

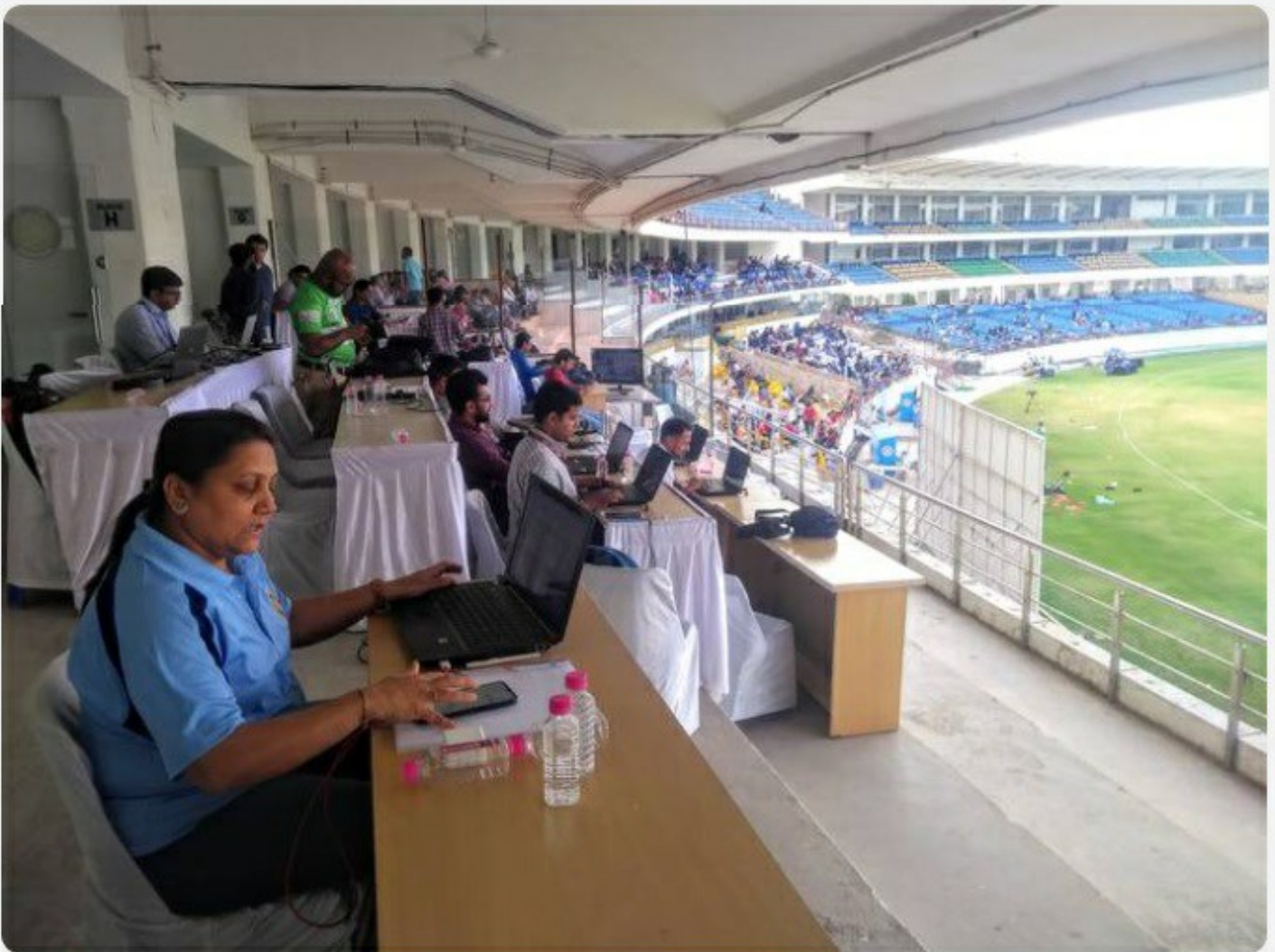
Meet Hemali, the scorer who completed 25 years

RANJI TROPHY 2019-20

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Women scorers are rare in the country; Desai is in the job since 1994, handling the pile of runs scored by legends in the middle.

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Hemali Desai in action at the SCA stadium in Rajkot during the Ranji final. - WRIDDHAAYAN BHATTACHARYYA

C ricket is not only limited to the action in the middle. There are more stakeholders working actively behind the scenes. A scorer is one. While covering the Ranji Trophy final at the

———— Khandheri ground in Rajkot, we bumped into a champion scorer who finished 25 years in the job.

Meet Hemali Desai, the woman who works as a scorer in matches hosted by the [Saurashtra Cricket Association \(SCA\)](#). There are not too many women scorers in the country. “You will find five of them in Mumbai and maybe 10 of them overall,” Desai tells *Sportstar*, while keeping a tab on the Ranji final action between Saurashtra and [Bengal](#).

Hemali started her career in 1994. “I used to play cricket in school for Gujarat. That time, there was no women’s cricket team. I would play university games. I took the test at SCA for the job of a scorer. I didn’t know much about scoring then but I took a chance. I passed the test and then, SCA gave me a chance to score in games,” says the 44-year-old.

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100 matches

Having covered all formats in domestic and international cricket, Desai is close to hitting a hundred. “I think I will cross 100 matches. I have covered everything from international to domestic, ODI to Test matches. My best memory was covering the Test match between India and England in 2016 and also, watching [Sachin Tendulkar](#) bat in a domestic match back in the day,” says Desai.

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How a scorer works

Desai enters the media box at sharp 8.30 a.m. and she has to constantly answer the journalists on the minutes, partnership and dot balls et al. “Earlier, it used to be manual calculation where you had to keep a tab on every minute. Now technology has stepped in. We use a software and the data is fit there. Rest of the calculation is automatic but you need to concentrate to see strike changes, little changes in the middle to ensure there is no mismatch in the data,” she highlights the challenges involved in the job.

Desai gets Rs 10,000 per day in all matches, domestic or international. Besides this, she also handles the SCA website. Saurashtra started playing domestic cricket from 1950-51 and Desai has updated the statistics of every batsman and bowler till 2019-20. “I never thought of money. I was getting Rs 100 per day when I started. This is a job that I love. See, I had never thought I would see Sachin bat. I feel I am lucky to be doing this job,” she adds.

When a day’s play or a match gets over, she fits the scores into the software and crosschecks the data twice before leaving the premises.