

A background image of a hockey player in a blue jersey with the Indian national flag and the word 'INDIA' on the back, leaning forward on a blue field. Overlaid on the image are several concentric, semi-transparent arcs in orange, green, and light blue. In the center, there is a white line-art logo of two crossed hockey sticks and a ball.

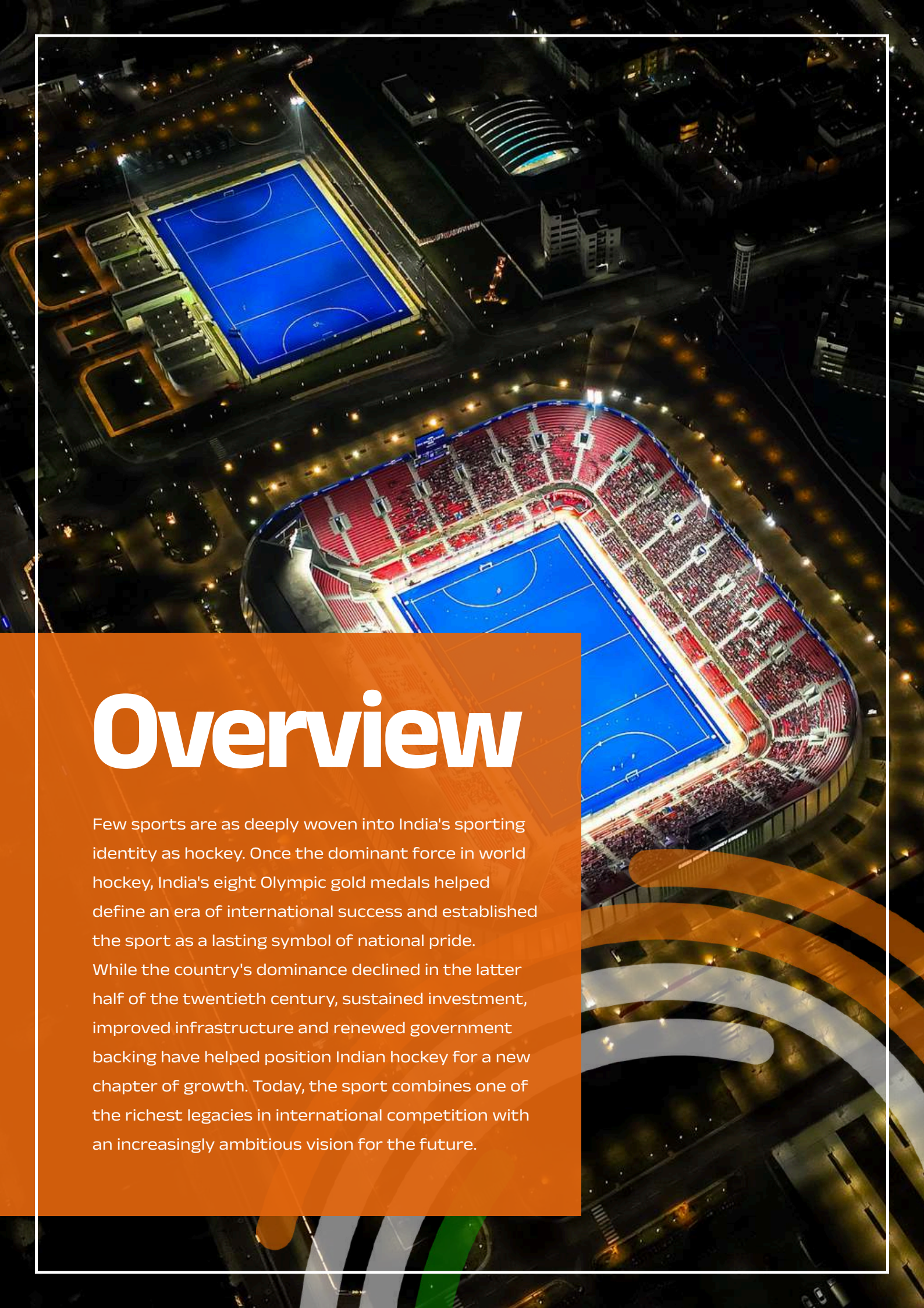
HOCKEY

INDIA

A Sporting Legacy Driving a Modern Revival

At a glance

Sport	Field Hockey
Olympic Gold Medals	8 (Men)
Last Olympic Gold	1980
Latest Olympic Medal	Bronze – Tokyo 2020
Key Growth Driver	Government investment and infrastructure
Leading State	Odisha
Domestic League	Hockey India League (HIL)
Major International Tournament	FIH Hockey World Cup

An aerial night photograph of a sports complex. In the foreground, a large indoor hockey arena is filled with spectators, its red seats and blue ice rink clearly visible. To the upper left, an outdoor hockey rink with a blue surface is also illuminated. The surrounding area includes parking lots, other buildings, and city lights at night.

Overview

Few sports are as deeply woven into India's sporting identity as hockey. Once the dominant force in world hockey, India's eight Olympic gold medals helped define an era of international success and established the sport as a lasting symbol of national pride.

While the country's dominance declined in the latter half of the twentieth century, sustained investment, improved infrastructure and renewed government backing have helped position Indian hockey for a new chapter of growth. Today, the sport combines one of the richest legacies in international competition with an increasingly ambitious vision for the future.

Is Hockey India's National Sport?

Despite widespread belief, India does not officially have a national sport.

Hockey has long been associated with that title because of its extraordinary place in the country's sporting history, driven by:

- India's historic Olympic dominance
- Legendary players including Major Dhyan Chand, Balbir Singh Sr. and modern icon PR Sreejesh
- The sport's enduring role in India's national identity

The men's team won eight Olympic gold medals, including an unprecedented run of six consecutive titles between 1928 and 1956 one of the greatest periods of dominance in Olympic history.





From Dominance to Decline

As international hockey evolved, India's dominance gradually diminished.

The introduction of artificial turf, advances in coaching and tactical systems, and increased investment by competing nations exposed weaknesses in India's own development pathway. The country struggled to keep pace in several key areas, including:

- Infrastructure
- Coaching
- Player development
- Sports science

Following Olympic gold in 1980, India entered a prolonged period without an Olympic medal, highlighting the challenges of adapting to a rapidly changing international game.



A group of Indian hockey players and a coach posing in front of the Olympic rings. The players are wearing orange jerseys with 'ODISHA' and 'india' logos. The coach is wearing a blue and white tracksuit. The background shows a green field and a chain-link fence.

The Revival of Indian Hockey

Over the past decade, Indian hockey has undergone a significant revival.

Investment from both the public and private sectors, improved coaching structures and the return of professional domestic competition have helped restore confidence across the sport.

A defining moment came at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games (held in 2021), when India secured the men's bronze medal, ending a 41-year wait for an Olympic medal in men's field hockey.

The women's national team has also emerged as an increasingly competitive force, reflecting broader improvements across the game's development pathway.



Odisha: The Engine Behind India's Revival

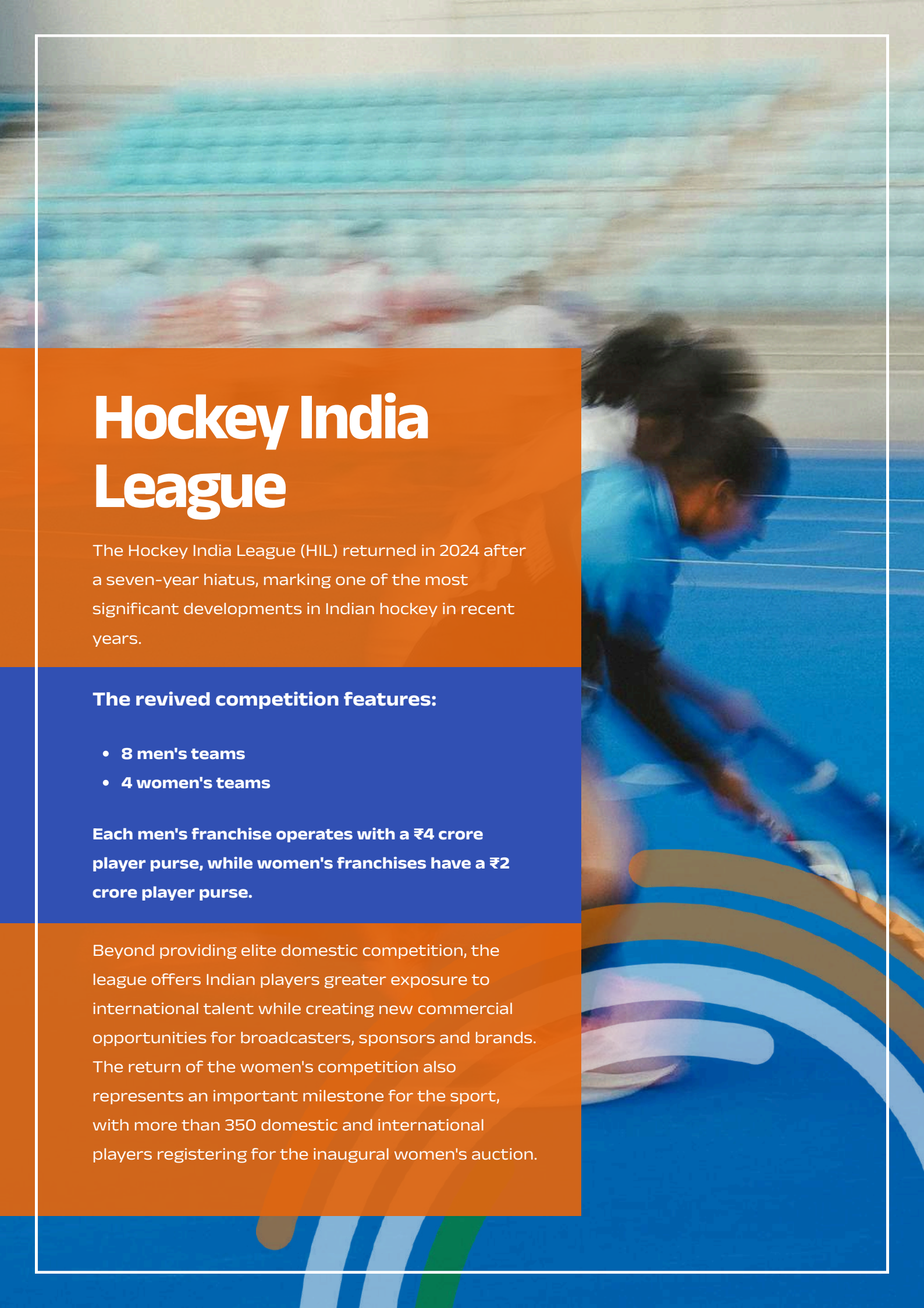
No region has played a greater role in Indian hockey's resurgence than Odisha.

The state government has become one of the sport's most significant long-term investors, extending its sponsorship of Hockey India until 2036 and positioning itself at the centre of the country's hockey ecosystem.

Odisha has also invested heavily in infrastructure, including the 20,000-seat

Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela the world's largest fully seated field hockey stadium.

Beyond infrastructure, the state has strengthened India's international profile by hosting major global events, including the 2018 and 2023 FIH Hockey Men's World Cups, demonstrating how strategic government investment can accelerate both sporting success and destination branding.



Hockey India League

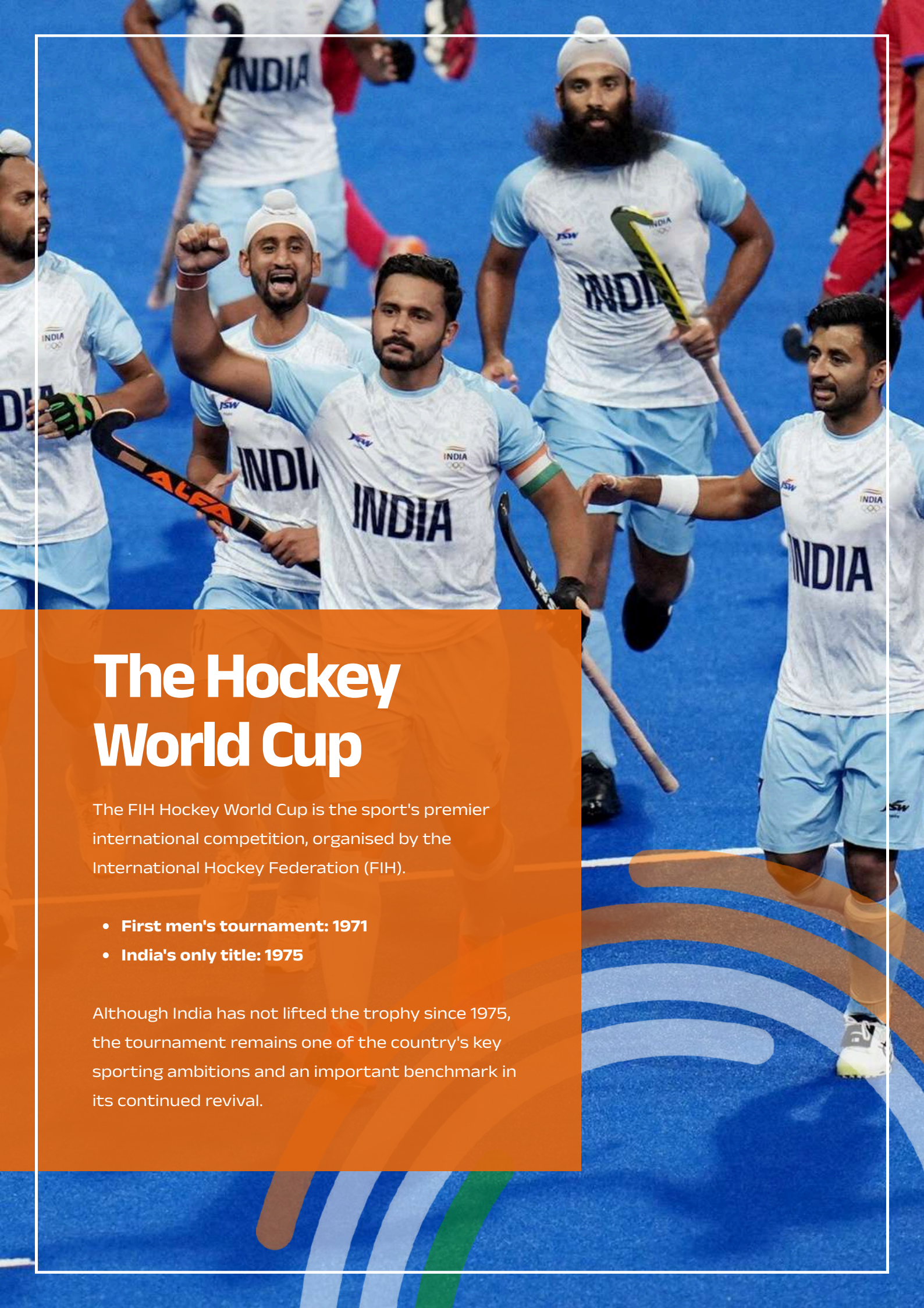
The Hockey India League (HIL) returned in 2024 after a seven-year hiatus, marking one of the most significant developments in Indian hockey in recent years.

The revived competition features:

- 8 men's teams
- 4 women's teams

Each men's franchise operates with a ₹4 crore player purse, while women's franchises have a ₹2 crore player purse.

Beyond providing elite domestic competition, the league offers Indian players greater exposure to international talent while creating new commercial opportunities for broadcasters, sponsors and brands. The return of the women's competition also represents an important milestone for the sport, with more than 350 domestic and international players registering for the inaugural women's auction.

A group of Indian hockey players in white jerseys with 'INDIA' and 'JSW' logos are celebrating on a blue field. One player in the center is raising his fist, while others are running and holding hockey sticks. The background shows more players and a blue field with some decorative patterns.

The Hockey World Cup

The FIH Hockey World Cup is the sport's premier international competition, organised by the International Hockey Federation (FIH).

- **First men's tournament: 1971**
- **India's only title: 1975**

Although India has not lifted the trophy since 1975, the tournament remains one of the country's key sporting ambitions and an important benchmark in its continued revival.



Market landscape

India remains one of the world's leading hockey nations, regularly competing at the highest level of international competition.

Continued government investment, growing commercial interest and the return of the Hockey India League are strengthening the sport's long-term ecosystem, while increased support for both the men's and women's game reflects a broader commitment to sustainable growth.

Together, these developments are helping reposition hockey as one of India's most strategically important Olympic sports.



Why it matters

India's hockey story is no longer defined solely by its historic success. It is increasingly becoming a case study in how sustained investment, government support and professional competition can revitalise a national sport.

For brands, rights holders and governing bodies, hockey represents an opportunity to engage with one of India's most recognisable sporting properties at a time when the sport is rebuilding its profile, expanding its commercial ecosystem and attracting renewed public interest. The continued investment in infrastructure, domestic competition and international events signals a market with growing long-term potential.

Key takeaways

Hockey remains one of India's most culturally significant sports, underpinned by an unmatched Olympic legacy and generations of national icons.

Long-term investment, particularly from the Odisha government — is transforming the sport's infrastructure, development pathway and international profile.

The return of the Hockey India League is creating new opportunities for players, fans and commercial partners, positioning Indian hockey for its next phase of growth.

