



Self-motivated Bajrang Punia pins faith on hard work to medal in Tokyo

New Delhi, May 29: Indian wrestler Bajrang Punia has nothing but hard work in mind as he looks forward to giving his best at the Tokyo Olympic Games. With just over a month and a half left for the greatest celebration of sports, Bajrang is set for a tour to Russia to intensify his training further.

In a media interaction, facilitated by the Sports Authority of India on Saturday, Bajrang mentioned that he is working on all aspects of his game and hopes that the Indian wrestling contingent brings back at least three or four medals this time.

He has been a part of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme since November 2018 and has been provided a financial assistance of Rs 81 lakh towards international competition, equipment, coaching staff and out of pocket allowance. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has supported the Wrestling Federation of India through the Annual Calendar for Training and Competition mechanism.

Excerpts:

On expectations from Tokyo Olympics: I am training at home in Sonipat with the equipment and on the mats I have here. I want to do my best in the Olympics. For last one year and a half, I have worked hard on my fitness. My mantra is to fight hard during my bouts. I use my power and endurance to do my comebacks. However, whoever has their day and the blessings of God on a given day will win the medals.

On moving to Russia for further training: The Wrestling Federation of India, TOPS and SAI have tried their best to get me sparring partners from overseas but that could not happen because of the Covid-19 situation. That's why I have decided to go to Russia next month. My technique can only improve through sparring.

On the aspects of the game he is working on: I am working on all aspects, including making my leg defence stronger. I am not leaving any stone unturned so that I do not give my opponents the upper hand. The more you train, endurance and power keep getting better. I prefer bodyweight trainings and I am not very fond of the gym.

On staying motivated during lockdown: I used to read books during lockdown to stay motivated. My physio and coaches also kept motivating me. All who stayed with me have boosted me. Fortunately, I never needed a psychologist. I have always been positive. I look at motivational videos, my previous bouts and so on.



On how India can perform in Tokyo: There is a good contingent of wrestlers this time and I am hoping we win at least three to four medals in Tokyo. They are working very hard, from Anshu to Sonam to Deepak. Not only in wrestling but also I feel India will do the best in the Olympics this time.

On his evolution as a wrestler: Every sportsperson wants to win an Olympic medal and they work hard for it from their childhood. After 2018, I trained more abroad and after getting a foreigner coach, the language barriers started breaking and the coaches could arrange proper training partners as they conversed in that language. Since 2005, this journey kept evolving. I used to watch a lot of dangals across various villages and my dreams evolved. Now, I aim for a medal in the Olympics.

EOM