OLYMPIC GLORY

The gold medal win in the Olympic marks an unforgettable event in Indian Sports history. Ainee Nizami goes on field to find out what fans have to say.

POWER PLAY

Study hard but play even harder was the motto of this Bandraite, fifteen years down the line the equation has changed for Imran Khan.

E leventh August 2008 marked the proudest moment in the history of Indian sports with Abhinav Bindra winning the first individual gold medal for 10 m Air Rifle event. The last medal which India won was in 1980, for hockey.

The 25-year-old Indian shooting ace, who qualified in fourth place for the final, finished with an overall score of 700.5 in a thrilling finale.

A win after 28 years, is surely a proud moment for Indians all over the world. But at the same time we should think of the reason as to why India’s performance in the Olympics is not up to the mark.

“His victory is indeed a proud moment in India history,” says Nikhil Mehrotra a student. “But I feel that that we should support the champion to a much greater extent than what we do right now,” he adds.

Many tend to agree to Nikhil’s views. Lack of government support and inadequate infrastructure does contribute to the huge gap in Indian winning record.

“Abhinav’s father was able to support and provide him with the needed infrastructure. But what about those champions who do not have such facilities? Who do they turn to?” questions Milan Gandhi, a sports enthusiast.

Another reason for the laps in the past could be the fact that people nowadays are more inclined to give preferences to studies rather than sports. “Parents do not always encourage their kids to take up sports. He/She education is the first and foremost thing and the rest takes a backseat,” feels Sankalp Pradhan, an Olympic fan.

Another interesting factor is the lack of awareness. People coming from small towns barely know about the opportunities open to them in the national and international field.

“I happened to know a bronze medal holder in Fina World Aquatic Championship held in Australia. All through his youth he was unaware of the fact that he was eligible to participate in international event. He won the medal in his late 50’s,” says Deepak Mishra, a freelance.

Be it lack of knowledge, inadequate support or Government’s indifference, the fact remains that except for cricket India hardly holds a presentable image in world sports.

“With this win, we can hope that the Government finally starts providing the required support and facilities to our champions,” concludes Tanvir Singh on a positive note.

aineeinizami@gmail.com

His name evokes the memories of a legendary cricketer and he is not a film star either, 25 years old Imran Khan has always had tremendous passion for different games he played, and he played many of them.

Cricket was his first love and he played the game quite well. But his father was apprehensive that this sport was not going to take his son anywhere. And the apprehension of his father was understandable: in a country where millions nurture the dream to represent Indian cricket team and only eleven can make it to the squad, are not a healthy competition and not a safer bet.

Though he continued playing the game at school and college level. “I represented St. Andrews, Bandra at my school and continued to play for the same during my college days, but never spoke about it to my family much about it. Though trophies and certificates kept flowing, I had to hide my secret love affair,” says Imran with an ear-to-ear smile.

While playing cricket at a very young age he also discovered that games like hockey and football were beckoning him as well. And soon he and his friends realised that he was equally good with hockey stick strokes as he was with a willo. Soon he got the gut feeling that he was in love again. This time with hockey.

In the summer of 2002-03 Imran represented Mumbai University and went on to win the west zone title in the champion trophy.

“After that victory I was so elated, I wanted to play more. I also played national hockey at junior level. I became addicted to the sport,” says Imran as his smart face gets lighten up.

Later he joined Dhananjay Palley academy and continued to play at the national level. Having rubbered his shoulders with players like Dhananjay Palley, Dilip Turkey, Adrian D’Souza, Shivender Singh and Viren Rasquinha, he was trained under the current national hockey team coach Joergaim Carrevello for three years.

Meanwhile he also played football for Millington and for Wellington gymkhana where success kept showering its blessing on him but these games could hardly bring any substantial income at home.

Imran takes immense pride for being the sports lover that he is but has no air about himself what so ever. He comes across as a boy next door. He has also played hockey for Indian airlines, air India and for RCF.

Having completed his graduation he joined CNBC network thanks to his editing skills. Today he is well versed at that as well.

“I am totally intoxicated with shear passion for the game I played, but in country like ours where infrastructure for ‘other’ sports is in bad shape, true talent is neglected, hence wasted.”

He draws attention to the plight of young athletes who get unnoticed convincingly. “I suggest today’s youngsters to play hard and study even harder, so that they always have academic back up if things do not work out,” he gives a realistic advice.

PRATHAMESH JADHAV
pratham.r.jadhav@gmail.com