

# Legacy

## A Journey Through Time



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Nestled in the small village of Yeola, located in the district of Nashik, Maharashtra, the Lord and Hardy Recreational Club, now known as Navbharat Krida Mandal, has stood the test of time for over 120 years. Initially established during the British colonial era, the club has grown to become a pillar of tennis and sports culture in the region. It is not just a place for sports, but a living testament to tradition, community, and dedication to the game. At first glance, the club's historical charm is evident in its old buildings made of stone bricks, with fired clay roofing that has weathered decades of time. Standing tall beside these structures is a banyan tree, which has witnessed the growth of the club for over a century. The tree symbolizes the strength and resilience of the club's legacy, growing with it and standing firm in its support of the community.

When the club was first established, it began with just two clay tennis courts. Over time, the number grew to four, and the addition of a badminton court, table tennis and gym floor further expanded its offerings. However, the club's true

strength lies in its ability to nurture talent and promote the sport of tennis, ensuring that each generation passes on the torch of tradition to the next.

One of the club's proudest achievements is its ability to involve families in the sport. Over 25 father-son duos are members of the club, a remarkable testament to the sense of community it fosters. Additionally, there are around 100 members who are involved in various aspects of the club, whether through playing tennis or participating in other physical activities. The club has always encouraged members to stay active and supportive, and this spirit is particularly visible in the daily gatherings for morning sports and exercise.

Navbharat Krida Mandal has also been the host of numerous prestigious tournaments over the years, with the Yeola Open being one of the oldest and most prominent events. This tournament, held annually in December or January, draws players from cities and states across India. The club proudly says so because back in the 2000s, the renowned coach, Mr. Datta Shinde and Elite player of that time Mr. Nandan Bal,

played in the tournament. The club also organizes events for young players under the auspices of the Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association (MSLTA) and the School Games Federation of India (SGFI).

Additionally, it has witnessed zonal and inter-university competitions, further elevating its reputation as a hub for tennis.

One of the club's most remarkable legacies is its support of multi-generational tennis families. The Gujrati family, for example, has seen its fourth generation play on the club's courts. Laksh Gujrati, a talented under-18 player, secured both a silver medal for his team and a bronze medal in the individual category at the SGFI national competition. His father, Yati Gujrati, has represented India at the ITF Masters in 2024, showcasing the club's continued role in shaping successful players.

The club has also been home to legends like Shrikant Parekh, a former teacher and principal in Yeola, whose tennis career has spanned more than six decades. At 82, Mr. Shrikant Parekh continues to play in tournaments such as the Solaris Gista Tournament held on Jan 19, 2025, and has accumulated over 150 trophies in his career. He has also captained the Indian team at the ITF Masters. When asked about his achievements, Parekh humbly admitted

that he had lost count of his tournament wins- a true reflection of his dedication to the sport.

The club is also proud of another legendary member, Dhavalchandra Patel – Veteran Tennis Champion & Coach

Dhavalchandra Patel is a passionate tennis player with an illustrious love for tennis spanning over six decades. A dedicated athlete and mentor, he has coached numerous aspiring tennis players, shaping the future of the sport. Competing in the senior circuit, he has won multiple ITF tournaments and proudly represented India in the 70+ age category at the 2023 World Championships. His unwavering commitment to the game continues to inspire players of all generations.

Not only has the club produced exceptional male players, but it has also nurtured female talent. Avani Patel, despite the challenges of being one of the few women members, played at the SGFI National Tennis Championship, further proving that the club supports all athletes, regardless of gender.

Yeola Navbharat Krida Mandal has a rich history of producing outstanding players who have gone on to represent major competitions like the All India University (AIU) tournaments. These players have not only brought recognition to the club but also left a lasting legacy for future generations. Some of the notable players

who have represented AIU include:

1. Kadar Kathib (1980-81)
2. Shirish Nandurdikar (1984-85)
3. Kishor Phatak (1985-86)
4. Rupali Patel (1991-92)
5. Bhavana Patni (1991-92)
6. Ajay Jain (1993-94)
7. Yati Gujrati (1997-98)
8. Amit Patel (2002-03)
9. Kiran Kulkarni (2007-08)

Yeola has seen significant improvements in sports infrastructure, and this tennis club has been a key part of that growth. In contrast to the increasing costs of tennis in bigger cities like Pune and Mumbai, where booking a court can cost Rs 400 or more per hour, Yeola's Navbharat Krida Mandal remains accessible to all.

The club's commitment to making tennis affordable while focusing on the well-being of its members has made it an important institution in the region. Despite offering clay courts, which typically require higher maintenance costs, the club keeps its fees low. For just Rs 400 per month, members can enjoy access to the club's classic facilities, making it accessible to a wide range of people from different socio-economic backgrounds. This affordability allows the community to participate in the sport

while promoting physical health and fitness, all within a supportive and encouraging environment.

The legacy of Yeola Navbharat Krida Mandal is founded on its dedication to the sport of tennis, its strong sense of community, and its emphasis on improving the health of its members. The club has helped shape the careers of many players and continues to play an important role in elevating tennis in the region, inspiring future generations to get involved in the sport.

A player receives skills, moral and discipline from his coach, so let's not forget them. Kiran Kulkarni and Sumit Gaikwad have been successfully organizing both tennis and badminton coaching camps under the guidance of Mr. Shirish Nandurdikar and elite player Mr. Shrikant Parekh for the last two decades.

Maintaining the clay courts is no easy task, and the club proudly acknowledges the 4 generations of the Mali family, who have been taking care of the courts. Suresh Mali, along with his father and son's Shrikant and Manoj, have ensured that the club's facilities are in pristine condition, showcasing a deep loyalty to both the club and the sport.

The club also boasts an event in its pocket- Four and a Half acker of land and more, which is owned by club and

has no boundary wall. The club fought for the place when the government issued a road through the center of the area. Winning the fight, the space serves as a playground for activities like walking, jogging, and enjoying fun fairs. Here, smaller kids can play cricket and other games without hesitation or restrictions. Such large playgrounds are rarely available these days, and the people of Yeola greatly benefit from it.

Apart from this, every member of Nav Bharat Krida Mandal Yeola accompanies the campaign of Swachh Yeola Sundar Yeola, initiated by Vidya International School, which is governed by Mr. Rajesh Patel, a member of the club. This factor of club proves social engagement of its members towards society.

The true essence of this club lies not just in its facilities or tournaments, but in the

rich culture it has fostered over the years. Legacy is not created overnight; it is built through decades of effort, trust in the process, and a commitment to passing on traditions to future generations. The culture of Navbharat Krida Mandal has created a lasting impact on the future of tennis in Yeola and beyond.

Through this article, we members of club encourage everyone to embrace physical activity and be a part of a community that supports sports. Whether it's joining a tennis club or participating in any other form of exercise, we must carry the torch of physical fitness and tradition to the next generation. The legacy of Navbharat Krida Mandal is a powerful reminder that sports can shape communities, create lifelong bonds, and contribute to the development of individuals.

