



Ace paddler Sharath Kamal confident of having best-ever Olympics in Tokyo

New Delhi, April 28, 2021: India's highest-ranked Table Tennis player, the vastly experienced Achanta Sharath Kamal on Wednesday said he has hope of winning an Olympic Games medal this time, especially in Mixed Doubles with Manika Batra.

“Back in 2004, I had a dream of winning an Olympic medal and 17 years later, I am sitting here with the hope it is actually doing to turn into a reality,” he said at a media interaction facilitated by the Sports Authority of India. “The nation’s dream of winning a medal in Table Tennis can come true, especially in Mixed Doubles where a medal is just three rounds away,” he said.

He said his confidence was rooted in the 2018 Asian Games medal. “The Asian Games bronze medal that Manika and I won in Jakarta leads me to believe that if we can do it in the Asian Games, we have a fair chance at the Tokyo Olympics as Asia is a powerhouse and the best teams are from the continent. So, when you medal in the Asian Games, you have that confidence that this is going to be the best Olympics in terms of performance and in terms of results.”

Speaking about his partnership with Manika Batra, Sharath Kamal said they have had very good sessions in the recent weeks and had worked on some aspects like footwork and coordination, where they complement one another. “We both do really well under pressure even as singles players. When a match gets close, we are both able to raise our levels a notch up,” he said.

“The second thing is we have different styles of playing. She is able to slow the game down fantastically well and I am able to speed it up from there. That is where the opponents also are not able to play comfortably against us. So that is how we are trying to build our game,” Sharath Kamal said.

“We have come a very long way since 2004, in 2008 when I went to the Olympic Games with little competitive exposure. Once TOPS came into the picture, it became a lot easier and we are able to concentrate on our training as all requirements have been taken care of,” he said.

For this Olympic cycle, Sharath Kamal was inducted in Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) in December 2018. He has been given financial support of close to Rs 50 lakh, with most of the finances being sanctioned towards the cost for international competitions, fee for support staff, expenditure for equipment and Out of Pocket Allowance (OPA).

On July 4, 2019, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) had sanctioned a budget of Rs 12.13 crore to the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) under the Annual Calendar of Training and Competition (ACTC) until September 2020. On April 1 last, in a fresh approval until March 2022, the TTFI was approved a budget of Rs 7.77 crore.



Tokyo2020 would be Sharath's fourth Olympic Games but he would compete in two events, Men's Singles and Mixed Doubles, for the first time.

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