

Press Release

Ten-year-old Abhinav Shaw becomes youngest KIYG champ

Pune, January 13: Abhinav Shaw became the youngest gold medallist at the Khelo India Youth Games when he teamed up with Mehuli Ghosh to help West Bengal win the 10m air rifle mixed team event here today.

The 10-year-old from Asansol raised his game enough in the final to ensure Mehuli Ghosh's classy display would not result in any medal other than her second gold.

The sixth-standard student had to bide his time to get on the range and display his talent, not being among the 16 shooters chosen to compete in the individual events in either Junior (under-21) and Youth (under-17) categories. He was not about to let it go. He dealt with the qualification and the final with a calm that would be the hallmark of any marksman.

The pint-sized but hugely talented young star made his team-mate, State and parents proud. With a string of positive results in the past few weeks, it is inevitable that he draws some attention to himself. Still a shy lad, embracing quiet, he has taken rapid strides in the direction his father Rupesh and coach Joydeep Karmakar, who missed Olympic bronze in 2012, have chosen for him.

It was clear that the Karmakar-trainees complemented one another well. In the final, where each series has a time limit, Mehuli decided to let her young teammate take the first crack. "I take a little longer than him to line up my shot. He shoots pretty quickly and when we have a minute to complete our series, it helps to have him go first since he shoots quickly," she said.

"Even though we had won two gold in the Nationals, I asked him before the final if he remembered the rules for the mixed team event," Mehuli Ghosh said of the lad whose parents named him in honour of India's only individual Olympic gold medallist Abhinav Bindra. "Once he repeated them, I told him to enjoy shooting the targets. As you can see, he enjoyed himself with a good performance."

The West Bengal team scored 501.7 points in the final, better than their 498.2 in the Junior final and the 498.8 in the Youth final in Thiruvananthapuram. They won by a handy 5.7 points from Rajasthan. Having shot 831.7 in the qualification where they finished second, 0.3 points behind Madhya Pradesh, the Bengal team was confident that it could pull it off one more time.

They did it in style, with Abhinav Shaw showing an ability to rise to the occasion. When he finally put his gun down, having borne immense pressure admirably, the little lad was the cynosure as officials and fans rushing in to greet him. Even Mehuli had to wait for a while to plant a gentle slap on his cheek in appreciation.