



Press Release

SAI MEDIA RELEASE/Dhiraj Bommadevara interview/01.05.24 **India working hard to secure men's recurve team quota for Paris Olympics 2024: Dhiraj Bommadevara**

Dhiraj Bommadevara was part of the Indian team that won anarchery World Cup gold medal in Shanghai after 14 years

New Delhi, May 1: Dhiraj Bommadevara, the only Indian recurve archer to have grabbed a quota place at the upcoming Paris Olympics, was part of a troika that scripted history at the Archery World Cup Stage 1 in Shanghai earlier this week. The Indian men's recurve team of Dhiraj, veteran Tarundeep Rai and Pravin Ramesh Jadhav defeated Korea in the title round to reclaim the recurve gold after 14 years. The last time Indian men won an archery World Cup gold medal was in Shanghai in 2010.

A beneficiary of the sports ministry's Target Olympic Podium Scheme, the 22-year-old from Vijayawada, Bommadevara won a second World Cup medal in Shanghai when he teamed up with Ankita Bhakat to win the bronze in the mixed team event. India drubbed Mexico in straight sets to win the medal.

In an interview with *SAI Media*, Bommadevara, who won a team silver at the Hangzhou Asian Games, talks about team bonding, a new belief, Paris Olympics and much more. **Excerpts:**

On clinching a historic gold after 14 years at the World Cup Stage:

We all feel very happy. The plan, the mindset we all had, got executed and we maintained that till the end.

On team's mindset during the final shootoff in men's recurve final against Korea:

Our mindset was to just focus on our game and not to focus on our opponents. We had a tunnel-vision focus. Be it in any situation, rain or wind, we wanted to keep the communication among us going. That we kept on till the end.

On men's recurve team bonding:

Tarun *bhaiya* (brother), Pravin and I – we three are from the Indian Army. So we stay and play together consistently. We know each other for long. The national camps also give us the opportunity to bolster this chemistry. From the beginning this bonding came naturally.

On being the youngest in history-making team in Shanghai:

I know I can learn a lot from my team members and it's only about how much I get to learn. The biggest learning is not to repeat the same mistake twice.

On India's realistic chances at Paris 2024:

Chances are pretty high. We are trying hard to convert the individual quota into a team quota, so we are working consistently towards it, planning for it and taking part in as many tournaments as possible. Our first priority is to get the team quota. We will go to Paris 2024 with a simple mindset just to give our best. The rest is not in our hands. No expectation on results. We have to be prepared for everything and perform accordingly.

On failure to win an Olympic medal despite so much World Cup success:

Our archers who have competed at the Olympics before have shown the dedication and no doubt they have put in their best effort. When we don't get a medal, of course everyone feels bad, the ones playing as well as the ones watching. The ones who feel the worst are the ones who had dedicatedly put in the hard work.

On veteran Tarundeep Rai impact in the current squad?

Nobody in the men's team has the amount of experience like him. It's a big learning process for the team whatever Tarun *bhaiya* (brother) shares. That helps us a lot, be it from a tactical or a philosophical standpoint. He also has experience of adapting to every situation and we get to learn a lot from that. Tarun (*bhaiya*) also personally pushes himself every single day to fight against young archers of my age. Seeing the dedication of a senior archer motivates us a lot.

On mental strength of Indian archers?

We are trying to achieve better versions of our past. We're not comparing with any other nation. Our priority is only to get better and improve from lessons learnt.

On impact of the compound team's performances:

Our compound team is the best in the world. Its performance helps us push ourselves. Both the compound bow and the recurve bow competitions are equally tough. How Jyothi (Surekha) *didi* handles her pressure in various categories – individual, mixed or team event – is really commendable and inspiring.

On transitioning from Khelo India Scheme to the Target Olympic Podium Scheme:

From 2017 to 2020 I was in the Khelo India scholarship scheme. One year later, I got into TOPS. After I got into TOPS, and secured a solid base in my career, I kept receiving financial support that helped me and my family. I didn't need to focus on how to financially help my unemployed father and mother. It was all taken care through the stipend from the TOP scheme. I wasn't stressed about any other thing. It helped me to just focus on my game and my performances.

(EoM)