

ORIENT IRRIGATION INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT



Winning team - India: team captain Naresh Bhatia, Mohammed Babul, Niraj Makhija, Raj Shahani and Shefali Verma.

APRIL, 1996. The 15th annual Orient Irrigation International Tournament had eight teams fighting for world squash domination. Each five-player team was loosely based on nationality and fielded four players from the men's league and one woman from the ladies league.

Group A consisted of defending champions Pakistan, Chairman's Invitational, UK and Egypt while India, Pan Global, England and last year's runners-up Rest of the World formed Group B.

India dominated Group B from the beginning securing top spot after only

two matches, leaving the other 3 teams to fight it out for second place. The Rest of the World team had, in every one of the previous 14 tournaments, made it into the finals but 15 proved to be their unlucky number, as they failed to make it even as far as the semi-finals, leaving the door open for England to go through. Group A meanwhile was in a much closer race although Pakistan, winners in both '94 and '95, were at the bottom of their group when the overnight tallies were announced. However, they managed to pick things up to sneak into second place as UK held on to the top spot.

In the semi-finals India steamrolled over Pakistan for their first ever rendez-vous in the finals, while on Court 2 England shocked the UK by beating them, setting up an all Group B final.

Having already played each other in the preliminaries both teams knew what they were up against. India chalked up two matches before Gautam Duseja managed to put England on the scoreboard but Raj Shahani put an end to England's hopes as he beat Michael Hyde to secure the title for India.

In the fight for third place, UK recovered from their upset loss to triumph over the luckless Pakistani team.



Honorary Egyptian Jim Naguib and Pan Globalite Nancy Iskander