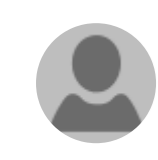


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OTHER SPORTS
Words of wisdom



Kalyan Ashok

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Captain Pavan Murthy, who passed away last month, was a doyen among tennis coaches

“These boys are playing ‘blind’ tennis.” The comment, both cryptic and concise, was what one had come to expect from tennis coaching legend, Captain Pavan Murthy, who passed away last month following a brief illness.

Over the decades, Bengaluru has been home to some excellent and well-known tennis coaches whose wards have gone on to play tennis at national and international levels. There is little doubt that the doyen among them was Pavan Murthy. Over a full life of 78 years, Pavan lived and worked across three continents sharing his vast knowledge and passion for the game to those who sought his advice. In his untimely demise, the tennis world has lost an astute analyst of the game.

Pavan Murthy was a commercial pilot based in Bahrain, but his tennis talent saw him emerge as a top player in the Middle East.

A four-time Rothman’s Cup champion in the 1970s got him an invitation by the ruling family of Bahrain to become the country’s National and Davis Cup coach. Pavan’s coaching skills were recognized and acknowledged by the heads of the tennis world’s most important associations.

Tennis coach Nick Bollettieri certified him a USPTA Master Professional and Dennis Van Der Meer, the founder of the Professional Tennis Registry (PTR, USA) made him a PTR Charter Member. Pavan was the first and only Indian to be accorded this privilege.

While coaching the Bahrain National team over several years, he took the team to the top echelons of the Asia Zone Davis Cup and his players to the ATP top 100 ranks. Post-retirement, he settled in Bengaluru choosing to work with like-minded coaches, who shared his passion and commitment for tennis.

Among them was M Krishna Kumar, the founder of the Kinesis Tennis Academy, who became a close friend.

At Kumar’s request, Pavan become an advisor to his academy and under his tutelage and guidance, Kinesis went on to produce and train many national and international grade players and coaches.

Pavan Murthy often lamented that Indian players were unable to make their presence felt in a big way on the world stage. “We are still stuck in the W.G. Grace era,” he used to comment, adding, “It is time we played modern tennis.”

Pointing out that Indian players lacked focus and had a tendency to play their shots ‘blind,’ he felt they lacked the technique to play using heavy top-spin on both flanks.

They had an over-reliance on serve-and-volley that was best suited to doubles play.

He would continuously emphasize the need to develop good fundamentals among the youngsters and cautioned parents against quick-fix solutions, academy hopping and changing coaches frequently for better results. “Tennis is a long-term commitment and there are no short cuts to success. Perseverance is the key,” was his advice to students and parents alike.

While Pavan Murthy is no more with us, we would do well to act on his words of wisdom.

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Captain Pavan Murthy

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