

## NBA As A Model To Promote Basketball In India

- Q. By getting inspiration of NBA and EPL brand policies, if you have to develop your own India league (any sport), what will be your main objectives and ways to achieve them? Give some examples and develop your study.

The sport I have chosen is basketball. The league system that I plan on implementing is similar to the one in place for the Indian Premier League (Cricket). So before detailing the model/system for the basketball league (say, Indian Basketball League aka IBL), let's look at the system in place for the IPL.

**Objectives:** Create a commercial closed league for basketball in India. Grow and develop the sport of basketball in India. Make it one of the top viewed leagues in India.

**Ways to achieve the objectives:** Basketball is a niche sport in India, hence needs a lot of marketing and promotional muscle to be put behind it.

The structure of the IPL can be closest associated to a closed league. The brands are controlled by the league, in this case the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India). The BCCI decides the number of players a team can acquire, the maximum number of overseas players in a team and the salary caps. Currently, with eight teams, each team plays each other (home and away) in a round robin format. At the end of the league stage, the top 4 teams play the play-offs to compete for the title.

The sport of Kabaddi can be viewed as an example of a situation where a sport not very popular at the national level has been completely transformed by having a commercial and structured league format. The Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) began in 2014, and by now has overtaken football to claim the second spot. It is the second most viewed sporting league in India.

**The IBL (Indian Basketball League):** At the core, the IBL's plan is to own private companies to own franchisees (the same eight cities having the IPL teams can be chosen to begin with). There will be no separate conferences because of the small number of teams. Rather, the top 4 will compete in a best of 7 games play-off series to win the title. It will create a synergy between the private investors and the sports industry. The league will be governed by the **Basketball Federation of India (BFI)**. By involving big companies and film and media personalities to invest in the franchisees, the league and sport opens itself up to the larger audience. The teams can earn revenue through merchandise and by getting a share of the media rights deals that the BFI controls. By involving celebrities and big industrialists, the people will find an affinity with them. A consequence of this will be an increase in the following of the franchise. There is a clear demand for the sport of basketball in India. The following brief figures indicate the sentiment. There were 120 million TV viewers for the 2017-18 season. The NBA also reported 1.4 billion impressions on Facebook for the 2017-18 season. The junior NBA program trains about 10 million kids (2018) compared to the 150,000 that it started with (2013).

The league, being a televised and a commercialised one, will also provide the domestic and the international players a platform to increase their visibility and improve their chances of moving and playing in bigger leagues (e.g. NBA).

Another method/possibility is to have the same league format, but it will be governed and guided by the BFI and the NBA respectively. This will immediately put the league under the spotlight, bring a new audience and also expose the league to the India NBA fans. This could be viewed as a win-win situation. Having an association with the NBA will surely boost the image of Indian basketball locally and internationally, but it will also further improve the NBA's footprint in India. This will also

provide the players a direct link between the league and the NBA, and the IBL can act as a “feeder league”.

Be it by using the NBA or by going independent with the involvement of private investors, the league system proposed will definitely aid in lifting the status of basketball in the country.