

Press Release

Making a comeback, Gujarat's Maana thanks Government schemes

Pune, January 15: For a talent like Gujarat's Maana Patel, winning medals at the Khelo India Youth Games was par for the course. Yet, what is most heartening is that she now seems to be on the road to recovery after a shoulder injury that derailed for her almost 18 months from early 2017, during which she also had to miss the Khelo India School Games.

At the ongoing KIYG, she has already won three medals, including one gold, and seems all set to get back on the road which could be destined for stardom.

Unrelenting focus is key in swimming where winners are decided by the finest of margins and Maana certainly has no dearth of focus. She started swimming at the age of eight but never saw herself as a full-time swimmer, until coaches around realized how good she really was. She then began training back home in Gujarat in 2010 and wasted no time and made her mark with a first national medal in 2011.

Maana continued to make giant strides and soon became a sensation on her way to breaking national records in three backstroke events in 2013. She continued to sail smoothly, winning numerous accolades until adversity struck her in early 2017 in the form of a shoulder injury that kept her out for 18 months.

Speaking about that difficult period in her life, Maana said, "It's tough when what's been your passion for years is suddenly taken away from you. I didn't know how to handle myself during that phase and I thank my parents, coaches and friends who always had my back." She has made a strong comeback since and feels fit again.

Maana is also a part of the Olympic Gold Quest program, led by former Olympian Viren Rasquinha, which supports and promotes young athletes. Maana was thankful that they stayed with her even when she was out of action.

Maana, who trains at the Glenmark Aquatic Foundation's centre in Mumbai, also mentioned how big a role coaches Kamlesh Nanavati, Peter Carswell and Bhushan Kumar have played in her journey so far.

She also thanked the Sports Authority of Gujarat and the Shaktidoot scheme for their support.

Not only does the 18-year old compete like a champion, she radiates that spirit through her personality outside the pool as well. "I believe in taking everything one step at a time, and the least I can do is stay grounded and keep working hard. I have a great bunch of people helping me and I owe it to them too," added Maana with a smile as she looked towards her mother who has been a great role model to her.

The Gujarat swimmer now has her sights set on the Euro meet in Luxembourg later this month as she begins her journey towards qualification for the World Championship in July. It's a tricky road ahead, but Maana's hunger to excel holds her in good stead to achieve great things.