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LEAD STORY

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KARAN PAUL ON PARTNERING PREITY, BUYING YUVI AND LEE, SETTING GOALS FOR APEEJAY AND BEING MR COOL...

KHILADI NO. 1

CRAZY ABOUT CRICKET

Are you a cricket fan? Did you play the game?

I am a huge cricket fan though over the years I have not been able to go to many matches. I have always been into sport and at the school level had participated very actively in cricket, swimming, table-tennis etc. I have very fond memories of playing cricket with friends at my house, invariably breaking glass panes!

Any cricket heroes?

Viv Richards, Imran Khan and Kapil Dev.

How did your involvement with IPL begin?

The whole thing from knowing, deciding and winning happened in barely three months. As prominent corporates, my partners and I had been presented their new proposition by BCCI. We knew they had a winner and we simply thought we must be a part of it.

Why didn't you bid for Team Calcutta?

Personally I would have loved to own Team Calcutta. However, we took an informed choice, keeping all the partners' views in mind. I am delighted that Shah Rukh has won Calcutta. I have the privilege of knowing him and his wife Gauri, who was in school with me in Delhi, and I know he will do the most fantastic job for Calcutta and the game of cricket here.

How did the partnership with Preity Zinta, Ness Wadia and Mohit Burman happen?

They are all very good friends of mine and the BCCI proposition moved from a casual discussion amongst us to great excitement and then the winning bid.

Preity is a star draw, but how involved is she? What is she bringing to the table and how much priority will she give the team?

Preity is a star in every way. She has tremendous energy and enthusiasm. Apart from being charismatic and creative she is very, very smart and is fully involved. Her connections in media, industry and government are huge value-adds. Her mere presence has raised the profile of our team enormously. Most importantly, the public loves her. And our team must connect with the public at every level.

Why Team Mohali?

Mohali was our first choice. It has the best stadium, by far, the



PICTURE BY RASHEE CHANDRA

SNAPSHOTS

Date of birth: November 3, 1969

Grew up in: Calcutta and New Delhi

School: La Martiniere for Boys, Calcutta; Modern School, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi

College: Brown University, USA

First day in office: Was very memorable as Mr Jit Paul in a sublime gesture insisted that I sit on his chair in his office while he took a chair further down the large desk. He had been sitting in that place for almost 30 years and the humility of his symbolism touches me always.

One thing I want to achieve: I have set myself very clear goals and milestones of achievement. In business, I want the Apeejay group to be the most profitable family-owned business by 2010 as that is our 100th year.

best captain for 20:20 (Yuvraj Singh) and a brilliant base of talent in our catchment area. Moreover, we love the spirit of Punjab and its enterprise and diaspora spread across the world which will become very important as the format becomes bigger and more international.

What will your team be called?

(Smiles) Kings XI Punjab.

How big a factor was Yuvraj?

We love Yuvraj and are very excited that he is leading our team.

Winning the team for \$76 million was a close call (over Hero Honda). Do you now look back and wish you had gone for a Delhi or Bangalore?

(Smiles) I repeat, Mohali was our first choice!

What was the strategy before you stepped in for the players' auction? Can you take us through the choice of players?

Our strategy was to get the best talent in the top order, who can even individually win games. We had wanted players in their prime who have years to go and who we considered had the mindset for 20:20. We have also taken top-rate local talent who will really grow and shine given this international-standard exposure we



I am delighted that Shah Rukh has won Calcutta. I have the privilege of knowing him and his wife Gauri, who was in school with me in Delhi...

will be providing. They will be the future stars of India. I think we have done a great job in our selection. My partner Ness has led this and we think we will have the winning team!

Your two main spends were Brett Lee (\$900,000) and Irfan Pathan (\$925,000). Why?

They are amongst the best at what they do and their selection has gone a long way in our team being considered very well balanced, young, aggressive and amongst the top teams in the league.

Along with?

Personally I feel Mohali, Hyderabad, Chennai and Calcutta are the top teams.

Was Tom Moody the coach of choice?

Moody is today considered the best coach in the world and we are honoured to have him on board. He was actively involved with Yuvraj and Ness in deciding the composition of the team.

Do you regret losing out on any player?

We would have liked to have Harbhajan since he is a star and from Chandigarh. However, there are always trade-offs and budgets, given the 5 million cap on salaries. Otherwise we are very satisfied (smiles).

What specific role do you have within the quartet?

We are all involved and are playing to our skills. My role is across the financial, administrative and resource functions.

How will you juggle IPL with your business? Will you be watching Team Mohali play?

We are all working like crazy right now but our objective is to put up a professional executive team which will manage the business for us. As with the players and coach we want the best people. We will make an announcement on this very soon. I will surely be attending as many matches as I can wherever we play. I don't think it will interfere too much with my schedule. Besides I do want to enjoy the thrill of being a team owner and hopefully taking it to the finals.

Picture this: Mohali versus Calcutta at Eden Gardens; who will you support?

(Laughs out loud!) I will be torn. However, my money will be on Mohali!

LEAD STORY

Contd

BIG ON BUSINESS

It is also expansion time for Apeejay... Yes, we are in the midst of the biggest expansion our group has ever embarked upon and its definitely exciting times at Apeejay. Overall, our group has had a great financial year and I do expect an even better record-breaker going forward to 2008-2009. This has been led by shipping and hotels and real estate. The tea market has been tough for us though we have continued to invest heavily for the future.

Can you take us through the new projects on your table? At Apeejay, we have drawn up an investment programme of over Rs 6,000 crore to be completed by 2010. This is through new hotels and ships. Real estate and commercial park development. The new Oxford stores and Flurys. The Typhoon tea launch in India. We are also putting up two world-standard ship building yards in Bengal and Orissa.... Apeejay focussed and invested in education very early on and our institutes across our families are very well regarded. In line with that we are also building two large knowledge parks in Haldia and Bhubaneswar.

Any special plans for Apeejay turning 100 in 2010? We are in the process of formulating our plans to make this a truly memorable milestone. We will do



Viv Richards, Imran Khan and Kapil Dev were my cricket heroes

something special to honour our ancestors and all the people who have worked with us and all the others who have supported us.

How far behind is Calcutta in the good life game? What needs to change and how? Things have changed but we still have a long way to go.

GLIMPSE OF THE GOOD LIFE

Not many know that you are the proud owner of a yacht... I love my boat, *Sky Dancer*. It was bought with my very good friend Sanjiv Goenka and The Park Hotel. It is for our exclusive use and puts a whole different spin to living in Calcutta. I enjoy being outdoors in beautiful scenery and this gives me the access 10 minutes from my office on Park Street.

How particular are you about what you wear? I wear very specific things and am very particular.

How garden proud are you? Very. We participate and do exceedingly well in the annual flower shows. I am blessed to have amazingly educated gardeners.

What in your book are musts to have a good life? Time first of all, which is the hardest to get. Health and intelligence. Good food and wine. Natural beauty. Loving family and friends.

We would have liked to have Harbhajan since he is a star and from Chandigarh...

Being so firmly entrenched in Calcutta is a business boon or a bane? In India, I would not live or work anywhere else. Calcutta has been great to us and it has been a boon.

Pratim D. Gupta

KARAN'S RAPID FIRE



Preity Zinta or Aishwarya Rai? **Preity**



Yuvraj Singh or Sourav Ganguly? **Yuvraj**

Roxy or Someplace Else? **Roxy**



Calcutta or Mohali? **Calcutta**

Calcutta or London? **Calcutta**

Family or friends? **Both**

Cigarette or wine? **Both together is divine**



Flurys or Atrium? **Flurys**

Love or profits? **Love**

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