

## Press Release

### Shubham embraces hunger and rewards himself with gold

**Pune, Jan 10:** Shubham Kolekar's hunger for gold medal was there for all to see. And he duly secured it in great style with a National Junior record in 55kg class in the weightlifting competition at the Khelo India Youth Games 2019 here.

An hour and a half later, dope test and media interviews done, he looked for some food to satiate his hunger. He had been starving himself over a few days to reduce around three kilogrammes.

He has come a long way from the lad who was attending a dance class when, spotting a good lifter's physique, coach Santosh Sinhasane roped him in to his gym and trained him. Son of a small fabrication unit owner in Sangli in the heart of Maharashtra's weightlifting belt, the youngster took to the sport with an intensity that has driven him this far.

On Wednesday, it did not matter to him that Muna Nayak, nearly three years his junior, was snapping at his heels. The Odisha lifter had opened up a five kg lead and his own Maharashtra team-mate Prashant Koli was a further two kg ahead after the round of snatch lifts. He knew that he would be able to cover some ground in clean and jerk.

He did keep an eye on the rivals to see what weight they are asking for to be loaded on the barbell. Nayak opened with 128kg after Koli and Piyush Singh (Madhya Pradesh) fell behind. Shubham joined the fray at 133 kg to tie with the Odia lifter. Muna Nayak attempted to match him with 133 kg but failed twice to leave the Sangli lad with the task of lifting one kg more to ensure gold.

"I knew I would get the National record and was confident that even if Muna lifted 133kg I would get gold," he said. "My coach had told me that I would have to aim for the National record since we knew that my snatch would not be my best suit today. It was important that we remained smart and gift away gold in an ambitious pursuit that could result in a no-lift in snatch."

He won the National Junior Championship crown in Nagpur less than a fortnight ago and had increased his body weight to prepare for KIYG2019. "I was 58kg three days ago and had to stop eating and even reduce my fluid intake to be able to come down below 55kg before the weigh-in on the morning of the competition," he said.

Despite being a self-confessed average student, Shubham has shown great understanding of his coach's strategy in raising the body weight ahead of a competition and then coming in under the prescribed limit. "It helps me improve my lifting skills," he said, indicating that he and his coach have set a 260kg total as their target.

Santosh Sinhasane says the quality of food is not as nutritious as in the past and hence has recommended some protein supplement. "We are careful that he consumes only those supplements which are marked dope-free. My trainees know that we follow a no-needle policy and they would be excluded from the gym if they are spotted with a syringe," he said.

Shubham is not talking about his long hair, tied beneath a bandana in deference to a vow that he has undertaken. But is a good guess that he has a weightlifting goal in mind and will train seven hours a day each day before shaving his head when he gets to that personal milestone.