



Sailors Varun Thakkar and KC Ganapathy bank on their partnership and vision to bring medal from Tokyo

New Delhi, May 5: Indian sailors KC Ganapathy and Varun Thakkar, who will compete as a team in the Men's Skiff 49er Class competition at the Tokyo Olympics, have had each other's back firmly over the years and still continue to do so. This partnership forged over a span of 11 years and that is how long they both unanimously mention would take for Sailing to take off as one of the major sports in India.

"We love training and going out each day to the sea and training in time. We complement each other and are good partners. On the 49er skiff, the crew holds the main sail and one on the steering. That's where we help each other, me from the steering end and Varun from the help end," said Ganapathy during a virtual press conference facilitated by the Sports Authority of India. "There has to be a lot of coordination. Varun's help is really crucial in getting the boat really fast. We both like going really fast. Our disagreements, when we do have, only make us improve."

Varun added that it was all a part of the process to look at the bigger picture. "We have a process and we believe in the process. We are sailing for 10 years now. We help each other and work on our flaws, keep the calmness, composure and so on. During the first three years after our team formed, we had our arguments but then we made a long term goal to bring a medal for the country. We believed in each other more than anything else. Currently, we are only each other's backbone," said Varun.

The duo was inducted to the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) following their qualification from the sport, alongside Vishnu Saravanan (Laser Standard Class) and Nethra Kumanan (Laser Radial event). For the Olympic cycle beginning since 2017-18, a total of Rs 12.11 crores has been funded, as on the latest date, to the Yachting Association of India by the Sports Ministry as a part of the Annual Calendar for Training and Competition (ACTC) scheme. Varun and Ganapathy are now hoping to have an exposure trip to Portugal in place to further boost their preparations for Tokyo.

"We are grateful to the Sports Authority of India to add us into the TOPS. They will help us in transporting our boat to Tokyo in time for the Olympic games and help our logistical partner," said Varun. "The next 3 months will be spent in Portugal where 6-7 teams qualified for Olympics are already training. We can keep pushing each other all the way up. We are still waiting to check the travel restrictions there. Next 3 months is really crucial."



Given the tight situation the country is going through because of the Covid wave, there is a Plan B in place if the trip to Portugal doesn't happen. "If Portugal doesn't work out, I guess it's Rameswaram again. It is a narrow island and you can sail on both sides," said Varun. The pre-lockdown training had taken place in Rameswaram. "During first few months of lockdown, Varun and I went to Rameswaram and trained there for a month, before moving to Bombay and Abu Dhabi earlier this year," mentioned Ganapathy.