

## Press Release

### **Consistent Dhanush makes his gun talk; upsets World Cup medallist Arjun Babuta to claim KIYG air rifle gold**

**Pune, Jan 11:** Telangana's Dhanush Srikant let his gun do the talking as he upstaged two-time Junior World Cup bronze medallist Punjab's Arjun Babuta in the men's under-21 10m air rifle final in the Khelo India Youth Games 2019 here today. Wearing a large smile, he then sought help to communicate with eager media persons since he is hard of hearing from birth.

He was a picture of consistency through the day, topping the qualification with 629.7, his best score. He showed nerves of steel in the final where he was ahead of competition after each shot. The 16-year-old, who has been shooting for just over two years after becoming a Taekwondo Dan 2, is a product of the Project Leap that Olympic medallist Gagan Narang's Gun for Glory runs.

The under-17 final produced fireworks with only 0.2 points separating the gold medallist Avinash Yadav from Rajasthan's Divyansh Singh. Yashvardhan of Rajasthan picked up a second medal for his State.

"I was not affected by who else was in the final. I wanted to score at least 10.7 with shot," he said, through his interpreter and mind-trainer Kritika Pandey. "I am glad that my coach (Neha Chauhan) taught me the value of having a proper follow through and I was able to secure my best score in the final to follow up my best in qualification."

Arjun Babuta, who won Junior World Cup bronze medals in the Gabala in 2016 and in Sydney last year, was third in qualification and remained in that spot in the final. Goa's Yash Yogesh earned silver, a mere 1.3 points behind the Hyderabad lad.

Dhanush's mother, Asha Srikant revealed that he had a cochlear implant in his first year. "He has been a happy, active child and has not needed to go to a special school," she said, indicating how the family had supported him without making him feel

He appeared to continue from where he left off in the second selections trials held in Delhi last month. He finally found his consistency to score 627.1 in qualification to enter the three finals in the second selections trials. He was fourth in the men's final, scoring 208.4 from 20 shots, third in the junior final with 228.0 from 22 shots, and fifth in the youth final with 186.2.

He shot 621 in the National Championships in Thiruvananthapuram and 620 in the first selection trials in Delhi last month but found his mojo in the second trials. Not surprisingly, India's ace rifle shooter Anjali Bhagwat was among the first to congratulate Dhanush. For someone who started playing with toy guns some years ago, he has come a long way in emerging KIYG2019 champion.

#### **Results (finals):**

**Men's under-21 10m air rifle:** 1. Dhanush Srikant (Telangana) 248.9; 2. Yash Yogesh (Goa) 247.6; 3. Arjun Babuta (Punjab) 225.6.

**Men's under-17 10m air rifle:** 1. Avinash Yadav (Madhya Pradesh) 250.9, 2. Divyansh Singh P (Rajasthan) 250.7, Yashvardhan (Rajasthan) 228.1.