MasTTers

A Veteran Table Tennis Community Dispatch



Salt & Pepper & Spice: First Delhi State Masters Table Tennis Championship. July 12, 2026



Maiden Gold: Ashish Kapil

Kapil's Clean Cut

Kapil's Clean Cut Ashish Kapil defeated Vijay Sharma in the finals of the Men's 50+ category of the Delhi State Masters ranking tournament on Sunday, clinching his first singles gold medal in the veterans circuit. The clash between the fashion designer and orthopaedic surgeon ended in straight sets, the outcome reversed since the two seasoned players clashed against each other two years ago. Kapil won 11-7, 11-8, 15-13, the third game raising limited hopes for Vijay Sharma. Sharma who alternates between table-tennis and running marathons has once again managed to secure top slots. He got the better of Hemant Dagar in the semi-finals. This time, however, he could not overcome the spirited Kapil who uses long pips, and is known for his blocking abilities. "I switched to Yinhe Moxa this season and focused a bit more on attacks as well," Kapil said caressing his colourful bandana that keeps his mane in place while playing. The tweak helped the stylish designer overcome a stiff challenge earlier from Manav Sharma in Semi final, who has been dominating the veterans circuit along with former national champion Rahul Chopra.



Another year, another result: Sharma and Kapil

RESULTS

Results 50+ (Men)
Winner: Ashish Kapil
Runners Up: Vijay Sharma
Semi-finalists: Manav Sharma and Hemant Dagar

55+ (Men)
Winner: Ashwin Walunjkar
Runners Up: Sanjeev Chaudhary
Semi-finalists: Diwakar Joshi and Puneet Kohli

60+ (Women)
Winner: Neeru Mehta
Runners Up: Alka Kansal
Semi-finalists: Pratima Menon and Rekha Dhupar

65+ (Women)
Winner: Indu Sharma
Runners Up: Sunita Mudgil
Semi-finalists: Ritu Verma and Abha Bhatnagar

80+ (Men)
Winner: V.K Maini
Runners Up: S.A.A Zaidi
Semi-finalists: B.N Khazanchi and B.S Kanwar





Bronze Medal winners in 55+ Diwakar Joshi and Puneet Kohli

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Cake Walk For Titans

Tejinder Singh retained the 60+ men's trophy defeating Anuj Sharma in straight games in the first Delhi Veterans Table Tennis Tournament on Sunday, joining ranks with Ravi Vashisht who too kept the promise without letting the opponents spring any surprises in the 65+ category. While Tejinder defeated Anuj Sharma 3-0, Vashisht trounced Anil Kumar Goel in straight sets.

Tejinder, the master in pimple rubber use, continued the winning streak this year as well. Goel has been sensational in the recently held nationals winning medals in most categories he participated. On Sunday, however, Vashisht made a quick job of the finals. VM Agarwal clinched the 75+ category gold defeating Raj Sharma in the finals. Playing his first tournament in the category, the left-hander defied age while hitting his trademark topspin, taking full advantage of the long-pips which he has recently started using on his backhand. Agarwal defeated Sharma 11-4, 11-7, 9-11 and 11-4, keeping the winning momentum going from last year when he won the 70+ category.

RESULTS

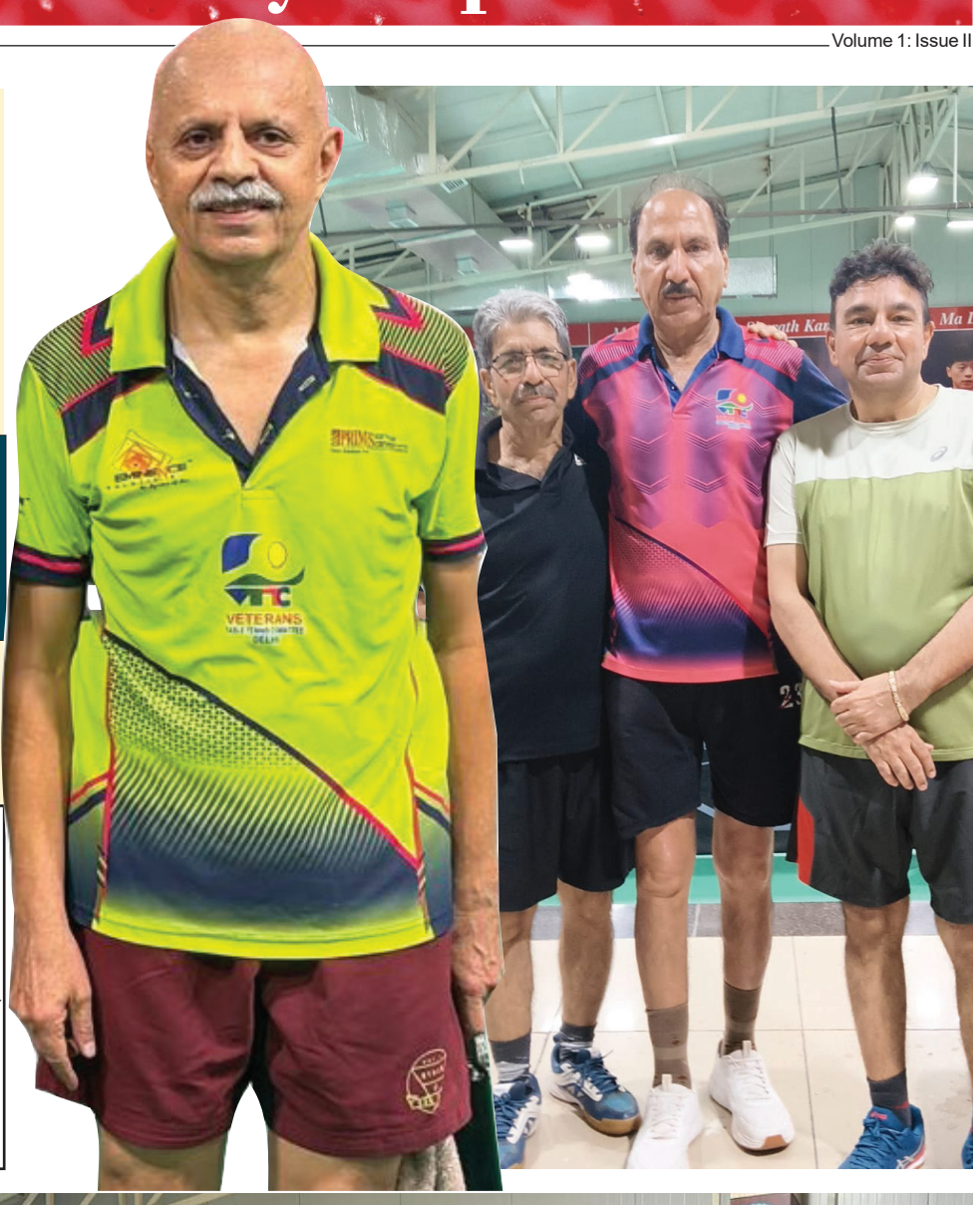
Men's 60+
Winner: Tejinder Singh
Runners Up: Anuj Sharma
Semi-finalists: Rajnish Sajdeh and S. Murali

65+ Men's
Winner: Ravi Vashisht
Runners Up: Anil Kumar Goel
Semi-finalists: Ashim Gujral and R.K Sharma

Men's 75+
Winner: V.M Agarwal
Runners Up: Raj Sharma
Semi-finalists: Raghunath Shankar and Ramesh Johri

Women's 50+
Winner: Shivani
Runners Up: Sangeeta Garg
Semi-finalists: Pallavi Goel and Ekta Bansal

Women's 55+
Winner: Jyoti Khurana
Runners Up: Ritu Rana
Semi-finalists: Seema Gupta and Anupama Singh













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RESULTS

Men's 40+
Winner: Sameer Sahani
Runners Up: Abhilash Thomas
Semi-finalists: Evgani Sap and Atul Mangwana

Men's 45+
Winner: Manuraj Jain
Runners Up: Loveleen Sharma
Semi-finalists: Deepak Garg and Mandeep Singh Kalra

70+ Men's
Winner: Suresh Bedi
Runners Up: Ashutosh Pathak
Semi-finalists: Sunil Chawla and Gen Ravinder Masaldan

Women's 40+
Winner: Vineeta Meghran
Runners Up: Anshika
Semi-finalists: Surabhi Kothari and Rekha

Women's 45+
Winner: Priti Vats
Runners Up: Ashima
Semi-finalists: Rani Gupta and Puja Anand

Sahani Has His Way to the Top

Sameer Sahani zoomed past Abhilash Thomas in an effortless victory characterised by gifted services and superior stroke play going unchallenged in the 40+ Men's category. It's the third year for the left hander's complete dominance since he entered the veterans' category. Sahani won in straight games on Sunday, the last leg of the First Delhi State Masters (Veterans) Table Tennis Ranking Tournament 2026-27. Unlike Sahani, there aren't many career table-tennis sportspersons who stay competitive in their forties. Sahani who is currently ranked in the top 10 of Delhi's men's category, has been winning medals for the state in the veterans' national championships as well. Thomas, playing his first state finals, overcame a stiff challenge from Evgani Sap in a semi-final match that stretched to four games.

BATTLE 70+

A closely-contested 70+ Men's final saw Suresh Bedi defeating Ashutosh Pathak. It was a match between two pimpled rubber users. Bedi, who relies mostly on his backhand, uses Tibhar's Grass while Pathak has recently shifted from an anti-spin rubber to Dr Neubauer's Killer, the medium pips variety. He was down 1-2 in the five-setter before winning 3-2.

Evgani Downs Nagpal in a Thriller QF

Third-seeded Sumeet Nagpal went down fighting Sap Evgani in a thrilling quarter-final match that stretched to the decider. Nagpal lost 2-3, coming up from depths in the last game to equalise, but failing to cross the line in the end.

The left-hander Nagpal has won the 40+ championships in the past, but could not hold on to his nerve on Sunday against the Russian player who has shifted to Delhi on a project last year. While Nagpal won a silver medal in doubles category at the recently held National championships, Evgani led his team to the bronze medal at the Pune event. Sunday's quarter-final lived up to its expectations of being one of the toughest games of the tournament with Nagpal skillfully using deceptions aided by topspin attacks and Evgani playing an overall aggressive game. Nagpal clawed back to equalise at 9-9 in the final game, capitalising on his backhand medium pips. The match could have gone the other way had it not been for a few unforced errors from Nagpal.

Evgani later lost to Abhilash Thomas in the semi-finals despite winning the first game. Nimble-footed Thomas fought back to win the subsequent games in a row, storming into the finals.







The Leading Ladies







Jain Wins in Style

Manuraj Jain trounced Lavleen Sharma in straight games in the 45+ Men's finals, winning the trophy for the second time. Sharma, a regular in the 40+ finals, played his first event in the 45+ category and made it to the finals. Incidentally, both semi-finals in the category went up to decider with Jain and Sharma bringing out their best game to beat their respective opponents and advance to the finals. Finals however, was a tame affair.

The finals brought curtains on the First State Veterans Ranking Championships. The rankings will be announced in this week, as per the association secretary Anil Kumar Goel



All Smiles Before Toss

I Got Pimples at 40

Reflexes slowing down. Losing too many points to opponent's serves. Footwork not fast enough. Is it time to say good-bye to your passion? No. Shift to pimpled rubbers. The technology marvels are giving a fresh lease of life to table-tennis players who continue playing after 40. The veterans are adding a dash of deception to their game by replacing one of their spinny rubbers. More and more players are choosing between short, medium and long pips to stay competitive, and in the process, even troubling superior talents who stay loyal to traditional inverted rubbers.

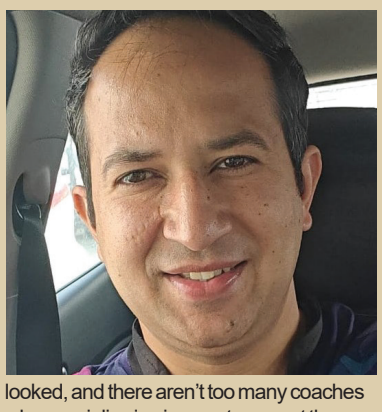
So is it the end of the road for plain rubbers in the veterans circuit? The growing number at the state and even national levels does suggest that. "Yes, it makes sense. Pips brighten your prospects," says Sameer Sahani, former India champion (CBSE) and now a top-notcher in Delhi's 40+ community. Sameer himself continues with plain rubbers, but feels using pips can help overcome age-related hurdles and modern services.



A small modification in the playing style is all that is needed for the transition away from smooth paddles.

PHYSICS BEHIND PIPS

Pips cut down the rotations resulting in a flatter trajectory. Thus, they suit those who play on-the-bounce and do not leave the table often. The playing style often proves to be a formula for success once grey hair starts showing. However, the rubber demands some tweaks. The bat angle needs to be more open and the ball needs to be hit quickly. These aspects are often overlooked, and there aren't too many coaches who specialise in pips use to correct the playing technique. Players are happy producing backspin and dipping ball effects





that torment opponents, but seldom go beyond to utilise the pips magic fully.

"Using pips needs more efforts. But most players are satisfied with the basic dividends like ease in receiving serves," Sahani says, pointing out that if a pips user wins tournaments, he sets off a trend.

While short pips -- not too different from plain rubbers -- have existed for decades, long-pips are more recent. If Tibhar's Grass (long pips) was enough to scare opponents, the newest offering, Yinhe's Moxa, is considered deadly. However, what is really changing the game is the youngest category -- Medium pips. Dr Neubauer's Killer range has been making waves and opponents are turning wary with its high deception qualities. If there is a method for playing against long-pips, none has been crystallised so far to tackle medium pips.

Sahani says coaches often encourage young players, especially girls, to shift to pimpled rubbers, for quick results. "Parents are happy. The child who would lose in the first round, is now able to win a few matches. So what's wrong? At international level too it is seen that a pimpled rubber user stands a good chance if the opponent is clueless."

Hemant Dagar, perhaps the best known long-pips player in the Delhi veterans circuit, says "Wait for a few years, and nearly 80% veterans will have pips. Look at Shailendra (Chhabra). He played his first tournament (First Delhi State 2026-27) using long pips and reached the quarterfinals. Pips will certainly bring advantage to the user as long as the opponent is not used to playing against them." Dagar himself fought it to the last-eight stage at the Pune national championships. "Pips may not help at higher levels. So they must be complemented with an all-round strokes play. I realised this, and worked on my services."

Nightmares for many, the pips fraternity is only getting stronger. Stay on table, remain fearless of any incoming spins and await a lollipop ball to hit a flat. For opponents, there are two options, learn how to beat them, or else simply join them. Get a Killer, go for the kill.

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Indian TT Gets an Angry Young Hero. A New AB



A time-out at 4-7 in the decider saw Ankur Bhattacharjee sitting outside the playing arena, shaking his head in disapproval. The one minute spent away, aided by motivating words from Dad, gave India its newest table tennis star at the Commonwealth Games 2026, held in New Delhi on August 2. The TT Men's Singles Gold Medal was the career-best achievement for the fiery 19-year-old who constantly pumped himself up, egging on the crowd to cheer for him. Bhattacharjee defeated his doubles partner Payas Jain in an intense seven-setter, a see-sawing match that did not throw up a clear winner until the final point was played. "He played fantastically. The Payas I knew was different on that day," the Bengal teenager later told MasTTers in an interview. Excerpts

What were your thoughts and strategy before the match started?
I wanted to focus on rallies, hoping to force him into making mistakes. I am used to big crowds and have played high-pressure games. The hall was big, so the ball was expected to slow down. I thought I would start with a psychological advantage, looking at our 13-1 history. But (smiles) that didn't exactly happen. Payas played very well that day. Maybe he was accustomed to the home conditions in Delhi. Also, unlike me, he had played in the team events as well. His backhand was coming out more spinny, and taking it on was getting difficult.

You seemed agitated...
Yes. Umpiring. I was given multiple service faults, and all that without any warning. When I asked, the umpire said, " Your head is blocking the view during the hook serve. I don't understand how a head would block the view of the contact point. I felt they should have been more professional. Anyway, I was not really angry. Aggression is my style. That is how I play.

You were also smiling a lot during the match. Is that a strategy?
It is natural. If one smiles when the opponent is leading, he gets confused, because he is expecting different emotions. So that makes him tense, and there lies a chance to turn over the game.

You were constantly looking at your dad (Angshuman).
I always look at him. He is my coach, and I seek his tips before every serve. Not just him; I look at the crowd as well. You get some motivation. My mom was sitting in the audience. She was constantly telling me to take it easy. When we play tense matches, we go blank. So tips from those sitting outside can be valuable.



I always knew I would win. Even at that stage. I focused on my normal game. I did not try anything extra, just kept going

What were your problem areas on Sunday?
I was playing well. But he was putting in a really good game. His backhand rallies were loaded with spin and forced me to falter on my forehand counterattacks. He always went a game up until the sixth game, and it was left to me to do the catching up. My strength was my backhand. I have worked on it. These days, backhand has become very important, although 90% of players still prefer the forehand attack because it is easier. But now, modern game techniques put more focus on the backhand. The halls are big, and there is AC, so there is no alternative to a good backhand.

All along, you had to equalise the one-game lead. How did you plan that? Your services were very good.
I was playing well. I only had to continue doing that. I was confident that if I kept rallying, I would come back into the match. And that is what happened. I varied my hook services, and the ones that earned me points were the no-spin float services.

What was your plan when you came back from 4-7 to win the match?
I always knew I would win. Even at that stage. I focused on my normal game. I did not try anything extra, just kept going. Dad kept telling me, take it easy, you are doing well. Don't pay attention to umpiring, etc.

You won the match that went the whole hog. If replayed, how would you play to make it simpler?
Well, if this match is to be played again, I will not play the long game. Will keep services short and open with the backhand. Payas was playing the long game, long services and long rallies thereafter. I should try and not play into his game plan.

Not Upset, just learnt a hard lesson

They have done it in the past, and will do so in the future. But what went wrong this time? Why did they lose? Was it sheer luck? Cheeky points, missed serves? Or a serious tactical error? Here's a peep into the minds of those who had to swallow the bitter pill, but learnt a good lesson at the just concluded First Delhi State Masters' Ranking Tournament. As they start preparations to bounce back in the Next, their learnings can guide fellow players who too had to deal with disappointments.

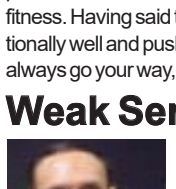
Didn't Take a Time-Out



SUMEET NAGPAL

Nagpal lost to Evgani Sap in the Men's 40+ quarterfinals in an electrifying match that went down to the wire, the decider slipping away from him after a 9-9. While Evgani is a gifted player, Nagpal himself is no pushover, having won the title earlier. "I feel, not taking a time-out in the second game when I sensed the lead diminishing, was a tactical error. I was leading 7-3 and a timeout would have helped me break his rhythm, and sprint to a 2-0 lead. TT is about momentum, and luck is an inseparable part of any sport. Maybe, it wasn't my day. There were a few edge and net points that went against me, but I focused on the next rally. "I plan to improve my backhand attack with my pimple rubber, work further on my service variations, and enhance my overall fitness. Having said that, I give full credit to my opponent who played exceptionally well and pushed me to perform at my highest level. Results may not always go your way, but destiny rewards those who prepare relentlessly."

Weak Service Returns



HEMANT DAGAR

Counted among the top long-pip users, Hemant Dagar lost to former Haryana champion Vijay Sharma in the semi-finals. Dagar had beaten Sharma earlier when the duo met in the finals. However, things didn't go his way this time. The match went to its full course and Sharma prevailed to enter the finals. "All I can say is, I played well against a good player," says Dagar. "I was a bit disappointed, yes, since I was leading 8-6 in the decider. My weak service returns probably cost me the match. Also, I did focus on short serves. I think, not even one short serve from me. Going forward, I need to focus on quality service returns, so that the opponent struggles for a third-ball attack. Not just returns, my own 3rd ball attack after a short serve is something I need to work on."

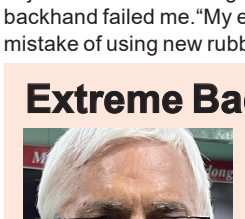
Played With New Rubbers



SREENIVASAN MURLI

One of the most deceptive players in the circuit, Sreenivasan Murli had to remain contended with a bronze in the 60+ category after losing semi-finals to Anuj Sharma. Murli plays with long-pips, Grass, on his forehand, something which most opponents find it difficult to face, and has defeated Sharma before. With a deceptive forehand and a powerful backhand, he has been winning tournaments with rather ease. The match result therefore, surprised many and taught a crucial lesson to Murli himself. "I did something, no professional player will ever do. I changed my rubbers (though same combination) just a day before," rues Murli, adding that "I not only burnt my fingers, but I burnt my entire hand..."I had ordered new rubbers well in advance, but the delivery took time, and I made a huge mistake by pasting them just before the match without putting in the minimum sessions needed for one to get used to them. I suffered. My backhand, my weapon, started misbehaving. Spinny rubbers demand some time for the user to get adjusted to. I still managed with my forehand rubber (long pips), although that too was new, but backhand failed me."My experience should be a lesson for intermediate players. Do not make the mistake of using new rubbers for a match without seven days practice"

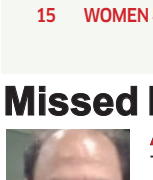
Extreme Backhand an Issue



ASHUTOSH PATHAK

The 70+ Men's crown went to Suresh Bedi after he defeated Ashutosh Pathak in five games. Pathak had beaten Bedi earlier, but a few repeated errors took the game away from him. Pathak had been using anti-spin rubber on his backhand, but made a transition to medium pips in this tournament. "The Killer (medium pips) ecosystem was probably new to me, says Pathak. "I made a lot of errors in executing forehand flats. Also my opponent was pinning me down on extreme backhand delaying my forehand attacks. And when I did attempt one, the ball had probably acquired a lot of spin to foil my flats. I was up 2-1 in the match, but Bedi played really well and pocketed the next two games. I need to work more on backhand counter drives using my new pimpled rubber. Let us see..."

Missed Backhand Flicks



ANIL KUMAR GOEL

The 65+ Men's Runners Up was up against a celebrity opponent in the finals. Ravi Vashisht, an India-ranker in his younger days, had a smooth sailing against Goel, who had beaten him last season. Goel was hopeful of an encore, but that didn't happen for the lobbying specialist who won medals in every category he participated at the Pune nationals. "It was neck and neck in all the three games. Ravi has superb services, and on that day, my returns were giving him a lot of attacking opportunities. HIs topspin attacks and flats are no doubt very good, but my reaction time was slower. Also, I missed a lot of backhand flicks. Going forward, I realise I need to practice with competitive players, especially those with good services. I need to keep my service returns low."

Delhi State Masters Rankings

SNO.	CATEGORY	Serial No.	NAME	1st Ranking12th-26th Jul'26	TOTAL	RANK
1	MEN 80+	1	VK MAINI	90	90	1
		2	SAA ZAIDI	60	60	2
		3	B N KHAZANCHI	45	45	3
		4	B S KANWAR	45	45	3
2	MEN 75+	1	DR VIRENDER MOHAN AGARWAL	90	90	1
		2	RAJ SHARMA	60	60	2
		3	RAGHUNATH SHANKAR	45	45	3
		4	RAMESH JOHRI	45	45	3
3	MEN 70+	1	SURESH KUMAR BEDI	90	90	1
		2	ASHUTOSH KUMAR PATHAK	60	60	2
		3	MAJ.GEN.RN MASALDAN	45	45	3
		4	SUNIL KUMAR CHAWLA	45	45	3
		5	SANDEEP MEHTA	30	30	5
		6	BRIJ MOHAN	30	30	5
4	MEN 65+	1	RAVI VASHIST	90	90	1
		2	ANIL KUMAR GOEL	60	60	2
		3	RAVINDER KUMAR SHARMA	45	45	3
		4	ASHIM GUJRAL	45	45	3
		5	SUNIL MAGON	30	30	5
		6	L M JOSHI	30	30	5
		7	PRAMOD GUPTA	30	30	5
		8	COL. LALAN CHAUBEY	30	30	5
		9	RAJESH SHARMA	15	15	9
		10	ASIF HUSSAIN	15	15	9
		11	SUBHASH VEDANTAM	15	15	9
		12	DEEPAK BHATNAGAR	15	15	9
5	MEN 60+	1	TEJINDER SINGH	90	90	1
		2	ANUJ SHARMA	60	60	2
		3	RAJNEESH SAJDEH	45	45	3
		4	SRINIVASAN MURLI	45	45	3
		5	AMAR SINGH	30	30	5
		6	TARUN BATRA	30	30	5
		7	DINESH SHARMA	30	30	5
		8	MANISH JAIN	30	30	5
		9	SHIRISH SINHA	15	15	9
		10	VIVEK DHIR	15	15	9
6	MEN 55+	1	ASHWIN WALUNJKAR	90	90	1
		2	DR SANJEEV CHAUDHARY	60	60	2
		3	DIWAKAR JOSHI	45	45	3
		4	PUNEET KOHLI	45	45	3
		5	RAHUL CHOPRA	30	30	5
		6	RAJ KUMAR KHURANA	30	30	5
		7	MANISH SAGAR	30	30	5
		8	RAJAT MATHUR	30	30	5
		9	ANIL JAJOO	15	15	9
		10	PANKAJ KUMAR JAIN	15	15	9
7	MEN 50+	1	ASHISH KAPIL	90	90	1
		2	DR VIJAY SHARMA	60	60	2
		3	MANAV SHARMA	45	45	3
		4	HEMANT DAGAR	45	45	3
		5	DR ANURAG BUDHIRAJA	30	30	5
		6	MANOHAR SINGH BISHT	30	30	5
		7	SHAILENDER CHHABRA	30	30	5
		8	PRAMOD KUMAR YADAV	30	30	5
		9	JENENDER KWATRA	15	15	9
		10	RADHAKRISHNAN P	15	15	9
8	MEN 45+	1	MANU RAJ JAIN	90	90	1
		2	LOVLEEN SHARMA	60	60	2
		3	DEEPAK GARG	45	45	3
		4	MANDEEP SINGH KALRA	45	45	3
		5	KINGSHUK SANYAL	30	30	5
		6	DR ANIL BALONI	30	30	5
		7	RUPAM MAJUMDAR	30	30	5
		8	ANOOP GAUTAM	30	30	5
		9	MANIK SHARMA	15	15	9
		10	ANU PRUTHI SINGH	15	15	9
		11	PUNEET THAREJA	15	15	9
		12	PRAKHAR RASTOGI	15	15	9
9	MEN 40+	1	SAMEER SAHNI	90	90	1
		2	ABHILASH THOMAS	60	60	2
		3	ATUL MANGWANA	45	45	3
		4	SAP EVGANY	45	45	3
		5	GAURAV ARORA	30	30	5
		6	SUMIT NAGPAL	30	30	5
		7	ROHIT BANSAL	30	30	5
		8	AVINASH CHAUHAN	30	30	5
		9	DINESH BAJAJ	15	15	9
		10	ANIL REVALIA	15	15	9
		11	GAURAV DUTT	15	15	9
		12	ARUN BAKHETIA	15	15	9
		13	FAISAL WASI	15	15	9
		14	PUNEET SINGH	15	15	9

WOMEN CATEGORY

SNO.	CATEGORY	Serial No.	NAME	1st Ranking12th-26th Jul'26	TOTAL	RANK
10	WOMEN 65+	1	INDU SHARMA	90	90	1
		2	SUNITA MUDGIL	60	60	2
		3	RITU VARMA	45	45	3
		4	DR ABHA BHATNAGAR	45	45	3
11	WOMEN 60+	1	NEERU MEHTA	90	90	1
		2	ALKA KANSAL	60	60	2
		3	PRATIMA MENON	45	45	3
		4	REKHA DHUPAR	45	45	3
12	WOMEN 55+	1	JYOTI KHURANA	90	90	1
		2	RITU RANA	60	60	2
		3	SEEMA GUPTA	45	45	3
		4	ANUPAMA SINGH	45	45	3
13	WOMEN 50+	1	SHIVANI	90	90	1
		2	SANGEETA GARG	60	60	2
		3	PALLAVI GOEL	45	45	3
		4	EKTA BANSAL	45	45	3
14	WOMEN 45+	1	PRITI VATS	90	90	1
		2	DR ASHIMA	60	60	2
		3	DR RANI GUPTA	45	45	3
		4	PUJA ANAND	45	45	3
15	WOMEN 40+	1	VINEETA MEGHRAN	90	90	1
		2	ANSHIKHA	60	60	2
		3	SURABHI KOTHARI	45	45	3
		4	REKHA	45	45	3

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A Veteran Table Tennis Community Dispatch

Volume 1: Issue V

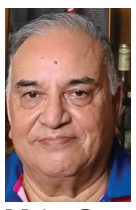
Doctors of The Game

Coaching is now an integral part of veteran players in the competitive space. But do these young men and women armed with a basket full of balls and a net behind them need some crucial lessons? MasTTers explores...

Passion takes you to the table every day. But when the green shoots of excellence surface, you know it is time to get a coach and eye the next level.

Veterans in the competitive arena are no strangers to the coaching ecosystem. Players on the state circuit train regularly at sporting academies or even hire a personal coach—usually a young man with all the answers.

"It is a technical game. If you want to play at competitive levels, there is no alternative to coaching, because you will never be able to read the ball trajectory," says Vinkur Khurana, a Delhi regular at Nationals.



Major Gen Ravinder Masaldan

A veterans' coach should be like a surgeon—focus on the bad organ, don't operate on the entire body. More than fitness, what seniors need to learn is strategy and game plan.

"People who left the game after college days and rejoined in their 40s typically go for coaching. Having tasted success as juniors, they have the desire to do well once again," says Major Gen Masaldan, a national medallist.

However, for most, the coaching journey ends abruptly. Players get disillusioned rather quickly and go back to enjoying the game with their pals instead.

"Coaches often make the mistake of using the same training methods for veterans," says a veteran seeded player who did not want to be quoted. "Fitness, footwork, multiballs... I was tired," he added.

Multiball coaching involves a basket with 200 balls fed relentlessly to drill a stroke into muscle memory. The method works fine, but it leaves veterans with sore muscles.

"A coach in Noida insisted that multiballs would help my topspins. I started facing difficulties with that but decided to push myself irrespective. After three days, I had a shoulder injury that kept me away from the game for 20 days; I am not even mentioning the treatment cost," said another player who represents Delhi.

The coaching module in academies typically includes a head coach and a few assistants. While the bossman moves around keeping a watch on all tables, the junior coaches are the ones who work with veterans. So essentially, it comes down to the junior coaches and veterans during practice sessions. That is where things start going south. The juniors fail to distinguish between physically fit teenagers and seniors.

"My own experience says it is difficult to find a good coach for veterans. Most coaches will train you like a youngster—footwork, action modification, muscle memory, the works," says Major Gen Masaldan. "Even if you teach me the correct action, there is a high chance that my muscle memory of 50 years will take me back to my flawed action during matches. So why not bring consistency to my actions even if they are flawed? In the end, it is consistency that will win matches for me, not the correct action," he says.

Khurana says coaching sometimes proves ineffective for senior players because they themselves lack the drive. "They feel their days of active sports are over and they should now play only for fun. When that happens, coaches lose interest. But if we set this segment aside, I can say most people are passionate and want to scale up their game."

The performance of players at the national level confirms that the overall game in Delhi is improving. A major chunk of this credit must go to the coaches. When a player does well in matches, the coach starts getting more enquiries.

There is no dearth of academies and coaches. In Delhi, there are facilities every five kilometers, and the cost is affordable. While academies offer coaching facilities for under Rs 5,000, a personal coach charges Rs 10,000–15,000 a month.

There are also coaches who don't require a monthly commitment; they help with a specific stroke through classes on a Rs 1,000 per-day basis. If a coach is able to bring about a noticeable change in one player, they are indirectly helping the practice partners as well, uplifting overall standards.



Vinkur Khurana

If you are watching YouTube videos, that is also a kind of coaching. One must enjoy losing. If we realise that we did not lose to a particular player, but to a particular ball you could not hit or return, that is a big learning

The main issue, however, remains: Is the coaching pattern customised to the needs of such players? "Some coaches understand this. I was, therefore, happy when I trained under Tejinder Singh. He did not try to improve my basics, but asked me to be consistent. He said I was losing because I was going for big hits and missing them in matches."

Khurana too gives all credit to his coaches. "I was a defensive player. My coaches made me an attacking player after working with me for two to three years. Last year, I had an ACL (ligament) tear and was away from the table for nearly eight months. I could bounce back only because of the physios and my own coach, who is now advising me to play close to the table."

In a country that puts teachers on the same pedestal as parents, coaches are having their day in the sun, helping the game develop in their own way. While their bread and butter remains children in the 5–20 age group, veteran students, loaded with passion and some money, are keeping the ball rolling and the home fires burning.



Stroke Power Should Come from Body, Not Just From Arm: Ti Long

International coach says Indian veterans need not abandon old techniques; they need an upgrade to modern tactics

1. What is your first piece of advice for a veteran athlete joining your academy?

Most veteran players who come to me already have many years of table tennis experience. However, much of their technique is developed based on the methods and concepts of previous generations.

I often see players relying heavily on their arms and trying to generate power mainly through the arm. They use relatively little power from the body, legs, waist and rotation.

Therefore, my first step is not simply to teach them a new technique. I help them understand the principles behind the technique.

When they understand how the body generates and transfers power, how timing affects the ball, how spin is created, how the racket angle interacts with the incoming ball, and how the legs, waist, body rotation and arm should work together, their game can change dramatically.

I don't want veteran players to throw away their experience. I want to rebuild their technique on top of that experience.

2. Most veteran athletes in India use unpredictable racket surfaces. Is this the right strategy?

Using long pimples, anti-spin or other specialised rubbers can be an effective strategy.

Especially for players who have weaknesses in serving or do not fully understand spin, these rubbers can make receiving easier, slow down the game and disrupt the opponent's attacking rhythm.

The rubber should support the player's techniques and tactics. It should never replace skills.

3. There will inevitably be physical limitations, so what should a high-level veteran athlete do to overcome them?

Every veteran player is physically different. Age, gender, height, genetics, joint health and conditions such as wrist, knee or back problems, high blood pressure or cardiovascular issues can all vary greatly. Therefore, there cannot be one technique or training program that fits everyone.

I place great importance on correct technique adapted to each individual. Good technique reduces the need for excessive force, improves efficiency and can also help reduce the risk of injury.

For example, if a player has knee problems, I may adjust the technique to reduce the load on the legs and make greater use of the wrist, arm and body rotation. Conversely, if the wrist is the problem, I can teach the player to generate more power through the legs, body and proper arm folding technique, rather than relying heavily on the wrist.

4. What common mistakes do you see experienced athletes making during training? What should an ideal training model look like?

One of the most common mistakes I see is that they focus mainly on maintaining the techniques they already have. If a technique is incorrect and a player continues repeating it for 5–6 hours a day, year after year, the technique will not necessarily improve. In fact, the mistake can become even more deeply ingrained and much harder to correct.

For veteran players, time and age are the most valuable resources, and they can never be recovered. Therefore, training more is not necessarily better; training correctly is more important.



5. What are the common injuries, and how can you recognise when pain or joint stiffness requires urgent attention and treatment?

Common problems among veteran players may involve the wrist, elbow, shoulder, knees, lower back and calf/Achilles area, particularly due to repetitive movements or excessive training load.

The most important thing is to listen to your body. Not every pain requires you to stop training, but persistent or worsening pain, significant swelling, restricted movement, or pain that changes your technique or movement should not be ignored.

If there is sudden or severe pain, significant swelling, loss of movement, numbness or weakness, the player should stop training and seek assessment from a doctor or qualified medical professional.

6. How do you rate Indian veterans compared to their foreign counterparts? In which areas do Indian players need to improve?

From my experience working with international players, I find that Indian veteran players have an extremely strong passion for table tennis. They have a very strong foundation. In particular, I have noticed that many Indian players are quite good at using long pimples and other pips. However, one area I would like them to improve is reducing their dependence on physical power and excessive arm movement. Many players still tend to generate power mainly with the arm and chase the ball with the arm, rather than using the body and technique efficiently.

I would like to see more focus on creating and varying spin, changing speed, controlling placement, and especially developing the short game close to the table.

7. How can players in their twenties help veterans improve their skills, and conversely, how can veterans assist the younger players?

I see this as a two-way relationship, where each generation has strengths that the other can benefit from.

Players in their 20s have the advantage of youth, speed, physical power and access to modern techniques. Training with them can help veteran players improve their reaction speed, ball processing and especially their ability to defend against fast and powerful attacks.

On the other hand, veteran players have a major advantage in competitive experience. After hundreds or even thousands of matches, they often have a deeper ability to read the game, analyze opponents and make tactical decisions.

8. In what direction is this sport evolving internationally? And how should veterans prepare to counter modern tactics?

In my opinion, international table tennis is developing toward a game that is faster, more powerful, more spin-oriented and increasingly tactical. Modern players need not only good technique, but also the ability to transition quickly between serve, receive, third-ball attack, counterattack and defense.

For veteran players, I don't believe the answer is to try to play faster and harder than younger players. The key is to become smarter and more efficient. Veteran players should not completely abandon the style they have developed over many years. They should keep their strengths and upgrade them with modern technique, principles and tactics.

(Ti Long is an international table tennis coach and has trained players from 39 countries over 20 years. He holds intensive training camps at Ti Long Club in Vietnam. He is certified by International Olympic Committee and has four world records to his credit.)

Keep it Simple, But Respect Physics



ABHISHEK MEENA
Tabletenniswithchampions

I regularly coach veterans. My approach is simple. TT is an easy game, though very technical. Keep it simple. Don't take big steps to reach the ball. Read the opponent's rubber and don't go against Physics.

Masters are too set in their traditional game. So I let them practice their favourite strokes. Once the session, they have paid for, is over, I give them extra ten minutes. I tell them, this is a 10-minute free session. During this time, I teach them a new stroke. They learn it to some extent. Later, when they practice it on their own, they remember and execute that newly-learned stroke. They get convinced only if they start scoring points in matches. So with veterans, it is a long process.

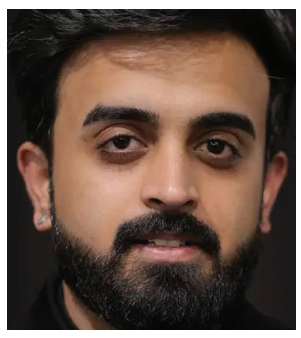
I try not to change their grip or actions. I try to see if small modifications are possible. I focus on weak areas with multiballs. There is no point in stressing on fitness for players above 40. Light running is enough.

The biggest problem that coaches face is time given by seniors. While a youngster comes for coaching every day, sometimes even twice a day, veterans are unable to spare more than one or two days a week for coaching. That makes life difficult for coaches.

Unlike young players, veterans take time to play against deceptive rubbers. I explain the science of ball rotation, so that they understand the logic. For example, Chop-Counter-Chop against long-pips. If they understand the spin reversal effect of long-pips, learning becomes very easy.

People say, footwork is the most important area of improvement for veterans. While there is no disputing that, I feel, stability is more important than footwork. When I was training with Kingshuk Sanyal, I spotted weakness on his backhand. We discussed and changed his rubber to Medium Pips on BH. The strategy helped and Kingshuk found winning ways in tournaments. Similarly, while working with Sumeet Nagpal, I asked him to focus on counterattacks on loops. It took him 3-4 sessions and today, he is able to execute that stroke. If you have seen his last match, you will know what I am talking about. For a player like Sumeet, there is no point in blocking loops, he has to go for counterattacks. So as I said, give veterans one stroke at a time and give them time. They will internalise and develop it themselves.

Don't Call Them Veterans



AYUSH GROVER
GROw Sports TT Academy

Firstly, I don't like the categorisation of players as veterans. The tag is harmful. It puts limitations in their minds, and that reflects in the game. They start feeling "Since I am a veteran, I am slow, and that is okay".

No. If one is slow, it is not always because of age, it is because of lack of training. I agree that movement of older players may be just 60% as that of the younger players. But that 60% is enough to sustain in their age category and win matches. If they work towards achieving that 60%, their job is done. But if you treat them as veterans, they will not even touch 30%. What happens when a teenager has a weak stroke? He trains and perfects it. Same is true with veterans. Spot a weakness, train, train and train. Nothing is impossible. Follow the same practice pattern as younger players do. May be it will take a longer time, but you will get the results. Veterans need to train regularly, something which most 40+ players are unable to because of time factor. If you want to do well in matches, consistency in training is needed. If you lose matches, it is fine. Get disappointed, train harder. India has a limited pool of coaches with a strong base. That is why techniques are wrong. Once the basics are clear, perfection is a matter of hard work. 90% veterans struggle with deep balls, especially on the backhand. That is because the hand doesn't go under the table. So, it all boils down to the right technique. Wrong technique leads to a wrong mindset, and players feel this is not doable. Some change rubbers. That is a shortcut and will gives limited success. But if you see the root cause, it is lack of training.

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Dehradun tournament experiments with Mixed Team event to club various age-groups into one fighting unit

North Stars Light Up Doon Valley

Delhi B stole the limelight at the First Doon Masters Table Tennis Tournament by winning six medals at the event held over the weekend that saw participation of 120 players. Lightquo Pacific however, won the hearts by winning the Mixed Team Event, a new format introduced in the veterans circuit, and bagging the second place with five medals.

Lightquo Pacific was represented by Parag Agarwal, Saurabh Poddar, Rishiraj Tyagi and Rohit Saxena. While Delhi B packed in Harsh Chopra, Abhishek, Vinay Chopra and Prakhar Rastogi.

The coveted 40+ title went to the favourite Sameer Sahani, who dominates the Delhi veterans tournaments, while 50+ crown was bagged by Rishiraj Tyagi of Lightquo Pacific. Girish Chabra beating Vinay Chopra in the 60+ finals (3-2) was the highlight of the tournament.

The Mixed Team Event aroused a lot of interest from the table-tennis fraternity, drawing top veteran players from across North India to Dehradun to test their sporting abilities as a team. Players from most north Indian states spent a busy weekend at the Parade Ground TT Hall, lifting the quality of competition almost at a par with nationals .

The Mixed team event format entailed players from every age group (40+ 50, 60+) forming a team, with a lower bias towards 40+ for competitive parity.

Multiple events and time constraints brought in a best-of-three games format until the quarterfinals stage, as against the usual best-of-five, making matches close and intense, and throwing a few upsets. Notables being Deepak Chavan defeating Harsh Chopra, the latest national champion in the 55+ category.



RESULTS

Men's Singles (40+)

Sameer Sahani (Delhi)
Evgany Sap (Delhi)
Harsh Chopra (Delhi)
Saurabh Poddar (Lightquo Pacific)

Men's Singles Team Open (40+)

Delhi-B
Lightquo Pacific
Delhi-A
Punjab-A

Women's Singles (40+)

Anu Sharma (HP)
Neeru (Delhi)
Preeti Chabra (Dehradun)
Sadhna Agarwal (Kotdwar)

Mixed Team

Lightquo Pacific
Delhi-B
Delhi-C
Uttarakhand-B

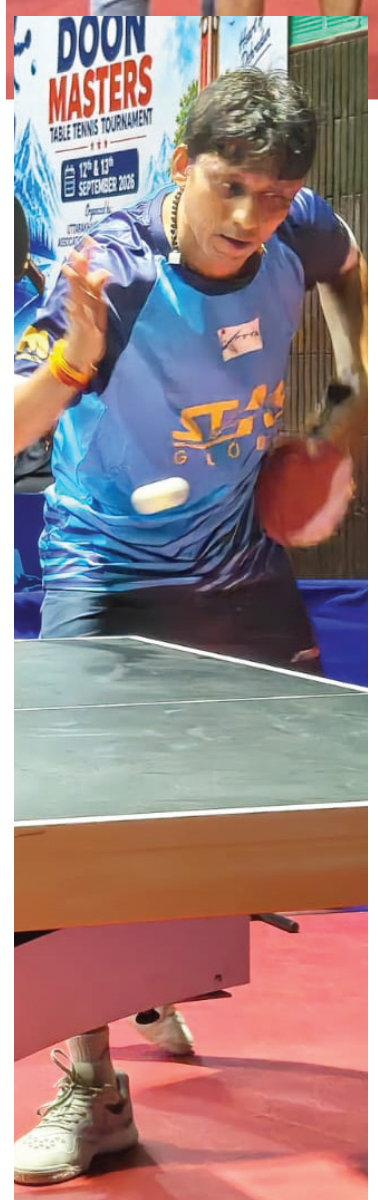
Men's Singles (50+)

Rishiraj Tyagi (Lightquo Pacific)
Parag Agarwal (Lightquo Pacific)
Harsh Chopra (Delhi)
Manish Nahan

Men's Singles (60+)

Girish Chabra (Dehradun)
Vinay Chopra (Delhi)
Peter Desouza (HP)
S. Murli (Delhi)







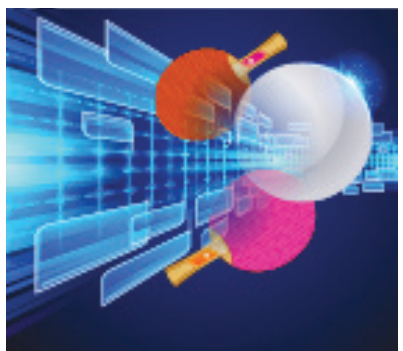




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RESULTS

2nd Delhi State Masters TT Ranking Tournament 2026-27

70+ Men's
Major Gen R Masaldan
Sunil Kumar Chawla
Suresh Bedi
Ashutosh Kumar Pathak

65+ Women's
Rohini Marathe
Ritu Verma
Sunita Mudgil
Nirmal Singhal

60+ Women's
Alka Kansal
Neeru Mehta
Rekha Duphar
Sujata Buchke

55+ Women's
Seema Gupta
Ritu Rana
Jyoti Khurana
Sangeeta Mathur

45+ Women's
Priti Vats
Ashima
Preetinder Kaur
Puja Anand

40+ Women's
P Mradula
Vineeta Meghran
Rekha
Anshika



Girls' Day Out



The General Makes it Special

Major General Ravindar Masaldan brought his attacking instincts to the fore to clinch the 70+ Men's singles title trouncing Sunil Kumar Chawla in straight games in the final, turning around the league stage setback.

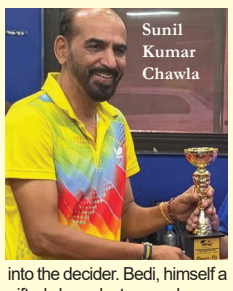
This was the first time for the Uttar Pradesh import to win the title after migrating to Delhi, and in a year when the category got tougher with a couple of star entrants who graduated from 65+ category. In earlier tournaments, he came close to the title many times, but could not breast the tape.

Rohini Marathe (65+), Alka Kansal (60+), Seema Gupta (55+), Priti Vats (45+) and P Mradula (40+) were the winners in various women's categories.

The star of the day however, was Major Gen Masaldan who learnt from his mistakes in the league stage where he lost to Chawla in straight games to bring about the victory when it mattered the most.

"I rectified the errors committed in the league stage. I was pushing the ball that came from his anti-spin backhand, gifting him a pop-up for a smash. In the finals, I started playing down-the-line and adopted a more aggressive stance," he later told MasTTers.

Major Gen Masaldan's journey to the finals was uphill. He got the better of Suresh Bedi in a closely fought semi-final that ran into the decider. Bedi, himself a gifted player, lost narrowly.



Sunil Kumar Chawla

In the second semi-final, Chawla defeated his long-time team mate Ashutosh Kumar Pathak 3-1. Pathak won the first game but struggled in the next three games to eventually lose the match.

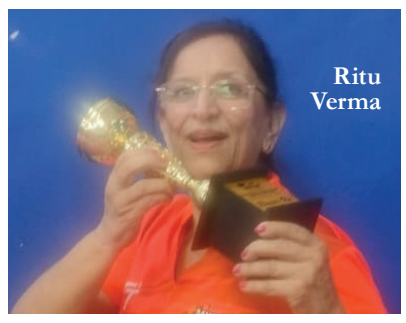




Rohini Marathe



Top-four of Women's 60+ singles



Ritu Verma

When Venue is All That is Missing

Delhi veterans are hoping that their search for a big enough hall to host state ranking tournaments ends soon.

The veterans table tennis community in Delhi is again grappling with an old issue --- How to find a facility that can host the state ranking tournaments. There was a respite in the last season when a spacious venue was available, but things don't look rosy anymore.

The lack of a well-equipped, affordable TT facility --- an air-conditioned hall that can house 10 tables with spectator seats --- doesn't reflect well on India's capital that boasts of close to 600 registered competitive players aged 40 and above, and nearly ten times the number who play at various sports facilities in the National Capital Region.

The Veterans Table Tennis Association, Delhi, is affiliated to the Delhi State Table Tennis Association and conducts ranking tournaments to select a state team for the nationals every year. The association has been running from pillar to post scouting for a proper venue. With no options forthcoming, the association has to fall back on the ubiquitous DDA-owned sports complexes, good venues for daily practice, but far from ideal for holding tournaments. With time running out, the second state ranking tournament is being held in a DDA complex from October 4, 2026. Players have little choice, though a few have complained on the official WhatsApp group.

A typical DDA sports complex TT hall is roughly the size allotted to one table in elite international fixtures. In this space, there are usually five tables crammed up. Spectators have to stand near the wall, and even leave the hall if it gets too crowded.

The sports centres aim at promoting sports culture among citizens, not at producing champions. For that, Delhi boasts of fully-equipped indoor stadiums, like Thyagaraj Stadium, Talkatora Stadium, Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, Nehru Stadium, among others where national events are routinely held. However, booking the world-class venues for veterans' tournaments is unaffordable for the association that depends mostly on entry fees collected from around 200 participants. So the collection per tournament, roughly Rs 1.5 lakh, is nowhere close to what is needed to book an indoor stadium.

People who have organised tournaments at these stadiums in the past say, if Rs 50,000 per day is the booking charge, air-conditioning and lighting cost almost four times the booking amount. Add to it the maintenance cost charged for seating spectators, rentals for tables and flooring, and the bill is astronomical for associations that do not get financial support from the state government.

Last season was a blessing as the association could get hold of a school in East Delhi that rents its terrace to a five-table well-equipped table tennis academy. The association organised four tournaments at the school on Sundays and even started the 2026-27 season at the same place. However, despite apparent commitments for the full season, the school suddenly became unavailable, and VTTA had to go back to the DDA venues.

"Playing matches there is akin to playing in a fish market," a player posted on official group, creating quite a stir. The association cited unavoidable circumstances and promised to look for better venues for the next tournament.

As a collective effort, the community even toyed with an idea of running a permanent facility that could be available for state tournaments. The idea was to create a corpus through donations, but the amounts committed were a fraction of what would eventually be needed.

Players point out that states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh manage to get spacious halls to host their state tournaments. Not just that, they also spice it up with food and pack in live coverage of the event, that eventually stays on YouTube. The reason why these states can provide large facilities is their size. Unlike Delhi, these states have multiple active district associations that pitch for hosting a ranking state tournament. When a district hosts one tournament in a year, it is easy to find sponsors. The next tournament moves to a different district, and new local sponsors and good Samaritans who donate come forward.



Photo Courtesy: TTFI

An office-bearer of MP veterans' association told MasTTers that the halls are usually acquired from the state government and the committee members use their good offices to get the facilities. "We approach government officials and elected representatives, and they are kind to us," the official said.

Maharashtra follows the same districts pattern. Association officials say rotating the ranking tournaments between various districts helps because the district bodies do the needful without putting any burden on the parent association. The enterprise of the district association awarded a state ranking tournament is therefore put to the test. "It is a huge expenditure, but our associates in the districts do a good job," says a former secretary of a district association in Maharashtra.

Delhi being a city state, there are no financially strong district associations who can come forward. So the state association ends up doing all the legwork without any strong marketing muscle to bring in sponsors.

Players say, proximity of the state to the Centre should be explored and both state and central governments that are keen on sports culture in the country, can actually do some groundwork on providing venues given the lack of support from district associations.

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Stars Come Out Shining After Early Scares

League Games Keep up Intensity at 2nd Delhi State Masters TT Tournament



Tejinder Singh retained the Men's 60+ title, but not in a way he would have liked to. The Numero Uno of the category got a walkover from Anuj Sharma in the finals at the 2nd Delhi State Veterans Ranking Tournament which saw more excitement in the league games than at the knockout stage.

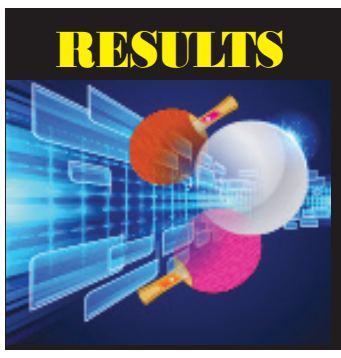
Anuj Sharma who uses the deceptive Moxa rubber had a tough journey to the finals which he eventually gave up due to an emergency. He suffered defeat in the league matches to Shirish Sinha in a closely contested match that went up to decider. Sinha's victory against the second seed upset all calculations and the group saw a tie. The top two, Anuj Sharma and Manish Jain, then qualified on the basis of games won and lost.

In the semi-final, however, Sharma got the better of the wily S Murali in a tough match that went into deuce in two games. In the league stage, Murli had to fight with all his tools to get ahead of Tarun Batra who levelled the match despite having lost the first two games, but the Moxa craftsman clinched the decider.

In the second semi-final Tejinder got a scare from Rajnish Sajdeh who stretched the match against the champion to five games.

League games were exciting in the women's 50+ league as well. Pratima Paul defeated the winner Sangeeta Garg, but lost to Pallavi Goel in the semis. Sangeeta Garg defeated Pallavi Goel in straight games in the 50+ women's finals.

B.N Khazanchi continued to excel in the 80+ category, beating V.K Maini in straight games in the finals. Maini with his pimpled rubbers gave a close fight to Khazanchi, who has national and commonwealth titles under his belt.



RESULTS

Men's Singles 80+
BN KHAZANCHI
VK MAINI
RS BUTTOO
COL. SHIV MOHAN KUNZROO

Men's Singles 60+
TEJINDER SINGH
ANUJ SHARMA
SRINIWASAN MURALI
RAJNEESH SAJDEH

Men's Singles 75+
RAJ SHARMA
RAMESH JOHRI
RAGHUNATH SHANKAR
VEER VIMAL RAHEJA

Women's Singles 50+
SANGEETA GARG
PALLAVI GOEL
SHIVANI
PRATIMA PAUL



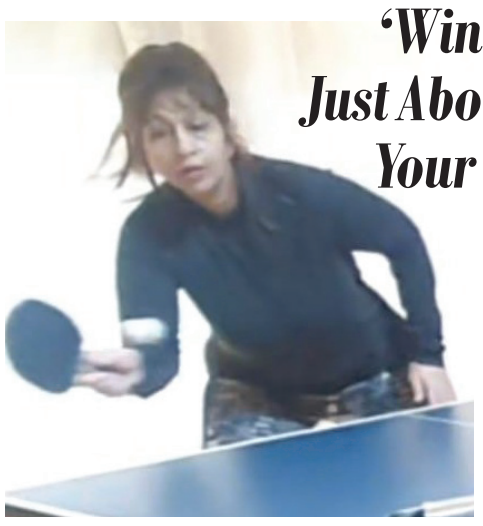






Delhi saw emergence of two champs who had not picked a TT bat until three years ago

'Winning is not Just About Beating Your Opponent'



When everyone was anxious about how to survive during Covid, Seema Gupta was thinking about how to live life. "There were enough tragedies around. Family members, friends.... I wasn't sure of my own health. That's when I decided, let me live life fully."

The thought took her to a table-tennis match video. She liked the game, and decided to buy a table; even get herself a coach.

Three years later Seema Gupta won her first gold medal at the 2nd Delhi State Veterans Championships, winning her way to top against experienced players.

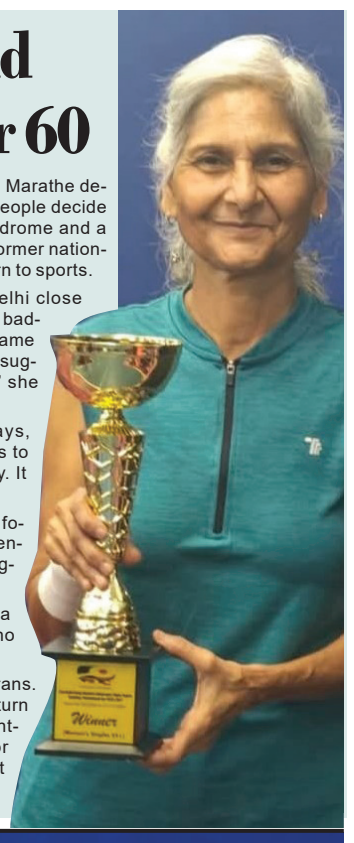
Gupta was never a stranger to sports. She had played multiple games and was the sports captain during her school games, having participated at zonal level in Badminton. However, marriage and family kept her confined to domestic duties. Covid forced a change and drew her out of her comfort zone.

"When I returned to sports after 22 years, I wanted to learn the game the proper way," she says. Enter coaches like Rajkumar Khurana, Nikunj Garg and Anil Kumar Goel who trained and encouraged her to play tournaments and test her newly-acquired skills.

"It was not easy. I admire the passion and talent of fellow players Ritu Rana, Alka Kansal, Neeru Mehta and others who guided me."

Her mother's words ringing in her ears during her quest for the gold medal, "Keep your cool", Gupta finally achieved what she set off for. "Winning is not about beating the opponent. It is about beating your own anxiety. A cool mind alone will take you to the podium"

Learning, and winning after 60



The latest 65+ women's champion Rohini Marathe decided to sweat it out at 60, an age when people decide to take life easy. When empty-nest syndrome and a sense of stillness started hitting her, the former national-level badminton player decided to return to sports.

"I started swimming, but facilities in Delhi close down during winters. I could not return to badminton because it is difficult to play that game after a certain age. That's when a cousin suggested that I should learn table-tennis," she says.

Being a sportsperson in her school days, Marathe knew there should be a process to learn a game. It can't be a leisure activity. It requires proper training and guidance.

"I went to various academies. But there, focus is on children. No one pays much attention to senior players. Luckily someone suggested the name of Tejinder Singh."

The academy run by the burly coach is a favourite hub for many veteran players who value his dedication and techniques.

"Tejinder Singh knows how to coach veterans. I would start from home at 8.30 am and return by 4.30 pm," says Marathe. An almost eight-hour schedule for TT paid dividends for Marathe who has earlier won a bronze at the Pune nationals.



