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# Son of the soil Girish to lead Puneri Paltan in PKL 6

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**Pune:** Mercurial defender Girish Ernak was on Wednesday named captain of Puneri Paltan team for the Pro Kabaddi League Season 6 relieving raiders from the pressure of strategizing during crucial match situation, something that was construed as weakness for some key losses over the last two seasons.

Girish, who has been with Puneri Paltan since Season 5, said he was honoured to have been bestowed with the duty of leading the team.

"I know that this is not just a designation but also a great responsibility and I hope to live up to it," said Ernak during the unveiling of team's new jersey.

"Last year, we were very young side and in a rush defenders made many silly mistakes. So this year we have done a lot of study on those aspects," he explained.

"I know Pune team since last two seasons and every players has a hunger to perform. Even new players which joined the team for Season 6 are gelling with team nicely," he added.

The team's jersey was unveiled by the Franchise CEO Kailash Kandpal, head coach Ashan Kumar, along with Ernak.

## Immense faith

"I am humbled to know that the management has immense faith in me and I promise to put forth my best foot forward to ensure that the Puneri lions roar the loudest in all the matches," said the captain.

"We as a unit are putting in lots of efforts to train and strengthen our battalion. With Ashan Sir's guidance, we are confident about bringing the trophy home this season," he added.

Kandpal said: "I am thankful to all the sponsors who have shown faith in



**SEASON BECKONS:** (From left) Ashan Kumar, Puneri Paltan coach, Anurag Vohra, IndiaBusiness Head, Kirloskar Brothers Limited, Girish Ernak, Puneri Paltan captain, Praveen Karnavat, Senior Vice-President, Corporate Material, Force Motors Limited and Puneri Paltan CEO, Kailash Kandpal, at the Jersey launch of Puneri Paltan on Wednesday.

the sport Kabaddi and team Puneri Paltan. Girish will take charge of the team this season. With his leadership skills, I am sure he will up the team's game in Season 6."

The team has been one of the most consistent teams of the league and finished in the top four for the last three seasons.

This year the team has a perfect blend of experience and young talent. Veteran players like Rajesh Mondal, Girish Ernak and Sandeep Narwal

bring with them truckloads of experience that can help the team in clinching the title this year. Also young and charged up players like Nitin Tomar, Akshay Jadhav, GB More and Rinku further add to the strength of the team.

Coach Ashan Kumar had simple message for the team.

"Play without pressure and don't worry about the results. Be alert for 40 minutes, every minute is important and don't wait for third raid (do or die raid). Assume every raid as a third

raid," said Ashan, who described the team as a balanced side.

"During training I am only teaching them to play collectively. Ernak is a leader who has a ability to guide the players, control the situation and he has an attitude which can make any team champion," is how coach viewed his captain.

The league will begin on October 7 and Puneri Paltan will be playing its first match against U Mumba on October 7 in Chennai.

## KNOW THE CAPTAIN: GIRISH ERNAK

- A vital cog in the Puneri Paltan's defense who guards fort from the left corner. He is one of the experienced players who has represented India in the Kabaddi Masters Dubai 2018 and Jakarta Asian Games.
- Known for his grit, Girish is equally famous for his ankle holds, blocks and dashes.
- Girish began playing Kabaddi when he was in eighth standard and use to distribute newspapers to fund his Kabaddi training.
- Currently plays for Bharat Petroleum Company Ltd (BPCL) and was the best player in Maharashtra Shivshahi Cup in 2014.
- One of the best defenders that India has produced, Girish became a part of Puneri Paltan in Season 5 and was retained for season 6.

## KNOW THE COACH: ASHAN KUMAR

- An established kabaddi player and a coach, Ashan is a former services kabaddi coach and has worked closely with Nashik Army sports unit. He holds a Grade A diploma in kabaddi coaching from the National Institute of Sports.
- Ashan represented India in various international tournaments and was captain when India won Gold medal at the Beijing Asian Games and also during the 2nd, 4th and 6th South Asian Games. He was honoured with the Arjuna Award in 1999.

## THE TEAM: PUNERI PALTAN

- One of the top performing teams in the Pro Kabaddi League, Puneri Paltan are a force to reckon with. Puneri Paltan has time and again played the most thrilling matches in the league.
- Paltan have on their side the war-horses - Rajesh Mondal, Sandeep Narwal and Nitin Tomar.
- The team also has a pool of young and fresh talent like Monu, Akshay Jadhav, GB More and Rinku.
- The team is owned by Insurekot Sports Pvt. Ltd since inception. From being an underdog team to finishing in the top 3 for the last three seasons, Puneri Paltan have come a long way from season one.
- The team plays its home matches at Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex, Mahalunge-Balewadi in Pune.
- This season, Puneri Paltan's home leg matches are scheduled to happen from October 18 to 24.

