



Press Release

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Indian junior women's team star Deepika cherishing the start of her long journey in hockey

The India Junior Women's hockey team has been making the most use of the Khelo India Women's Hockey League Under 21, ongoing at the Major Dhyan Chand Stadium in New Delhi, as a much-needed warmup ahead of the Junior Women's Hockey World Cup, scheduled for next year in South Africa. The World Cup was supposed to be held this December but had to be postponed owing to the rampant spread of the Omicron variant of Covid-19.

Haryana girl Deepika, 18, one of the team's star performers in the tournament, has been a routine name in the scoresheet of every match of the India Juniors. She has 8 goals after a total of three matches in the competition. Her hockey journey started way back in 2011 and it took real passion, dedication and love to get into the sport. "I started playing the game when I was probably 7 or 8. There was immense support from my coach as well as my family. Back when I started out, I used to accompany my brother to the akhada for his wrestling training. On the way, I used to see a hockey field and I instantly fell in love with the game. I told my parents then itself that I don't want to play any game but hockey," Deepika said.

"There are mostly wrestlers in my family, my uncle, my brother, they all are wrestlers and they wanted me to be in that sport too. But, I was determined to play hockey. I want to prove that it is not necessary to be in wrestling if you are from Haryana but can also participate in other sports," Deepika adds, with a feeling of passion in her voice.

Deepika is not only the top scorers of the league so far but also has four goals converted from penalty corners – highest among all players. Speaking of preparations for the Junior Hockey World Cup, she mentions, "We're getting all the best possible support from the staff ahead of the World Cup. Our coach Erik Wonink sir is working especially hard to make us fully prepared for the Hockey World Cup, postponed to next year.

"We have been training together at the SAI National Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru since 2019 and we are provided with diet and every requirement we want. Hockey India, too, helps us in the best way possible. They fulfil whatever we require and I am thankful to both SAI and Hockey India for doing this much in our journey," she adds.



Deepika idolizes Indian Cricket Team sensation Virat Kohli and mentions it's his never back down spirit that inspires her. "I idolize those who don't back down in life. Virat Kohli has seen a lot of ups and downs in his career as well as struggles and he is now in a big stage in his life," she says. Looking ahead, Deepika mentions the journey to Olympics has just started for her. "This tournament is just the start and there is a long road ahead and many dreams to fulfil for me. My focus is on the Olympics and I will be very happy if not just me, every player of the squad playing today, gets to compete in the Olympics. We're playing together for 3-4 years and the bonding among us is very good. We keep encouraging all our teammates during the match."

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