

Dharmaraj Cheralathan — going on and on and on

Credits the longevity to maintaining his fitness, diet and weight

PKL

S. PRASANNA VENKATESAN
CHENNAI

Longevity is Dharmaraj Cheralathan's thing as a kabaddi player. He's 44 years old and says he's played for around 25 years now.

So much so, his 16-year-old son Aditya, he says, will try and get into the ProKabaddi League (PKL) in two years. "He's studying in Pune now. He's been practising. When he's 18, he'll try and get into the league."

"My desire is to play until then. But I don't know if I can. Let's see."

On coaching

"Those who've played with me have become coaches now! I'll think about it (coaching), but I definitely want to do something for ka-

baddi in my village after I retire."

Cheralathan, who captains Haryana Steelers in the ongoing PKL season, has started playing kabaddi for fun in his village Thiruchennampundi in Thanjavur district.

He endorses the portrayal of the conduct of kabaddi tournaments in the Tamil movie "Vennila Kabaddi Kuzhu" as being similar to how it was like playing kabaddi in his early days.

"We (his team from the village) used to go to a lot of places to play tournaments. We especially used to play in the night."

It was in 1995, when he played for the Sun Paper Mill Ltd. for six months that he had his first coach. "That was when I had my first taste of professional training. Until

then, I had no coach. Christopher sir was my first coach."

By that time, he had already started playing for the State team. So, he also played his first Nationals that year. The first of "around 22" Nationals he's played so far. In 1997, he'd been employed with the Railways and has been representing the team in the Nationals until now.

"I think I've won around 13 gold medals. Only four or five times, have I gone without a medal in the Nationals."

Having played many Nationals and won many medals is what he's proud of. That, he says, is his biggest achievement.

He owes his 2016 World Cup selection to his collective performance in the first four seasons of the PKL. He picks the World Cup and the

1999 South Asian Games as the two remarkable big-ticket tournaments he's played so far.

Only regret

"My only regret is that I haven't got to play in the Asian Games."

He adds as an afterthought: "But I think my long career and the Nationals medals make up for it."

He's had his share of injuries, but says he doesn't remember considering retirement at any point in his career. "When I think about it, even ten years of playing is a big achievement. So, what I've done makes me feel proud."

"I've been relentless in maintaining my fitness, diet and weight. That's what is so important for a long career, I believe."



Silver jubilee star: At 41 years old — 25 of those playing kabaddi — Dharmaraj Cheralathan wants to carry on till his son starts playing professionally in a couple of years. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Rutuja loses the plot

SPORTS BUREAU
GGUIYANG (CHINA)

Rutuja Bhosale lost her way after a robust start, saved five matchpoints, but finally lost 0-6, 7-5, 7-5 to Su Jeong Jang of Korea in the first round of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament on Tuesday.

Other results:

\$15,000 ITF men, Jakarta, Indonesia: **Singles (first round):** Alexander Crnokrak (Aus) bt Karunoday Singh 6-2, 6-2; Jumpei Yamasaki (Jpn) bt Kunal Anand 6-3, 6-2.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Matthew Romios (Aus) & Aryan Goveas bt Bill Duo (US) & Anthony Susanto (Ina) 6-4, 6-4.

Niki Poonacha & Manish Sureshkumar bt Dusty Boyer (US) & Ray Ho (Tpe) 6-4, 2-6, [10-7]; Justin Barki (Ina) & Ruan Roelofse (RSA) bt Kunal Anand & Rishi Reddy 6-1, 4-6, [10-6].

Officials need to keep fit, says Sandhiya

She's been a match official in the PKL for the second consecutive season now

S. PRASANNA VENKATESAN
CHENNAI

Former kabaddi player M.K. Sandhiya has been a match official in the ProKabaddi League for the second consecutive season now.

"They selected a fresh batch last year. I was picked from the selection in Chennai, attended a workshop in Mumbai and was initiated into the league," says the 29-year-old who works as a physical education teacher in a school in Vellore.

She had been officiating in the all-India, south zone and State tournaments before the PKL.

There are seven match officials for a PKL match. The referee, two umpires, two line umpires, and two assistant referees.

According to her, an offi-



M.K. Sandhiya.

cial will be assigned for both matches on the day (there are single match-days as well).

"I'll be told (that she's going to officiate) roughly 45 minutes before the start of the first match. I'll be assigned two different roles for the two matches."

Imagining

"Once I get to know, I go on the mat and prepare — practising signals and coordination with the other officials. We imagine match situations and react to them."

"For instance, we'll imagine that a raider has entered the lobby without a touch, and I will signal to the line umpire who has to make proper eye contact with me."

She says there are two sets of match officials — groups A & B. Each group has 14 members, she added. "I belong to group-A. Each group is assigned six venues. This (Chennai) is our group's third venue after Hyderabad and Patna. We'll next go to

Bengaluru, Pune and Panchkula."

Two out of the nine women officials are from Tamil Nadu.

She says the officials need to keep fit throughout the season. "Morning gym workout is mandatory for us."

They attend a camp for around eight days just before the league begins. "Besides fitness training, there is this workshop for practising signals, pronunciation, and voice modulation and clarity. Like, we practise pronouncing team names and how to talk in the match."

Tests

"For instance, saying things like 'raider safe, one point to Gujarat Fortunegiants; or, defender out of bounds. We also take tests in which we'll

have to write how we'll handle the given match situations."

Kabaddi is a rapid, alternating game of small margins; errors in judgement dearly cost teams.

She says she finds a match official needs to have focus and observe very carefully. "The primary aim is to not make any mistake."

She added that the match officials (all 14) attend a near-one-hour review meeting headed by the league's technical director Prasad Rao in the morning after every match day.

Asked to name a greatly skilled player in the ongoing season, from a match official's perspective, she said, "I would say Naveen (Kumar) of Dabang Delhi. He's real quick and shrewd!"

India to bid for 2024 Worlds

TABLE TENNIS

A. VINOD
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) has decided to bid for the 2024 World championships with the support of the Union Government.

During an interaction with *The Hindu* here on Tuesday, TTFI secretary M.P. Singh, TTFI advisor Dhanraj Choudhary, and newly elected president of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Association Vivek Kohli said the federation has already sounded its intentions to key officials of the International Table Tennis Federation recently and has received a positive response.

The bid process is to start next year. The Union Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs has offered all possible

help for the development of the game through the last three years, enhancing the financial outlay for table tennis to ₹12 crore last year. "We are hopeful that the Government will also support us in bringing the World championships back to India," they said.

Olympic qualification

In the next few months TTFI will have to ensure the Indian men's team qualification for next year's Olympics in Tokyo. With this in mind, it has lined up a coaching camp in China, prior to next month's Asian championships in Indonesia. This will be followed by a camp each in Germany and Portugal before the team qualification process is held in the Iberian nation in January 2020.

Efforts are also being made to help Achanta Sha-

rath Kamal and Manika Batra get a Olympics qualification spot in mixed doubles.

New coach

Likewise, the TTFI is also involved in the identification of a new foreign coach for India's senior teams, now that the Canadian coach who was supposed to join the side early this month pulled out of his commitment due to a knee injury.

"We hope to sort this out within the next few weeks so much so that the new coach will be able to join the players prior to the qualifying team event in Portugal."

Giving in to players' demand, TTFI has also decided to use a same quality brand of balls in all tournaments henceforth. TTFI top brass was also all praise for the conduct of the ongoing South Zone championships.

Ankita played like a top-100 player: Narendranath

The coach, who is guiding her in New York, says he wants her to serve better

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Travelling with a coach is a rare luxury for Ankita Raina. At the Grand Slams where she has been trying to qualify into the main draw in recent times, she has travelled with her long-time coach Hemant Bendrey.

The 26-year-old Ankita, who had a bright start, beating the ninth seed Ysaline Bonaventure of Belgium 6-1, 1-6, 6-2 in the first qualifying round of the US Open, has the experienced coach Surath Narendranath to guide her in New York.

Very good match

"Ankita played a very good match yesterday. She played like a top-100 player in the first set. She could not maintain that level in the second set, and made many unforced errors. She regrouped and played very tough in the third set which helped her



Welcome addition: Ankita Raina should benefit from the services of a travelling coach. ■FILE PHOTO: ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

pull through the match." summed up Narendranath, who had travelled with Sania Mirza in the US circuit in 2006.

Meanwhile, Bendrey clarified about the coaching assistance to Ankita, from his base in Pune.

"I was with Ankita for the last 45 days. So, had to come back to look after my academy. Chubby (Narendranath) is not only my friend, but my guru for coaching. I used to

work with him for a long time, and have learnt coaching from him. He has agreed to travel whenever possible," said Bendrey.

Narendranath runs his coaching centre in Hyderabad, and had worked with Sania for a long time as well, apart from a bunch of good players.

Started believing

"I have always believed that Ankita is a top-100 player.

She will soon be achieving it. I think, slowly, she has also started believing in it," said Bendrey, about his ward who won the Asian Games singles bronze medal last year.

For the 194th-ranked Ankita, it was a commendable performance to beat Ysaline whom she had defeated in 2009 in the junior circuit and in 2014 in the professional circuit.

"I want Ankita to serve better and maintain good level of play through the course of the whole match," said Narendranath about Ankita's second round against Denisa Allertova of the Czech Republic.

"This is my second tournament with Ankita. Hopefully, will be travelling more in the future," said Narendranath.

Travelling with a coach will not be a rarity for Ankita any more, and that should hasten her progress to the higher echelons of the game.

Areeba finishes 29th

SPORTS BUREAU
LAHTI

Areeba Khan shot 64 out of 75, with rounds of 18, 24 and 22, in women's skeet in a field of 72 shooters in the Shotgun World Cup on Tuesday.

The 29th-placed Areeba was nine points behind leader Caitlin Connor of the United States. The other Indian shooters — Karttiki Shaktawat (58) and former National champion Saniya Sheikh (57) — were way behind.

Two more rounds on Wednesday will be followed by the final for the top six.

National champion Maheshwari Chauhan, competing in the MQS section, shot 62, following rounds of 20, 20 and 22.

Riding to glory



Creating a ripple: Fouaad Mirza, who won a silver in the individual and team event at the 2018 Asian Games, has been recommended for the 2019 Arjuna award. The 27-year-old trains at the Embassy International Riding School (Bengaluru). He became the first Indian to win an Asian Games individual medal in equestrian since 1982. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



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- Aug 28 - Root words
- Sep 04 - Present Perfect
- Sep 11 - Prefix-Suffix
- Sep 18 - Past Continuous
- Sep 25 - Intensity of adjectives

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