

GENERAL

Volleyball gets a new pro league

Principal Correspondent

KOCHI: It's new, it's got colour and it holds loads of promise.

The Kerala Volleyball League, which promises to raise the profile of the sport in a big way while bringing the country's biggest stars to play in the southern State, was launched at the Dream Hotel here on Monday night.

The KVL, the country's first professional volleyball league, will have actor Mammooty as its brand ambassador.

The event, created by Mumbai-based sports management group SportzConsult and which will be jointly organised by the Kerala State Volleyball Association, will run in Kozhikode from February 20 to 28.

Players' auction

And much like cricket's IPL, a bidding process will be conducted to finalise the six franchises out of 10 select districts, and players — around 100 from Kerala and outside — will be auctioned to the franchises. The teams are likely to have spicy names like Kannur Kings and Kochi Knights.

"The teams are likely to have a base price of Rs. 2 crore each," said Jitendra Joshi, the CEO and founder of SportzConsult.

"That will be for ten years, it will work out to something like Rs. 20 lakh per year. The teams will have their own mascots, theme songs and matches will shown live on TV."

Each 12-member team will have eight players from Kerala of which two will be under 21 years. The other four will from outside the State. Two matches will be played each day and the top two finishers will play a final.

"This is a new beginning, the league will have fireworks," said Mammooty. "I'm not a cricket fan. The sports I watch on TV are volleyball and basketball. I like two-hour games. Volleyball a simple game, there are no complicated rules, no lbw."

Nalakath Basheer, the Kerala State Volleyball Association Secretary, said the KVL would herald a new beginning for the sport in the State.

"We have planned a lot of new schemes to bring back volleyball to its former glory," he said.

The Kerala Sports Council President T.P. Dasan, KSVVA President Charly Jacob and many former Kerala and India volleyball stars were present at the launch function.