

Press Release

KIYG champ and Maharashtra lifter Ashwini sets sights on Commonwealth Games

Pune, January 16: “It’s a good lift,” announced the referee, words that would have sounded like music to Ashwini Malage’s ears, gold medallist in the +87kg women’s Under-21 category at the KIYG 2019 here.

“I knew that the competition was going to be tough, but I had prepared myself well. I was determined not to settle for anything less than gold and am glad that I was able to achieve my target,” she said with a triumphant smile.

“I liked this sport from a very young age as I used to accompany my father when he visited his friends who all were in different sports. One of them was a weightlifting coach.” And as destiny would have it, weightlifting called to Ashwini.

Then came one of those weird bits of coincidence, a wish by her father Rajendra Malage, which was to turn into reality. “Ashwini looked very much like Varsha Patki, an ace weight lifter from Kolhapur. And God knows why I felt that Ashwini should also opt for weightlifting,” Rajan recalls with a smile.

Ashwini’s father Rajendra Malge owns a garage for two-wheelers and he himself works in it. From that income he supports his daughter’s sporting ambitions.

Starting off at age 16, Ashwini showed early promise, mounting the podium in her very first competition to receive a gold medal at the district level in 2014. That year also brought her accolades in state, school nationals and national competitions. This was her first gold in Khelo India games but her seventh gold at various National level events, junior and seniors. Ashwini has also won three gold in internationals.

The impressive performances earned her a berth in the India camp for the Junior Asian Championship in Uzbekistan last year, where she was to gain experience but no medals.

“There is a dearth of adequate training facilities at Inchalkaranji” her father says. “With her growing need for training, she has to travel to and from Sangli every day”.

Between college, her studies and training, Ashwini says “I receive a lot of support from parents in this regard. My grandmother is my biggest motivation as she inspires me day in-day and out to follow my dream”.

Her father, the sole bread winner for the family, owns a garage in Inchalkaranji. “We are not a very well to do family, I try to lend her as much support as I can, but whenever there is a shortfall, am fortunate that my friends fill the gap without any expectations,” Rajan says.

“Everyone wants me to perform well, and am very grateful towards all for their support” echoes Ashwini. With her eyes set on the Commonwealth Games in 2022, it reflects the

sort of determination with which she had made plans for KIYG 2019. She totaled 184kg here, but her goal is to get to 220kg.

At the KIYG, Pune, Ashwini Malage, participating in the women's +87kg category topped with a total weight of 184kg (snatch 80kg, clean and jerk 104kg) finishing well ahead of Karnataka's Bhavishya who took silver with a total of 180kg (snatch 79kg, clean and jerk 101kg) Ann Mariya M.T. from Kerala.

On the last day of competition on Tuesday, Ashwini's teammate, Snehal Bhongle also won gold in 87 kg category in under 21 age group. Snehal lifted 160 kg weight in total and it was her best till now. She lifted 68 kg in snatch and in clean and jerk she managed 112 kg for her first gold in Khelo India Games. Last year at Khelo India School Games, she won a bronze medal. She has also two medals in youth nationals and one gold in School nationals.