



SOG Grandmasters Series: Koneru Humpy & Ajinkya Rahane Hail West Zone Champions, Advocate Bringing Mind Sports to the Mainstream

The tournament witnessed a massive response with over 1,50,000 registrations from the West Zone

Mumbai, 05 March 2025: The inaugural West Zone Finals of the SOG Grandmasters Series, hosted by the Skillhub Online Games Federation (SOGF) on Monday and Tuesday, showcased strategy, skill, and cognitive excellence in the first-ever on-ground competition, while the winners across three mind sports categories secured the Major Dhyan Chand Scholarship and spots in the National Finals to be held in New Delhi later this year.

The West Zonal Finals were held at Sahara Star, Vile Parle, Mumbai in a glittering ceremony graced by esteemed dignitaries, including the Minister of Information Technology of Maharashtra Shri Ashish Shelar, former India Test Captain Ajinkya Rahane, and Youngest ever Women Grandmaster Padma Shri Koneru Humpy. Together they felicitated the winners across the three sports and supported mind sports in the country.

The tournament witnessed winners across ICM and ICMB categories, celebrating outstanding talent in mind sports. In the ICM Women's category, Akshita Jain secured the top spot, followed by Swera Bragance and Dnyanada Unmesh Gujarathi. The ICM Men's category saw Jval Saurin Patel emerge as the champion, with Md Nubairshah Shaik and Wagh Suyog finishing second and third, respectively. In the ICMB category, Darpan Inani, Aryan B Joshi, and Kakade Atul showcased their remarkable skills, earning well-deserved recognition. Their victories highlight the ever-growing prominence of mind sports in India.

Reflecting on the event's success, Koneru Humpy stated, *"The SOG Grandmasters Series is a game-changer for mind sports in India. It is heartening to see such enthusiasm among young players, and I am proud to be associated with an initiative that nurtures skill-based gaming at such a grand scale with Chess being at the forefront."*

Ajinkya Rahane, known for his strategic mindset on the cricket field, echoed similar sentiments, he said *"Mind sports require discipline, patience, and strategy—qualities that are essential for any athlete and for playing any sport. Witnessing the passion and commitment of these competitors especially in Blind Chess was an eye opener at the West Zone Finals. "*

The two-day event featured intense matchups among the top finalists, with participants battling for coveted spots in the upcoming SOG Grandmasters National Finals, New Delhi. The winners were awarded the prestigious Major Dhyan Chand Scholarship, reinforcing SOGF's commitment to recognizing and supporting India's brightest mind sports talents.



Shankar Aggarwal, President, Skillhub Online Games Federation (SOGF), emphasized the event's broader impact, he said *"With stalwarts like Koneru Humpy and Ajinkya Rahane backing the series, mind sports in India are receiving the recognition they truly deserve. We are thrilled by the response and look forward to elevating this platform further."*

The action now shifts to the North and East Zonal Finals, culminating in the SOG Grandmasters National Finals in New Delhi. With increased participation and growing engagement, the initiative is set to redefine the landscape of competitive gaming in India.

The SOG Grandmasters Series continues to solidify its reputation as India's premier skill-based gaming championship, bridging the gap between traditional and digital formats. With increased participation and growing engagement, the initiative is set to redefine the landscape of competitive gaming in India.

About SOGF:

The Skillhub Online Games Federation (SOGF) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting and developing esports and skilled online gaming in India. With a focus on building a vibrant esports ecosystem, SOGF works to nurture talent and create opportunities for players and fans alike. Through key partnerships, such as the collaboration with the International Esports Federation (IESF), International Mind Sports Association (IMSA) and Global Esports Federation (GEF) to bring an international tournament to India, SOGF is positioning the country as a key player in the global esports and skilled online gaming arena.