

# Line Of Cricket Control

India and Pakistan's friendly rivalry comes to New Jersey



Keval Patel, captain of Premium Indians USA Kings team franchise of American Premiere League (APL).



Jay Mir, owner and chairman of APL.



Rizwan Cheema, captain of Premium Pakistanis team franchise of APL.

By A STAFF WRITER

**A**t what organizers called “a glittering event” at the Lake Chateau in Woodbridge, New Jersey, August 30, 2021, some enthusiastic guests staged an impromptu cricket fight between India and Pakistan, symbolic of the decades-old friendly rivalry between the two nations that have even fought real serious wars.

Very soon, the U.S. will see the friendly side of the traditional rivalry between these two countries in the form of two business leaders whose love of cricket has brought them together.

## PASSION FOR THE GAME

Indian-Americans are among the most passionate about this sport. Families pay for channels that bring them this game wherever it is taking place in the world. They are up to date on every game, follow the players avidly, know each one by name

and his history and how many sixers some player hit, whether in the Indian teams or Pakistani teams, or the English and West Indian teams.

The rise of cricket in the U.S. has gone hand-in-hand with the expansion of the South Asian population in this country. Their passion for the game and campaign for it in different parts of the country has given rise over several years now, to cricket clubs which have popped up around the United States, pitches have been prepared and players recruited.

Starting from neighborhood friends and informal matches, it has grown to become a serious and competitive sport with matches that pit several teams at locations in Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Florida and other states.

And its not just grown-ups who are interested in the game. They want to get younger second-generation kids involved in cricket.

The APL is the latest develop-

ment in a long history of the game in this country.

Rajinder Singh Mago of the Punjabi Cultural Society in Illinois, told Desi Talk about his son Satnam, who was born in the U.S., but got familiar with the game when his grandfather brought him the whole paraphernalia from India relating to cricket. “He played the game in our backyard and then his cousins visiting would join and play, and in our neighborhood playground, people from all the cricket countries would be playing league games,” Mago said. Satnam discussed cricket with his cousins in England too.

Krish Vaidya, 12, of New Jersey, is even more of an expert in cricket, introduced to it by his grandfather. The three generations of family members watch the game wherever it is being live-streamed from. Krish knows the statistics of every player and discusses powerplays with his father and grandfather.

Mitali Chikhalkar, 31, of New Jersey, who came to the U.S. from

Mumbai, kept up her interest in following Indian cricket. “My friend and I whenever we meet, we discuss cricket. And we follow players on Instagram,” she told Desi Talk. “I love watching Indian cricket.”

“Between Dallas and Fort Worth just off the Texas 130 Interstate an American cricket “Field of Dreams” is being built amidst the urban sprawl,” reported Reuters in November 2020. The USA Cricket chairman told the news outlet, “build it and they will come.”

“Cricket is in my blood,” Jay Mir, founder and CEO of American Premiere League had told Desi Talk back in May as he began his venture. Originally from Lahore, Pakistan, Mir's views on cricket match those of Sam Singh, who hails from North India, and also has cricket running in his veins. Singh has purchased one of the top cricket teams in Mir's lineup. That historic match between the Pakistani and Indian teams is scheduled to be played September 27, 2021, at Yogi Berra Stadium in Little Falls, New Jersey.

The usacricket.org website says America has one of the richest cricketing histories of any country, dating back over 300 years! USA Cricket is organized according to regional zones and matches are played routinely. But the new generation of Indians who began coming in large numbers to the U.S. since 1965 Immigration Act, has really helped the game grow. Cricket teams were formed in universities and cities, like Dartmouth, Amherst College, Mass., Philadelphia Cricket Club, to name just very few.

Today, one of the big players entering this field is American Premiere League.

The Aug. 30 meeting was to announce the acquisition of the Premium Indian USA Kings cricket team by businessman Singh from Mir.

With American Premiere

League (APL) announcing the 1st season of the seven-nation league in New Jersey, organizers declared, “Finally professional cricket has arrived in USA”

Jay Mir, who had the vision to bring highest quality cricket in T20 format to New York, set out to make it a reality. He sought the approval from the United States Cricket Board which reports to the International Cricket Council.

The ten-day cricket tournament starts on September 20th and goes on till the 30th.

With two games during the day and one at night in Yogi Berra Stadium, the league follows the T20 format.

The opening ceremony is set for September 13, 2021 at the stadium with top performing musical groups of Junoon and world famous Shazia Manzoor.

Seven teams involved in the League include Indian, Pakistani, England, Australian, West Indies, Bangladeshi and American.

## BILLIONS OF FANS

A sport which is followed by about two billion fans, the game has been long sought after by cricket lovers in United States. Not new to North America where U.S. and Canadian cricket teams did exist and though the game was 1st played in United States in late 1800s, it never took root.

Now with about 20 million immigrants in the U.S. from countries where cricket is the 2nd religion, the game had to be launched, organizers say.

Mir formed American Sports and Entertainment Group and built his plan on the lines of the Indian Premiere League (IPL). He announced the tournament as an exciting venture in summer and started to auction the teams.

He sold Pakistani, English, Australian and West Indies teams quite quickly but held on to the most coveted and sought after team of Premium Indians. He

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“From left, official from ARY, Sam Singh, owner Premium Indians USA KINGS, Muhammad Ali, owner Premium Pakistanis, Asif Jamal, President of APL, Sara Sooy Deputy Commissioner of Somerset County, Jay Mir, owner and chairman of APL, Victoria Morgan, owner Premium English team and Dr. Zenon Christodoulou.