

# The Walmiki brothers' journey — from darkness to light

Amazing success story of the siblings from Mumbai

## HOCKEY

ASHWIN ACHAL  
BENGALURU

The Walmiki brothers, Yuvraj and Devinder, recall the great hardships they had faced when they were young.

"Very often, I had to skip meals so that Devinder had something to eat. Our family lived in a small shanty in Mumbai, with no electricity, water or even a proper roof," Yuvraj, the elder of the two, tells *The Hindu* here on Friday.

Their life forever changed when Yuvraj scored a crucial tie-break goal against Pakistan in the final of the 2011 Asian Champions Trophy hockey tournament in China. "My parents had taken a lot of loans to help us pursue our dream of playing hockey. When Yuvraj returned from China, he paid off all the loans — totalling around ₹30 lakh," Devinder says.

### Dream realised

Watching Yuvraj shine strengthened Devinder's resolve to break into the Indian team. The ultimate dream was realised in 2015, when both Yuvraj and Devinder scored a goal each in a 3-0 win over Poland in the Hockey World League semifinal.

"All the newspapers carried a photo of me lifting and hugging Yuvraj, with a headline 'Walmiki Brothers do India proud'. That was a truly memorable moment," Devinder says.

Along with the highs came the lows as well, when injuries and other issues forced Yuvraj out of the 2012 and 2016 Olympics. Devinder, on the other hand, made it to the 2016 Rio Games.

"We have one Olympian in

our house, which is something to celebrate," Yuvraj says.

### Out of favour

Devinder too has since fallen out of favour with the national selectors, but like Yuvraj, he hasn't given up hopes of making a grand comeback yet. "We still have international quality; all we need is one chance to prove ourselves," Yuvraj says.

Regardless of what the future holds, the brothers can take pride in what they have accomplished so far.

"When I started playing hockey in 1999, my mother struggled to buy ice to treat my injuries.

"She would wash my match jersey every single day with her bare hands. When I scored against Pakistan in 2011, she watched the match on our neighbour's television. Right through school, Devinder and I studied under candle light. Now we have a television, washing machine, air conditioner, lights and fans — things that my parents have never owned in their lives.

"Even now I get emotional when I think of those days. From darkness to light — that is our journey," Yuvraj says.

## A mother's diktat

A thunderous reverse-click from forward Yuvraj gives Bengaluru United Hockey Club the lead against South Central Railway in the Bengaluru Hockey super division championship here on Friday.

His younger brother, midfielder Devinder, is



The stars: The Walmiki brothers, Devinder and Yuvraj, are keen to get back into national reckoning. ■G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

among the first to run over and congratulate him.

"If Yuvraj doesn't score a goal, I get into trouble because our mother scolds me for not passing the ball and creating chances for him," Devinder laughs and says.

Yuvraj nods in

agreement. "I call my mother after every match.

"If I don't score a goal, my mother bluntly says that I am not fit to be a striker. "So it's imperative for me to keep finding the net, or else we'll be in big trouble when we return to our home in Mumbai," Yuvraj says.

# Chhattisgarh suspended, West Bengal warned

National Youth Championships slammed for poor facilities

## ATHLETICS

UTHRA GANESAN  
AGRA

Chhattisgarh Athletics Association was suspended and West Bengal issued show-cause notice as the Athletics Federation of India's annual general meeting here became a day of chastisement for state associations on Friday.

"We have decided to suspend the federation, form an ad-hoc body and give it six months to conduct fresh elections and find a new set of office-bearers. We cannot keep giving warnings and also allotting competitions," AFI Planning Committee chairman Lalit Bhanot said categorically.

The 2019 National Youth Championships in February had been slammed for poor facilities and organisation and also racked with age-fraud controversy.

The state is supposed to host the next National Games but athletes and officials had complained of poor arrangements at the 2017 national cross country championships as well.

West Bengal, meanwhile, was issued notice for pulling out of hosting the national Inter-State Championships without any satisfactory reason. "We have changed venues before but never been forced to change the dates. Other than a natural calamity or Force Majeure, no other reason can be acceptable.

"We have had to postpone the tournament, the last qualifying event for the World Championships, to end August (27-30) in Lucknow. Once they reply, we can suggest to the State Olympic Association to rethink their affiliation also," AFI president Adile Sumariwalla said.

The AFI top management made no secret of its displeasure at the lack of accountability and performance at the grassroots.

"A vast majority of doping and age-fraud issues happen at the state and district levels and it is the state body's responsibility to ensure it doesn't happen. If it does, they have to pay the price," Bhanot slammed. The AFI has provisioned for a one-year suspension of the secre-

tary if there are more than two cases of over-age athletes from a state, a decision that saw many protesting to no avail.

In fact, the state units were squarely blamed for most of the ills in Indian athletics.

"It is not the job of the AFI to prepare athletes. The international federation only conducts events but we have taken this responsibility because the states were not doing their job — identifying athletes and training them, providing good competition and getting good coaches.

"They have to conduct district level meets and provide a strong foundation to athletes before they join the elite ranks. What we do at national level, you have to do in states — scrutinise and conduct tests," Bhanot added even as Sumariwalla cautioned that there was increasing pressure from IAAF and WADA to get Indian athletics in order.

The AFI also unveiled new kits for Indian athletes with the legendary Sriram Singh and Anju Bobby George doing the honours.



Legendary honours: Sriram Singh and Anju Bobby George unveiled the new kits for Indian athletes at the annual general meeting of the AFI. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# Sohil and Tijil take pole

SPORTS REPORTER  
CHENNAI

Bengaluru teenagers Sohil Shah and Tijil Rao took pole positions in the MRF F1600 and Formula LGB 1300 categories in the third round of the MRF MMSC-FMCSI Indian National Car Racing Championship at the MMRT here on Friday.

Sohil, 18, came up with his best lap of one minute, 39.218 seconds, much quicker than his timings in the two Free Practice sessions earlier in the day.

In the second spot was Nayan Chatterjee, followed by Manav Sharma and Nirmal Umashankar.

In the FIA Formula-4 South-East Asia series, Oman's Shihab Al Habsi topped the practice session with a flying lap of 01:37.862, while the three Indians in the fray, Yash Aradhya, Mira Erda and Sneha Sharma were fifth, seventh and eighth fastest.

Tijil (Momentum Motorsports), 16, put in a fine performance in Formula LGB 1300 with a hot lap of 01:53.523, nearly a second quicker than his best in the practice sessions earlier.

# Alaphilippe beats Thomas in 13th Stage

REUTERS  
PAU

France's Julian Alaphilippe claimed an impressive victory in the 13th stage of the Tour de France, a 27.2-km individual time trial, to extend his overall lead on Friday.

The Deceuninck-Quick Step rider clocked 35 minutes over the lumpy course to beat defending champion Geraint Thomas by 14 seconds and Belgian Thomas de Gendt by 36 seconds.

# Smooth start to AITA Trust scholarship scheme

## TENNIS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The AITA Trust scholarship camp — to identify eight boys and girls for a per year scholarship of ₹1,00,000 — got off to a smooth start at the DLTA Complex here on Friday.

Davis Cupper and FedCup team captain Vishaal Uppal made it clear that scores and results would only be one of many factors to be considered for selection.

Fed Cup coach Anika Bhambri told the players to relax and enjoy their tennis.

Former national coach Balram Singh advised pa-

rents not to neglect their children's education in pursuit of a tennis career.

"Education is very important for the development of a player, and kids will lose confidence if they don't get good education," he said.

### Holistic

Every aspect of their game and behaviour — in victory and defeat, while playing at their best or not — would all be noted, the players were told clearly.

Uppal was categorical in stressing that it would be a holistic process.

Another seasoned coach, Nar Singh, who has rich experience of guiding the In-

dian junior teams in many events over the years, requested the players to capitalise on the immense knowledge of the selection committee.

"It is a challenge to play good tennis in an adverse situation," said Anika.

### Four groups

The 32 boys and girls were divided into four groups each. They will all play on a league basis in the group, in a 'best of 13 games' format. Thereafter, all the No. 1 players will get into one group, the No. 2 in the second group, etc. for another spell of matches.

The matches are being

kept short to help the youngsters tackle the heat and humidity on the hard courts, with minimal physical strain.

On the last two days, there will be a fitness test which would also demand good physical condition of the players after a series of matches.

"We will also look at how hungry you are to become a world class player," Uppal said.

Talking to parents, Balram suggested that the children should be handled with care, especially when they lose a match. "Don't talk to the child immediately. Talk later," said Balram.

# Sanjivani gets two years for doping violation

Set to lose her Asian 10,000m bronze medal

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) has handed a two-year suspension to 23-year-old long-distance runner Sanjivani Jadhav for testing positive for probenecid, a banned substance under the category Diuretics and Masking Agents, in-competition twice last year.

Sanjivani, whose urine samples collected during the TCS World 10k (Bangalore, May 27, 2018) and National inter-State athletics championships (Guwahati, June 29, 2018), said that she had not taken probenecid knowingly.

The AIU, which implements the IAAF anti-doping rules, charged Sanjivani with committing anti-doping rule violations and offered her an opportunity to either admit the anti-doping rule violation and accept a two-year suspension or request a hearing before a disciplinary panel.



Sanjivani Jadhav. ■FILE PHOTO

Sanjivani admitted to the doping violation.

She, nevertheless, requested for a reduction in her period of ineligibility on grounds such as the concentration of probenecid was too low to be used as a masking agent, she suspected the prohibited substance might have entered her body due to use of contaminated ayur-

vedic medicines and she never cheated.

While noting that Sanjivani "failed to disclose the use of ayurvedic medicines on dope control forms," AIU, in its order released on Thursday, said there was no evidence to support her claim that these medicines contained the banned substance.

Considering that the athlete admitted to the doping violation, the AIU handed her two years' suspension for her first offence.

It ordered that Sanjivani's results at the TCS World 10k, National inter-State meet and events following that would be "disqualified" and titles, awards, medals, points and prizes won would be forfeited.

As a consequence, Sanjivani will lose her 10,000m bronze medal achieved in the Asian championships in Doha in April this year.

The decision is appealable.

# Swati and Priyanka suffer defeats

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KARAIKUDI

Former national champion and WGM Swati Ghate and seventh seed WIM Priyanka Nutakki of Andhra Pradesh suffered shock defeats in the opening round of the 46th National women's chess championship here on Friday.

Senthamizh Yazhini of Tamil Nadu defeated Priyanka and Bindu Saritha (LIC) stunned Swati.

However, the other seeded players had a relatively easy day out.

Playing the black side of the London System game, Swati blundered on the 33rd move to hand over piece advantage to her LIC teammate and surrendered after five more moves.

Meanwhile, WGM Soumya Swaminathan (PSPB), the top seed, got past V. Nanditha (Telangana) and defending champion Bhakti Kulkarni (Air India) made short work of Ananya Bothra (West Bengal).