

Press Release

Nithin pitchforks himself into sprinting spotlight with KIYG double

Pune, January 13: Balakumar Nithin catapulted himself among the country's top sprinters, capturing a golden double in the athletics competition in the Khelo India Youth Games 2019. His under-21 200m gold medal-winning time of 21.57 seconds at the Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex this afternoon, would have fetched him a top 16 rank in India last year.

Karnataka's AT Daneshwari also completed the sprint double, winning the girls under-21 200m in 24.58 seconds. She was, however, overshadowed by Maharashtra's Avantika Narale. The under-17 runner, who missed out on the 100m final, scripted a run in the 200m final that was faster than Daneshwari's time by a hundredth of a second and made it look most one-sided.

Interestingly, the Girls under-21 high jump placings were decided on a countback after three athletes, SB Supriya (Karnataka), Abhinaya Shetty (Karnataka) and Rubina Yadav (Haryana) finished with best jumps of 1.79m each. Surpriya won gold since she had cleared each height on first attempt until she failed at 1.81m.

Another performance that raised expectations was a 19.20m shot put effort by Amandeep Singh Dhaliwal (Punjab) in the boys under-17 division. Even though the iron ball weighs 5kg (as against 6kg for the under-21 group and 7.26kg in the senior ranks), his rise from 15.72m in Khelo India School Games last year to 19.20 was eye-catching, indeed.

Nithin's bounding run pleased the talent scouts enough for them to tell him to pay a visit to the Khelo India Talent Development office in the campus. He could well be recommended to get the Khelo India scholarship.

"I had done everything right in practice. And having won the 100m despite a bad start, I was confident that I could complete the double," he said. "With 70m left, I knew that I had opened up a big lead and could drive my way to victory. I knew that the National Junior champion was in the fray, but I was prepared to do my best and secure gold."

His time of 21.57 seconds this evening is his personal best over the distance, improving on the 21.60 he clocked in a fast semifinal heats in the All-India Inter-University Athletics Championships in Moodbidri in November last. He is aware that becoming the flagbearer of sprinting entails a great responsibility and he is prepared to shoulder that.

It will be no surprise, however, if he lets go of his 100m ambitions and embraces the 200-400 combination in the time ahead. "Making further improvements in my 100m time will entail a lot of time and hard work. I am prepared to train hard, but I am not sure that I do not want to invest so much time in shaving off a few tenths of seconds from my personal best."

In any case, much of his training is based in the YMCA at Nandanam in Chennai and his coach and he are only sporadic visitors to the synthetic track in the Nehru Stadium in the southern megapolis. He has caught the eyes of the Indian selectors – he went to the South Asian Under-20 Championships in Colombo – and the talent scouts here.

