

Rio Olympic Games Preview: “Performance Predictions”:

Background:

The Rio Olympics are just around the corner. We will see the very best of the best hockey players in action, displaying their marvelous skills. Some very fine tuned skills and some not so fine-tuned skills will also be at display. Here is a list of the major technical and tactical skills, I anticipate the Olympians to showcase.

Purpose of this article:

Develop awareness of, which technical and tactical skills, the Olympians will perform close to perfection and where they will struggle and under perform. This way the coaches and the young players, become more knowledgeable about, what to learn and imitate and what to unlearn and avoid, while observing the Olympians in action. This way we identify the strengths, weakness and the opportunities we have, to take our game to the next level, while exposing the knowledge gap.

Some Realities:

- We all see things differently. What we see depends mainly on what we look for. In a way, we also only see what we like to see
- I like to share the way I see things, when a match is in progress
- So we are aware of “What” to look AT & FOR specifically and “Why”

Life is a Continuous learning and improving process

Acknowledgement:

I acknowledge and understand that, there are more than one way of doing and seeing things. This does not mean that the way Coach John or Coach Mike coaches is wrong. My intention is not to undermine or criticize any coach or player personally, for that matter. I just like to show and share the things, without prejudice, from a different angle and perspective. A Shift in paradigm. This way

we all become more informed and educated. Ultimately, one day we may be able to call our game beautiful – honestly which is not at the moment - as soccer has these bragging rights.

Strengths:

- Out letting; Circulating the ball in the back
- Leading, Re-leading and interchanging positions, all over the field and especially in the front by the forwards. See Photo 1
- Different types of Press Tactics employed, in different zones of the field
- Scoring field goals via deflections from the Hits, Sweeps & Pushes coming, from different angles at the speed of a rocket, into the circle. Of course the Back hand hits – Tomahawks. And gutsy goals from the rebounds, near the face of the goal – 6 to 7 meters area
- Execute Pin point accurate aerial passes in the various corners of the field, to escape the Press Net, Launch an attack, Counter attack or even score field goals. EG. Mark Knowles aerial from the Right defensive quadrant to the CF, during the 2014 Hague world cup final. See photo 2
- Conversion of Offensive / Defensive Penalty corners

On top of this Work rate, Determination. Desire to excel & win, Emotional resilience will be at its best



Photo series 1



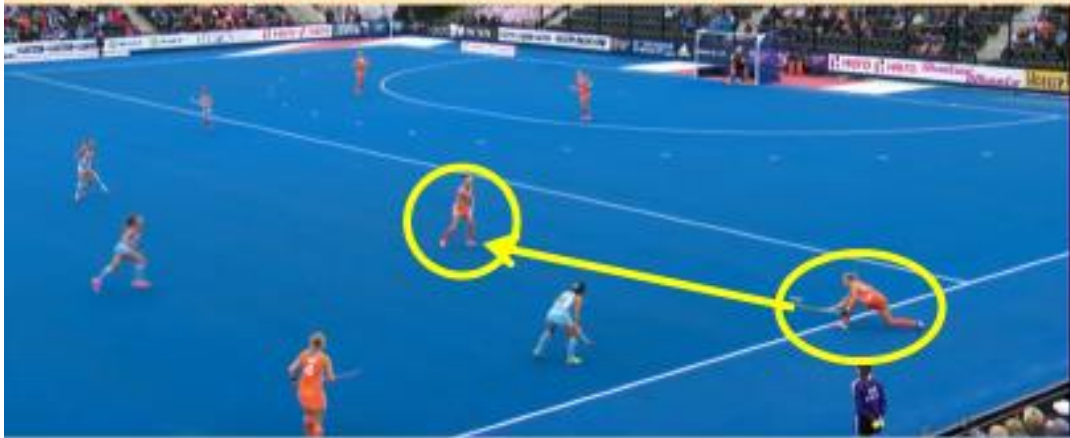
Photo series 2

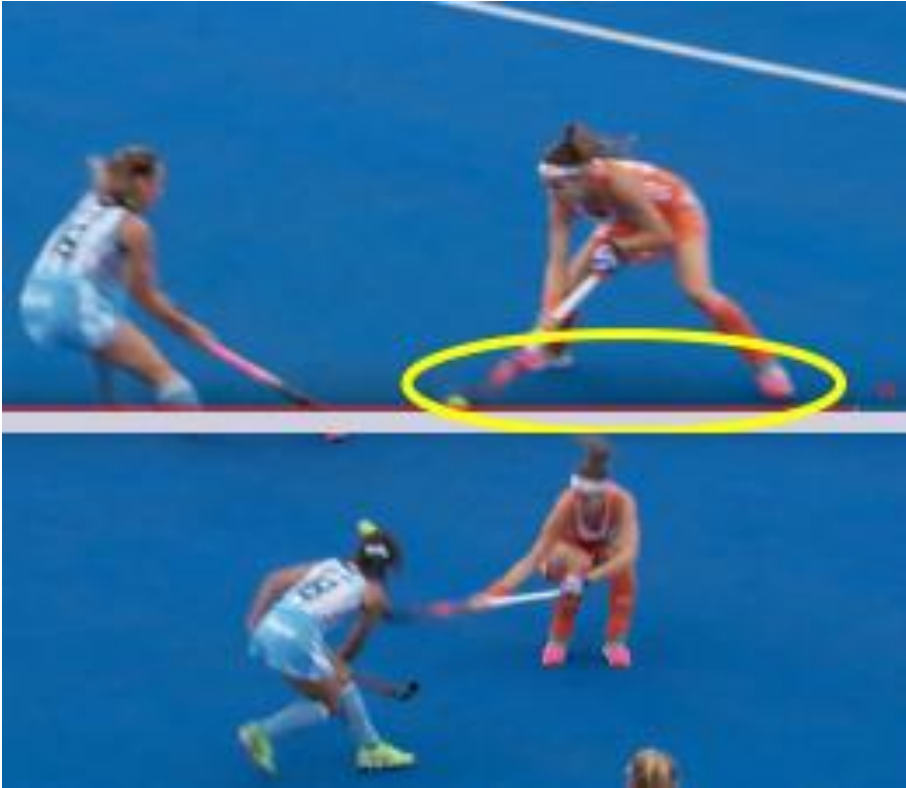
Weakness:

- Possession skills under pressure in a confined space. See photo 3
- 1 on 1 tacking in a confined or open space
- 1 on 1 elimination skills in a confined space and tight game situations
- Over protecting the ball and hurting no one other, than oneself. And in some situations spinning in circles unnecessary. It's like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire
- Game Sense and Decision Making under pressure
- Another definite area of **concern - FOOTWORK**. How playing on one's heels, with a wide stance, will hinder the Olympians to perform at the optimum level, with fluidity. Further, how it effects their performance in a negative way
- Receiving the ball – Block Receiving – with one's back towards the attacking goal, even when there is no opponent nearby

Please refer to the **“Pre Rio Olympic Games Performance Predictions” Power Point Presentation**, which depicts these game situations in a photo slides sequence.

Possession skills under pressure, during the 2016 champions trophy





The Dutch player (orange shirt) has a way **too wide a stance**, to float around quickly – with the ball - like a butterfly. When the feet are shoulder width apart and are on toes, it facilitates quick footwork. This results in little baby steps – side shuffle’s and pivoting - to control the ball and win the contest. In the bottom photo her feet are too close, while balancing on her heels, rather than on her toes.

Quote:

“People often assume that the size of a solution has to match the size of the problem. In reality, a small change can often fix what is – or feels like a big problem. But one has to know what tiny change needs to be done”. Chap Heath & Dan Heath

The law of inertia:

I have seen this – poor footwork and stick work coordination - happening for decades. Sadly it has been, being ignored, and not addressed by coaches / players from one generation to the other. The law of inertia in action. This may also be

due to pure ignorance, not knowing what to do, in these close range game situations? It is a **learning error and not an execution error**. We coaches need to address it. It is urgent and important.

Quote:

“Most ailing organizations have developed a functional blindness to their own defects. They are not suffering because they cannot resolve their problems, but because they cannot see their problems” John Gardner

Now the scary and ugly part of our game:

During the 2012 London Olympics, 5 Olympians were grievously hurt, while tackling from the left. This situation and defending Penalty corners, is one part of the game, which I hate the most. I strongly feel that FIH Rules Board Committee, must do something about **this – Penalty Corners**. It is insane. Please see the 5 incidence photographs below, from the 2012 London Olympics.





Message: We need to teach our players how to tackle from the left safety

Why do we allow the history to repeat itself? During the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, semifinal match **Stefan Blocker, from Germany sustained a head injury** while defending a PC. He missed the finals. Please copy, paste and click on this YouTube link. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vwS3TidEXo>

Views on Penalty corner by Richard Charlesworth, one of the most successful coaches, in the world “The punishment doesn’t fit the crown. You could have a power play instead of a short corner and design it in all sorts of ways to take the **danger** and make it just as interesting. **The rules should make the game safer** -- to parents watching, they should be thinking, do I really want my kids facing that? I am not sure it sells the game too well – simpler and reward skill.”

According to George Brink, who has kept us all informed via his daily hockey and coaching updates, on www.Fieldockey.com, “There has been a **steady decline in the number of spectators** at International events to the point where the last Junior World Cup was played in an almost empty Dhyan Chand stadium and even at the last World Cup (Hague 2014) in games where the Netherlands was not involved, the stadia were depressingly empty. Could this be because of the

constant changing of the Rules so spectators don't really understand the game anymore? The players I umpire certainly are confused at the beginning of each season as well as some of my colleagues”

The big question is, Are the super powers “FIH Rules Committee” going to do anything about the issues mentioned above?

On top of this our game is becoming more **power based and robotic, day by day.** There has to be grace and creativity, in the game, with a right blend of soft and hard skills.

Shining Example: Mark Knowles and Jamie Dwyer, are the two players, who come to mind, who play fluid hockey while dancing on their toes. It will be a joy seeing them in action. There is no reason, why we cannot produce more players like them.



Mark and Jamie together

Conclusion:

The intent of this article is to achieve, the following objectives, once the Rio Olympics are over;

- Realize and understand that our game has **huge strengths** with some glowing deficiencies – missing links – in our Technical and Tactical skillset
- Develop analytical awareness of the present situation. Where we are and where we want to be during the Tokyo 2020 or 2024 Olympic Games
- Design a strategic plan, with deadlines, to fill this knowledge gap
- Improve upon the **“Junior coach education programs, Player development models and the training methods”**

First let's see, How true these predictions are?

Once it becomes clear that we do have these glowing deficiencies – missing links – in our Technical and Tactical skillset. It will be wise for the newly formed **FIH Hockey Coaching Academy** and each National Hockey Federation to take action.

Quote: Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Albert Einstein.

Parting comments:

We have come a long way and have a long way to go, as a Global Hockey Family. During the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games, where only 3 teams participated; India, Japan and USA. Winning an Olympic medal was not that hard. The Indian goalkeeper Alan was signing autographs, when the opponents – USA - scored a goal against India. Final score being 24 – 1 in favor of India. Yes, India did win the Olympic gold medal.

Let's Collaborate: We all need to collaborate and work systematically, as a team to build upon our strengths and improve upon the weakness. We are living in an era of information age and knowledge worker. There is no reason why we all cannot bridge this knowledge gap.

Please also view the attached Power point presentation, “Pre Rio Olympic Games Performance Predictions”

Photos are courtesy, FIH YouTube videos

Your feedback will be most appreciated. Email:coachshiv@aol.com

