



Press Release

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Haryana Hockey Academy goalkeeper Rekha following footsteps of Savita Puni, wants to make her proud

New Delhi, December 21: Haryana Hockey Academy goalkeeper Rekha mentions she wants to follow the footsteps of Savita [Punia] didi and go on to become the next No 1 in the India senior women's Hockey team. The 20-year-old Hisar girl remained a strong custodian for her team, as the team conceded just three times from six games, in the first phase of the Khelo India Women's Hockey League Under 21.

"Savita didi is our senior and is also from our ground in Hisar. She guides and motivates us so very much whenever she comes and I personally get to learn a lot from her," said Rekha, after her team's 1-1 draw against the Madhya Pradesh Academy on Tuesday. "Savita didi keeps telling me to take her position in the senior team and keeps motivating me (laughs). I have learnt a lot from her watching her on TV and I am only following her footsteps."

The Haryana Hockey Academy stood first in the Pool B points table with a total of 16 points, which included five wins and one draw. "From the start of the tournament, we wanted to play like a team and decide on the tactics one match at a time. We didn't score that much in the tournament but a win is a win," continued Rekha, who started playing hockey 8 years back at the SAI Training Centre in Hisar. "13 girls in our team are from the Umra village in Hisar and we have been practicing together since 8-9 years. Our coach Azad Singh Malik sir has also prepared us well and he keeps telling us as and when to switch strategies. There are still a few errors which we want to address and get prepared for the second phase of the Khelo India women's hockey league in Lucknow. We take every tournament seriously," Rekha continued.

Commenting about her individual performance at the Major Dhyanchand Stadium, she said, "If the team plays good, obviously the goalkeeper will try to give the best. It gives us goalkeepers a lot of motivation when the players in front of them play so well. As for me, I just played my part in being the protector of the team."

Rekha, who has won above 16 medals from 22 nationals in a span of 8 years, has been selected to be a part of the SAI National Centre of Excellence Bhopal and will join them early next year. She is



looking forward to participating at the Khelo India Youth Games next year, scheduled to take place at her home State of Haryana. “I want to participate in the upcoming Khelo India Games and win medals of course. Such a big tournament is happening in our State and it naturally gives the players from our State all the more confidence to give a good performance in front of our people,” mentioned Rekha, who won three gold medals in the Khelo India Games.

Speaking on her long term goal, Rekha puts it straight, “I don’t just want to participate at the Olympics but also win a medal and make Savita Punia didi proud”.

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