



Swimmer Sajan Prakash sets sights on Olympic Games semifinals

New Delhi, July 4: Sajan Prakash, the first Indian to secure an Olympic Qualification Time for an automatic berth in the Olympic Games swimming competition, has placed the semifinals as a realistic target in Tokyo2020.

“My realistic target at the Tokyo Olympics is to cut down another 0.5 seconds from my current time,” he told reporters at a media interaction facilitate by the Sports Authority of India. “It will surely get me into the semifinals and once I get there, I will give it my best shot to reach the final as well.”

Sajan Prakash created history last weekend when he became the first Indian to achieve the Olympic ‘A’ cut, clocking 1:56:38 in 200m butterfly at the Settecolli Swim Meet in Rome. It completed a comeback for the 27 year-old who will be competing in his second Olympics, having spent eight months away from the pool due to a neck injury and the lockdown.

“When I returned to the pool, I had lost 50 per cent of my belief but the other 50 per cent I knew I could do it,” he said. “But in sport, it’s that 1 per cent that matters. When I got back in the pool, I was not able to swim even 200m.

“Within three months I was able to return to swimming freestyle, I was not able to swim one stroke of butterfly. My coach (Pradeep Kumar) told me that if I wanted to qualify for the Olympics, I would have to do things differently. Even if I failed I had to try,” he said. “I was barely able to move. So, I didn’t know then if an A cut would be possible.”

The postponement of the Olympic Games by a year came as a blessing for Sajan Prakash. During his rehabilitation and when swimming pools in India were shut due to the lockdown, the thought of an Olympic ‘A’ cut was far from his thoughts.

The Government funded a two-month training camp in Dubai for three swimmers including Sajan Prakash between August and October. “I had to literally start from scratch, I had to work on basics. We had to work on many things but thanks to everything coming together, today I have made it,” he said.



Sajan pushed for more biomechanic support in Indian swimming saying, “Swimming is a technical sport and sports science is very important. We need to have more sports science and biomechanics support, not just once in two years, or once a year. The biomechanics experts should be aware of what we are doing and help us make error corrections,” he said.

The Government has supported swimming through the Annual Calendar for Training and Competition and has sanctioned a total of approximately Rs. 13.66 crore in the three budgets for the years 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22.

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