



Focussed Abhishek Verma keeping distractions away as he sets his eyes on the Olympics

New Delhi, May 7: World No. 1 pistol shooter Abhishek Verma chooses not to be distracted by reports in the international press about the uncertainty around the conduct of the Tokyo Olympic Games due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The 30 year-old Verma is focused on the task which comes with the pinnacle of sport. “I am not even thinking about whether the Olympics will be held or not. I am training with the belief that it will go ahead. Whatever is the next competition, I am focusing on that,” he said at a media interaction facilitated by Sports Authority of India.

Responding to a question on how Tokyo 2020 would be different and how it brings about changes to the routine of athletes, Verma said his is always on training and on competitions when he enters one. “I focus on how I can give my best on every shot in every competition. Whatever external situation arises, I will adapt to that,” he said.

“Even in the World Cup here last month, we had to make certain adjustments, like wearing masks. There were shields separating shooting lanes. It was awkward constantly having to remember to put on the mask. Whatever be the situation, we have to face it and adapt. The most important thing is performance,” he said.

As part of the Olympics-bound Indian team which will be based in Croatia before proceeding to Tokyo, Verma said this trip would help him retain his focus despite being away from family.

A late bloomer, the advocate in the Punjab and Haryana High Court started shooting competitively only at the age of 27 and made a meteoric rise. Once described as a hobby shooter, Verma feels age is no bar in becoming a successful shooter.

“People look at me and say that they are 23 or 24 and ask if they can start shooting. I tell them I started at 27. Once I realised I liked shooting, I worked hard on it and not just like a hobby, that is why I am in the Indian team. Age does not matter but if you were willing to work hard, you can achieve anything,” he said.

Verma has an impressive record where he rose to fame by winning a bronze medal at the 2018 Asian Games and following that up with a gold medal at the 2019 Beijing World Cup with which he won a quota place at the Tokyo Olympics. He also won the gold medal the same year at the Rio de Janeiro World Cup.

He was inducted in the Target Olympic Podium Scheme in December 2018 and has so far received Rs. 16.73 lakh through out of pocket allowance and customised support. The sport of shooting has also received support from Government through the Annual Calendar for Training and Competition with Rs 55 crore being allocated in the last two budgets.

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