not for many, but of course for “the miracle from Chandigarh”. Whenever the 101-year-old Mann Kaur sets foot on the athletics track, the aim is to get better and better with each passing day. Let’s hear it out in her priceless words of wisdom - “There is no secret to running at 100, it’s not some magic herb that you take and you become fit overnight. The same basic aspects that work for an athlete or even a normal person at a younger age, works at my age as well... I run almost 20kms a day with my son Gurdev (who is 79!) once in the morning then evening, it’s become a lifestyle for me. Earlier I had the worst diet, but when I was 93, I was diagnosed with a heart problem. Since then, I decided I will live life on my own terms and the terms are to prove to myself that I can become an athlete.” Kaur’s energy and drive to compete have become an inspiration to participants in the unique international event for athletes over 30. Kaur has now won more than 20 medals in Masters Games across the globe.

MAY 2018

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## Mariyappan Thangavelu

Deeply rooted to his village - Periyavadamgatti - in Tamil Nadu, an accident at the age of five changed his life forever. On his way to school, his right knee got crushed by a vehicle. Initially, he used to play volleyball – but it was his Physical Education teacher who first saw his skills in high jump and motivated him forward in this sport. In 2016, he won the gold medal in the men's T42 high jump finals in Rio Paralympic and became the 1st Indian to do so in Paralympic Games. In 2017, he has been conferred with the highest Sports Award – Arjuna Award for Para-Athletics and the fourth highest civilian award Padma Sri.

MAY 2018

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*Jewels of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## Mary Kom

**T**ruely "Magnificent Mary" - Mangte Chungneijang Mary Kom is famed as a five time World Boxing Champion and the only boxer to win a medal in every one of the six world championships. M C Mary Kom is a near-perfect example of an athlete keeping one's feet firmly planted on the ground. The struggles, hardships she has endured over the years hailing from an economically-disadvantaged family in the Northeastern state of Manipur steeled her so much so that she has learnt to handle 'success' with poise and nonchalance. Proud mother of three - the 2012 London Olympics brought her more respect and honour as she became the first Indian women boxer to qualify and win a bronze medal at the Olympics and also became the third Indian woman to win an individual medal at the Olympics. In 2014 Asian Games, she won a gold medal and created history for India. Besides cornering glory for the country, the Mary Kom Regional Boxing Academy is her other biggest focus area for now. Speaking about her academy, well she has her job cut out - "I'm not able to devote much time towards training my academy wards as I'm still playing and has to be busy with training and competitions. Of course, I will eke out more time for my wards once I retire. My dream is to produce thousand Mary Kom."

**JUN 2018**

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*Land of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## Mirabai Chanu

When Mirabai Chanu lifted the country's first weightlifting World Championships gold medal since 1995 — well she made all of India proud! Mirabai's gold medal — India's first at the prestigious World Championships since Karnam Malleswari's medal in 1995 — also presented the 23-year-old lifter with redemption of sorts as she had failed to get an overall total in the women's 48kg event at 2016 Rio Olympics, which was her debut appearance at the grandest stage of all. She has been widely seen as a successor to Malleswari, who won a bronze medal for India at the Sydney Olympics in 2000. The World Championships gold is another reason to mark her as one of India's brightest prospects in the discipline. She has previously clinched a silver at the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games and a gold medal at the 12th South Asian Games in 2016.

**JUN 2018**

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## Mithali Raj

**Y**ou could call Mithali Raj unique. It is indeed very surprising to know as a child, she was trained in Bharatanatyam, and gave stage performances but nothing can be more surprising than the fact as Mithali herself confesses: "I did hate cricket initially as I was not keen to take up sports. I was already pursuing Bharatanatyam then, it was my dad's initiative to turn me into a professional cricketer." Captain of the Indian women's cricket team, she is the only female cricketer in the world so far to surpass the 6,000-run mark in ODIs, the first Indian cricket captain to lead the team to an ICC ODI World Cup final twice. The second most-capped player in ODI history behind Charlotte Edwards, Raj's consistency is second to none.

But Mithali's life is not only about the sport she plays professionally. The 35-year-old is just as comfortable as a glamour queen as she is on the cricket pitch. "I have always been fashionable, but people don't know that because I have only recently been in the public eye," she says.

**JUL 2018**

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## Neeraj Chopra

All of just 19, he is the reigning junior world champion and world record holder in the javelin throw. He is regarded as the next big hope of Indian athletics. Hailing from the hinterland, the seeds of track and field glory, so rare in this country,, were sown in Khandra, a remote village in Haryana. Neeraj blazed into national reckoning with the javelin at the junior level in the Junior Nationals in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh in 2012, where he won the gold medal at the U16 level with an effort of 68.46m, which also broke the existing national record. Talking of his journey, he describes just how he picked up the javelin. "I used to be fat kid. So my uncle kept on scolding me for my weight and asked me to do something about it. My uncle asked his friend to train me which helped me lose 15-16 kgs. In 2011, my seniors started to help me with my training and I learnt a lot from them. I used to watch them and learnt the art of throwing the javelin." At the IAAF World U20 Championships, he won the gold medal to become the nation's first world champion at any level in track & field. At the Asian Athletics Championships, he trailed throughout the event but in his final effort, he threw the javelin a whopping 85.23m to take home the gold and add to his ever-increasing tally of medals and trophies. His former coach Garry Calvert sums up the hopes of every Indian when he said "... his throw is the longest of the juniors ever... his performance is not only the best in the world at the moment, but far better than anything that I've seen in my life. He is still only 18 years old. He will mature a lot in the future. I see him as a person matching the elite of the world."

JUL 2018

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*Jewels of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## P. V. Sindhu

**P**usarla Venkata Sindhu's transformation is complete. From the time she showed glimpses of her talent by winning her first State-level under-10 title to the silver medal in the Rio Olympics recently, Sindhu has come a long way. Born to volleyball players P. V. Ramana and P. Vijaya - P V Sindhu started playing badminton from the age of eight after she drew inspiration from Pullela Gopichand's victory in All England Open Badminton Championship in 2001. The Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna awardee reached a career-high ranking of world No. 3 currently and also entered six finals, winning three of them. She became only the second Indian, after Saina Nehwal, to play in the final of the World Championships. The 22 year old Gopichand protégé has 3 super series crowns under her credit. She has played 57 matches in 2017 and winning 44 of them is really breathtaking! The secret of super success lies mainly in her approach to the game – "Nothing is impossible in sport, or for that matter in any field, if we put in the hard work. There should not be any inhibitions once you set goals for yourself. Come what may, stay focussed and one day you will be there." – any budding player following these words is sure to succeed!

**AUG 2018**

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## Pankaj Advani

At the tender age of 18, Pankaj won his first World Title in 2003. From there, Pankaj's career has seen many firsts. He is the only person in the history of the game to have won both the billiards and snooker IBSF World Titles as well as the World Professional Billiards Championship. Almost two decades, 15 world championships, and numerous accolades later, one would imagine the thrill of the game may have dimmed. But the 30-year-old is still hoping to learn more about the game and improve, he is eager for newer challenges and hopes to better his own (admittedly illustrious) record. To quote him most memorably – "After playing for so many years and establishing myself in the game, I have realised that I have so much to learn. Learning is a never ending process, and the best part is that whatever the result, I feel that as long as I am improving myself and as long as I am trying out new things, adding new shots to my repertoire, I think I am in the right direction."

AUG 2018

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*Jewels of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## Ravichandran Ashwin

With 4 hundreds, 11 fifties and 300 plus wickets in just 55 tests - Ravichandran Ashwin is quite deservedly compared with India's greatest all rounder ever - the legendary Kapil Dev! India's new spin-spearhead - who could quite easily claim his trademark for the carrom ball - is the fastest man in the history of Test cricket to have taken 300 wickets. But unbelievable as it is - Ravichandran Ashwin was many times told by his school coaches to not bowl off spin in the selection trials since it affected chances of other players. They felt Ashwin would get selected on his batting credentials alone. As he fondly recounts - "There was a time when I was studying in school when one of my coaches clearly told me I shouldn't be bowling at selection trials. We had a couple of off spinners from our own school and he said that if I bowled off spin, their chances would get affected. So, I didn't really bowl at the trials till I was in my late teens." Over the years with his experience in English County cricket, he has evolved as India's biggest wicket taking bowler, especially in the longest format of the game.

SEP 2018

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*Jewels of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## Rohit Sharma

*H*ail him with whatever names you like - Rohit Sharma is undoubtedly one of the finest batsmen in world cricket. With the record of making 3 of the 7 double centuries made so far in One Day Internationals, the intensity and ruthlessness of his approach to the game makes him what he is! Nothing can illustrate it better than his own words - "But, on the match day... , without thinking that I was injured for the last three months. The moment I played my first ball, I stopped thinking about my finger. I was focused on the bowling." – This was what he had to say on his mammoth 264 versus Sri Lanka in 2015. With his experience as captain of the Mumbai Indians, he is Virat's most trusted deputy, especially in the shorter formats of the game and can lead the Indian team really well in Virat's absence. Rohit is one such batsman, on whom 1.25 billion had pinned their hope for their 3rd World Cup in 2019!

SEP 2018

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## Rupinder Pal Singh

A long serving pillar of the Indian field hockey team, Rupinder Pal Singh, known by his teammates as 'Bob', has helped the team to many of its successes at the Hockey World League. Singh debuted for the international team at age 20, playing at that year's Sultan Azlan Shah Cup in Ipoh, Malaysia for the Indian national side. The power house of grit and will power is a vital cog in the Indian defence. The 24-year-old Faridkot lad is not only well known for his power-packed drag-flicks but also for his shrewd defending skills. A hamstring injury in his right leg just before the Hockey World League Semifinal in London early 2017 had almost jeopardized Rupinder's fledging career. But the man of steel has an indomitable will - back into the national fold after overcoming the "toughest phase of his career", he knows it very well that his comeback will be difficult as he has to stave off stiff competition from juniors to cement his place in the side.

OCT 2018

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## Saina Nehwal

It is extraordinary how Saina Nehwal brought an entire country together as she became India's first ever badminton player to win an Olympic bronze at the 2012 London Olympics. The 27-year-old shuttler has not only won many laurels for the country, but has also put badminton on the map in cricket-crazy India. Saina went out of action in August 2016. On comeback she won the Malaysia Masters, but was far from her best. The former World No 1 suffered a few early round exits, but slowly started regaining form – claiming Bronze at the World Championships – exactly a year after she went under the knife. She is currently coached by Indonesian badminton legend Atik Jauhari along with the former all England champion and national coach Pullela Gopichand as her mentor. Being a National Junior champion, she has performed well in major tournaments, both in national and international ones. She has clearly made a mark of her own. As one of the eight brand ambassadors of the 2010 Commonwealth Games, Saina won a gold medal creating an epic moment in the history of Indian badminton.

OCT 2018

MTWTFSS	MTWTFSS	MTWTFSS	MTWTFSS	MTW
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	8 9 10 11 12 13 14	15 16 17 18 19 20 21	22 23 24 25 26 27 28	29 30 31



*Jewels of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## Sakshi Malik

*H*ailing from Mokhra village of Rohtak district in Haryana - Sakshi's first and perennial source of inspiration was her grandfather, Badhlu Ram, who was also a wrestler. Her wrestling training started when she was just 12. Her coach, Ishwar Dahiya trained her at an akhara in Chhotu Ram Stadium, Rohtak. For taking up a sport that, according to conservative Indian mentality, is "not meant for girls" Malik and her coach faced many problems during the initial stages of the former's national sports career. A true successor of Geeta and Babita Phogat, Sakshi Malik not only won a bronze medal in the 58 Kg category at the 2016 Rio Summer Olympics but won the heart of every Indians, who cheered for her on that memorable day. She has become the first female Indian wrestler who has bagged a medal at the Olympics. Apart from Olympics, Malik had participated and won a silver in the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and a bronze at the 2015 Asian Wrestling Championships in Doha. She had also won a gold in 60 Kg category at the 2014 Dave Schultz International Tournament.

NOV 2018

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## Sunil Chhetri

Being Sunil Chhetri was never easy in a nation that swears by Sachin Tendulkar! Sunil is the most well known Indian professional footballer in the international football fraternity, who is currently the captain of the national team. He is the most-capped player, and all-time top goal scorer for the Indian national team, with 56 goals in 97 appearances. Chhetri began his professional career at Mohun Bagan in 2002. It was his stint with the national team that his game flourished and Chhetri gained fame and made a name for himself. His contribution to India's win in the 2007, 2009, and the 2012 Nehru Cups as well as the 2011 SAFF Championship has indeed been a great eye opener for the otherwise cricket-centric nation. He was also one of India's best players during the 2008 AFC Challenge Cup in which India won the tournament and thus qualified for their first AFC Asian Cup in 27 years. He now plays for Bengaluru FC in the Indian Premier League. Chhetri was picked up by Mumbai City during the 2015 Indian Super League season for Rs. 1.2 crores, making him the most expensive Indian player at the auctions. Players like Sunil Chhetri have been instrumental in taking Indian football to new unattained heights.

NOV 2018

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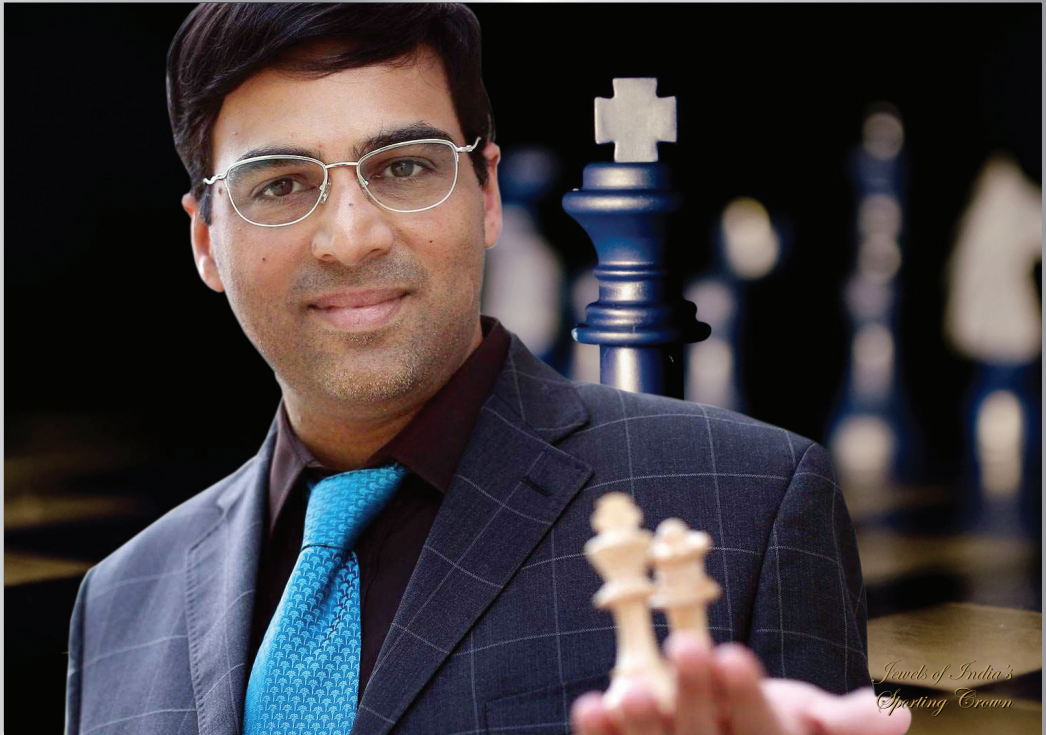


## Virat Kohli

He is just 29 and already has 52 international hundreds and 6 double hundreds in just 63 tests and 202 one day internationals – Virat Kohli has already earned his place in the pantheon of some of the greatest batsmen that ever played the game of cricket. Virat is considered to be the greatest batsman of the contemporary era and that too in all the formats of the game. Under his aggressive and attacking leadership, India has almost become an unbeatable side in all the formats – as the streak of series win in Tests as well as ODIs continues. Amidst all the glory and glam, who is the real Virat Kohli? Is he the champion batsman and tough captain set to break almost every record in the sport with a single-minded obsession, or a spoilt superstar in love with himself? Is he the gentle soul who has adopted stray dogs, is environment-conscious, and has now started his own charity foundation, or is he simply a highly marketable brand being driven by cricket's relentless commercial treadmill? "The money comes when you are successful, I don't think about it too much.... I want to be attached, yet detached from all I do, like a monk in a civil world." – He insists (only he can) with his sincere most conviction.

DEC 2018

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*Temple of India's  
Sporting Crown*

## Viswanathan Anand

Born in a family of government executives, academicians and administrators – Anand could have very well become one of them. But India is really indebted to his homemaker mother, who introduced him to the world of chess when he was just 6! Well we have heard cricket to be called the gentleman's game, but if somebody has to be called the most 'gentleman player' in any game, it would surely be this man ! The humility, the down-to-earth calmness and simplicity that exuberates from Viswanathan Anand, people often tend to miss the greatness of the legend that he is. World Chess Champion for 2000-2002 and from 2007-2013, Anand is also the reigning World Rapid Chess champion. Former no.1 in the World for 21 months at a stretch, Anand has checked and mate some of the greatest of the game with the likes of Vladimir Kramnik, Veselin Topalov, Boris Gelfand and Garry Kasparov. Being associated with the NIIT Mind Champions Academy for one and half decade, he has contributed immensely to help chess grow in this otherwise outdoor sports centric nation.

DEC 2018

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