

Press Release

Farmer's daughter Akshata makes use of SAI support to reap gold at Khelo India Youth Games

Pune, January 14: Akshata Basvani Kamati seemed to be nowhere in the running for the gold medal after the snatch in the Under-21 71kg category in Weightlifting at the Khelo India Youth Games. She heaved a modest 73 kg and then twice failed at 76kg, while her main rivals, fellow Karnataka lifter Lavanya Rai (79) and PH Roshni of Arunachal Pradesh with 77 built a handy lead.

Stung by that reverse, she opened with a successful attempt at 100kg in Clean & Jerk and then improved it to 103kg before failing at 107kg on the next two attempts. Her rivals were nowhere close with Lavanya managing 95kg, but failing at 98kg, which if it had been successful could have given Lavanya the gold. Lavanya's attempt in snatch, Akshata's attempt in C&J and the total were all new records for Junior women.

The two Karnataka girls were clearly the pick and with totals of 176 kg by Akshata and 174kg by Lavanya, they were way ahead of third place Roshni (167kg).

Akshata comes from Halaga near Belgaum, which has also produced Eklavya Award-winning lifter Kanchan P Manolkar, a gold medalist at the 2015 Commonwealth Championships in Pune. Her taking to the sport was a case of love at first sight, which happened while taking a stroll into the gym at the Sharda Girls High School back home.

Once hooked, Akshata represented her school at the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan (RGKA) competitions in Bellari, landing a gold medal in her maiden major tournament. There was no looking back after that and she has added loads of trophies since then to her cabinet.

"My father plays a very important role in my life. I have his unconditional support and he ensures that there are no hindrances of any kind in my sporting journey," Akshata says.

Her father, a farmer by occupation, is the sole earning member of the family, and Akshata's maturity at such a young age shows in her understanding of her father's untiring efforts towards her success.

In 2014, she began training at the Sports Authority of India Bengaluru Centre under coach Virpal Kaur. "When I saw Akshata for the first time, I was sure that she was made for weightlifting. Her BMI (body mass index) index is very suited to lifting. Her technique is special and it will take her to high levels," says Kaur.

The coach takes every care that her lifters get the best of training. "Before coming to KIYG 2019, we worked a lot on our lifters. It was a mixture of learning new scientific techniques, sessions with psychologists to improve mental strength, video analysis, bio mechanics teams giving inputs to improve technique, combined with appropriate diet plans," says Kaur, who was rewarded with two of her students – Akshata and Keerthi (49kg U-21) -- taking gold and silver respectively.

While Akshata has her eyes set on the upcoming Senior National Weightlifting Championships in Vishakhapatnam, she has bigger plans. “No doubt I want to perform well in the senior nationals, but winning gold for India is the ultimate aim”. Her coach echoes the same desire. “That would be like my dream come true as well,” says Kaur.