ROHAN BOPANNA: A LONG GOODBYE, AND A LEGACY THAT STAYS.

"How do you bid farewell to something that gave your life its meaning?"

Rohan Bopanna answered his own question this week. After more than two decades on tour, the 45-year-old Indian great has put down his racquet—leaving behind a career built on patience, pride, and quiet courage.

Bopanna's numbers tell one story. He won 26 tour-level doubles titles, six Masters 1000s, and two Grand Slams — men's doubles at the 2024 Australian Open with Matthew Ebden, and mixed doubles at Roland Garros 2017 with Gabriela Dabrowski. He also became World No. 1 in men's doubles — the oldest man ever to get there. In 2024 he was the oldest Grand Slam men's doubles champion, and later the oldest ATP 1000 champion in Miami. But the real story is how hard it was to reach all of that.

He turned pro in 2003. He kept going through the ups and downs, through the years when Indian tennis searched for new heroes. Doubles didn't always get the big rewards, but the travel and the grind were the same, and he stayed with it.

In 2010, he played his first major final at the US Open. In 2023, he returned to the US Open final with Matthew Ebden and fell short. Five months later, in Melbourne 2024, he turned that heartbreak into a fairy tale.

That Australian Open win was sport at its best. A 43 year-old lifting his biggest trophy of his career, smiling as he said in the on court speech: "I'm not age 43, I'm level 43." After countless tries at men's doubles majors, the breakthrough finally came. Soon after, the ranking followed. World No. 1.

There is a moment from his early years that Indian fans never forgot. In the World Group Playoff against Brazil, India trailed 0–2 after Day 1. On the last day, a 479th ranked Bopanna walked out for the deciding fifth rubber and beat the 75th ranked Ricardo Mello 6–3 7–6(2) 6–3 to seal a 3–2 comeback. The first time India ever won a Davis Cup tie from 0–2 down. For many, that was young Bopanna's unthinkable job, the night he showed what his nerve was made of.

Bopanna won doubles titles with 15 different partners. From his first with Eric Butorac in Los Angeles to the career defining runs with Matthew Ebden. He reached the ATP Finals title match twice, 2012 with Mahesh Bhupathi, 2015 with Florin Mergea. At home, he lifted trophies with several Indian partners. Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan, Divij Sharan, Ramkumar Ramanathan, and others, in the process he became a bridge between generations when Asian tennis needed one.

The Olympics gave him another story and it still hurts. In mixed doubles at Rio 2016, Sania Mirza/Rohan Bopanna won the first set in the semifinal but lost to Venus Williams/Rajeev Ram. Less than 24 hours later, in the bronze-medal match, they fell to Lucie Hradecka/Radek Stepanek 1–6 5–7 finishing fourth. One match from a medal. For many Asian fans, that remains one of the most heart breaking moments. So close, yet so far.

There was always more than medals. When debates flared in Indian tennis between administrators and top players, Bopanna took the steady path. He mentored others, set up support for doubles players, and helped build a structure where there wasn't much. He knew progress can start with the players you already have. And he kept showing up for them.

His farewell note sounded like Bopanna himself. Honest, grounded, grateful. He wrote about his home in Karnataka, about family, about pain and purpose. He thanked his sister Rashmi, his wife Supriya, and his daughter Tridha. He spoke about the years when his knees hurt too much, when he thought of quitting, and how he turned those limits into strength. Through it all, he carried himself with quiet dignity. Win or lose, first round or final.

His last match came at the Rolex Paris Masters, partnering fellow Asian star Alexander Bublik. A tight first round loss closed the record books, but not the love fans have for him. For many in Asian tennis, Bopanna was the headline for years. A steady presence and a reminder that late peaks still count.

In the end, Rohan Bopanna's career comes down to one word. Perseverance. A kind of belief that keeps you going until your best day finally arrives. He leaves as a Grand Slam champion, a World No. 1, an Asian Games gold medallist, an Olympian, and a mentor. But most of all, he leaves as Rohan, measured, kind, respected. The matches will fade. The example won't.

Thank you, Bops. From Bangalore to Melbourne, from court to classroom, you showed what belief can do.