

ROWING INDIA

— 2022 —



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FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends in Rowing,

The period between October and January gave us – the Rowing fraternity, much to be encouraged about. After a period spanning two years, we witnessed our talented boys and girls compete fiercely in the junior and senior nationals held at the ARN rowing node – Pune, in December and January, respectively. The races were a testament to the dedication of our affiliated State associations and coaches for keeping their troops fit and championship ready through the turbulent months of the pandemic. With a record entry of 25 Associations, the nationals witnessed the coming together of old comrades and races that were reminiscent of earlier rivalries. I am grateful to Mr. Sanjay Valvi, Secretary Maharashtra Rowing Association & Col Sandeep Chahal, CO, Army Rowing Node, for their spontaneous offer to hold the Jr & Sr Nationals at ARN, Pune.

Many of our Sr Rowers have been training at ARN in a very strict Bio-Bubble. I greatly appreciate their discipline, patience, and dedication over the past two years, to have remained away from their families as they trained to bring us national glory. The fruits of their sacrifices are there for all to see, both in the Asian Championships and the Olympics of 2021.

As we welcome the Sculling and Rowing Association of J&K into our fold, April will witness the Sub Jr Nationals scheduled to be held in Jammu. It marks a joyous moment for the rowing family as we look towards new talent and to build on our rowing program in the beautiful state of J&K.

We have entered the crucial preparatory phase for the 19 Asian Games to be held at Hangzhou, China, from 10 Sept 2022 to 25 Sept 2022 as well as the Para Asian Games which will follow. As a result, National Coaching Camps are commencing for Sr Women at Hyderabad & for Men at Bhopal.

I am hopeful that we continue to safely navigate the pandemic even as we set our eyes on bigger goals in the next few months. My best wishes to the office bearers, coaches, parents and players to remain steadfast in your commitment to our beloved sport.

Wishing you good health and success in the New Year 2022.

Jai Hind !

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rajlaxmi Singh Deo'.

**Rajlaxmi Singh Deo, President
Rowing Federation of India**

MEN'S NATIONAL CAMP

@ Pune : 4th Oct to 4th Dec 2021

Camp participants – 34 Rowers



Bajrang Lal Takhar For the love of gold

Arjun Awardee and Padmashree Bajrang Lal Takhar is quite confident of his team. He and his team trained 14 participants for the Asian Rowing Championship held at Ban Chang, Rayong in Thailand. We caught up with the coach who promises more medals this year. Excerpts:

How is the preparation this year?

Our preparations are good this time. Our team did well in the last Olympics and we have improved our timings as well. We are a bit wary of the current situation and are following all protocols to keep ourselves safe. Our health and game, both are our priorities.

How many medals can we expect this year?

Last time we bagged one gold, two silver and three bronze. This time we are targeting more gold. The federation also expects us to bring gold because our preparation is good and we have improved a lot. Our confidence is high.

Have you planned any strategy to achieve that goal?

Our goal has been set - to get as many medals as possible. And working towards that goal, during the training we have improved on our timing and technique and that has improved our overall confidence in our skills. When we are on the ground for the real game then we will strategise keeping the situation, climate and other factors in mind.

Tell us about the participants who are representing India in Thailand.

This time we have a mix of participants. While some are already medalists at the Asian Games, some have played in the Olympics and then there are fresh talents as well. So we have a pretty strong team.

Any request you would want to make to the federation?

I am thankful that the Federation is always there for us and the game. However, I would request our officials at the apex body to organize more camps and take a technology-first approach for optimum performance from the players.

Any message for the rowers?

Dedication and discipline are the keys to achieving any goal. Rowing is a water sport through which you can earn respect and honour for yourself and for the country as well.

Participants speak

Arvind Singh: I will be rowing in the lightweight single sculls. The exposure at the Olympics this year has improved my confidence and I am sure that I can get gold for India.

Arjun Lal Jat: I am in the Men's Double Scull and have trained myself quite well with whatever time we had. Here co-ordination with the teammates also plays a crucial role and I am sure we will get the gold that we are targeting.

ISMAIL BAIG Man with a mission



Dronacharya Awardee Coach Ismail Baig opens up about his journey and making history before he retires

In the history of rowing in India, one name shines brighter than gold. With an astounding winning streak coach Ismail Baig has a total of 160 medals in his awe-inspiring oeuvre. To be precise, the Hyderabad-based mentor won 37 gold, 64 silver and 59 bronze medals, a score that makes for an enviable career graph.

From Rower to Coach

His short and remarkable stint as a rower turned the tables for him and after an intensive course in Pune and Kolkata, Baig took charge as a National Coach in 2002. From holding the oars and blazing the course to reach the finish line, the rower-turned-coach infused young rowers with his passion and commitment to make India proud at prestigious international pedestals. The following years saw him grow from strength to strength and the performance, confidence and medal count of his proteges multiplied. He is largely credited with changing the medal structure of India – from only bronze to multiple silver and golds. To give a clear picture, this genius won 15 medals at Asian Games (2 gold, 5 silver and 8 bronze); 94 medals at Senior Asian Rowing Championships and SAF Games (28 gold, 37 silver and 29 bronze); 43 medals in Junior Asian Championship (7 gold, 20 silver and 16 bronze) and 8 medals in other international championships. (2 silver and 6 bronze).

The great escape

The Dronacharya Awardee's entry into the world of rowing was nothing but an 'escape plan'. The soft-spoken 53-year-old legend tells us, "Being a part of the Indian army I was in the boxing team. However, my fondness for the sports never grew and I was looking for ways to escape the boxing ring." In 1987 he broke off from the confines of the aggressive sport and entered the thrilling world of rowing. "I loved every bit of the sport ever since I held the oars and raced on the water," quips the coach whose debut medal came in 1989 at the 13th National Rowing Championship. He won a bronze medal. The maiden medal pumped up his confidence and surprisingly in the same year, Baig bagged his debut gold at the 2nd All India Invitation Rowing Regatta, Chandigarh. As a rower, he also represented India in the 1990 Asian Games in Beijing. One of the best rowers of India at that time, Baig returned to the National Championship held at Madras in 1991 and added gold to his resume before becoming a coach.



Creating A-listers

A kind-hearted human and a coach who goes an extra mile for the cause of the game has produced some award-winning rowers who made national headlines. The most striking among the lot is Bajrang Lal Takhar, the Padmasree and Arjuna Awardee who scripted history by becoming the first rower to earn a gold medal at the 2010 Asian Games. His other notable mentees include Jenil Krishnan, Satish Joshi, Saji Thomas and Sawarn Singh, all recipients of the Arjuna Award.

Coaching during Covid times

Over the last 2 decades as a national coach, Baig witnessed many ups and downs, but 2020-21 posed a different challenge altogether. However, his fighting spirit got the best out of him. Talking about the challenges he tells us, "It affected us all – physically, emotionally and mentally. A lot of us lost our loved ones. Plus, restriction in movement disrupted training for many. We even resorted to Zoom sessions to train and motivate the players. Quarantine and not being able to meet with family members also affected the emotional state of the sportsmen. The girls particularly suffered more as they couldn't come under one umbrella and get trained. This affected their performance at the 2021 Asian Championship. The boys performed quite well, bringing home multiple medals." The model leader also lost a few of his relatives but he did not deviate from his primary duty – taking rowing to newer heights. "As it is said the show must go on, I did the same. The goal for us – coaches and rowers, is big; to make the camp and country proud," avers the coach who stresses on hard work and discipline in life to succeed.

Coach turns cook

Beyond channelizing his energy at grooming rowers, the coach loves cooking. In fact, he tells us that he turns into a cook during the weekends and treats his students and staff with flavourful and aromatic biryani which is no match to the popular restaurants in Hyderabad.

Aiming High

While 2021 ended on a good note with multiple medals, particularly gold, in the Asians, Baig is focusing on increasing the count of the yellow metal in the impending international regattas. "At the 2021 Asian Championship, our ranking improved despite the challenges that we all faced. I would like my boys and girls to continue the momentum and make history at the impending international competitions," signs off Baig with a deep sense of hope and contentment in his voice.



2021 ASIAN ROWING CHAMPIONSHIPS

They are the champions

Braving all odds and rowing on foreign shores, these rowers made India proud at the 2021 Asian Rowing Championships held at Rayong, Thailand

A total of 20 participants under the able guidance of six coaches made the country proud at the Asian Rowing Championship held at Ban Chang, Rayong, Thailand in December. While not all bagged the prestigious metal, the contingent gave their best, fighting all the way is worth acknowledging and appreciating. Resulting in a spectacular result from both men and women categories, while the male rowers were trained by Coach Ismail Baig, National Coach and Dronacharya Awardee along with a team of assistant coaches at the Army Rowing Node at Pune; the women team was groomed by Coach Inderpal Singh, Olympian and Arjuna Awardee along with a team of assistant coaches at Jagatpur, Odisha.



Ashish Phugat is a seasoned player now having rowed at the junior level including at few international venues. Though he and his partner Sukhjinder had targeted gold, they had to settle for silver. An optimistic lad, he suggests getting trained on windy and wavy courses. **“Our training was impeccable but the wind and waves caught us off guard. Getting trained at similar conditions will help us,”** suggests Ashish.

Though it was **Sukjinder Singh’s** debut international championship, he wasn’t at all nervous. The confident rower who finished the race with a silver medal tells us, **“We had practiced well, following the instructions of our coach and they also believed in us. So there wasn’t any room for nervousness.”** Sukhjinder is eyeing gold in the next championship that he is preparing for.

Light Weight Men’s Double Sculls



Light Weight Men's Single Sculls

Competing in the Light Weight Men's Single Scull, **Arvind Singh** was confident of getting gold for his country. While his main competitors - Uzbekistan and China, had a strong chance of spoiling his dream, Arvind's technique and stamina was nothing in front of them. Arvind who was competing for the first time in the above category avers, "During the first 500 metres we were at the same footing, however in the second 500 metres I increased my speed and took the lead. They performed well too with the winning margin staying around 5-6 seconds." His time was 7:55.942.



Men's Double Sculls

Ravi Birhman who clinched the gold medal in the Men's Double category, tells us that his entire village and primarily his mom and sister are extremely happy with his jubilant streak in Thailand. The Ronaldo fan tells us, "This is my first gold and I feel absolutely thrilled. It's certainly great teamwork. Initially, we were a little wary because the weather conditions were absolutely different at which we had practiced. While it was cold here when we had practiced, it was hot there. However, we kept our focus intact and gave our best."

A satisfactory performance at the Olympics coupled with the zeal to push the envelope further helped **Arjun Lal Jat** win gold at Asian Championship. The Rajasthan-boy teamed up with Ravi Birhman to beat China and Uzbekistan who had to settle for the second and third positions, respectively. He says, "It was Ravi's first international game, however, the coach and I were really confident of his skills. We gave our best and we got our first gold."

Men's Single Sculls

Parminder Singh won the Silver medal in the Men's Single Sculls category. Terming the experience 'fulfilling' the Haryana sportsman says, "The Asian competition gave me great exposure and it has improved not just my game but also my confidence and personality. Competing with world-class teams on an international venue was very encouraging."



Men's Coxless Fours

This was Bhatinda boy **Jasveer Singh's** sixth Asian Championship and though he and his mates missed the first spot, he is happy with his performance. "Due to some confusion, we reached late at the event and couldn't warm up at the venue and that is what I think affected our final performance. However, we gave our best and got home a medal," tells Jasveer who has around 15 medals from national championships and eight medals from international tournaments to his credit.

Despite arriving late at the venue because of some confusion and having only one outing on foreign waters, **Punit Kumar** earned a silver. "Our oars were different which meant it took time for us to get the grip right. Also, the climatic conditions were very different from India. If only we had arrived early and tested the waters, we wouldn't have missed the gold."

Gurmeet Singh had worked hard for the Asian Championship and it showed clearly when he kicked off the race in Men's Coxless Fours along with three of his teammates. The Punjabi rower who won his maiden silver at the game tells us, "We all had worked hard for the game and our team was a very strong one. So we were pretty confident of bagging the first spot, however, sadly things did not work in our favour." His next target? Of course, gold.

Charanjeet Singh rues that they missed the first spot by just few seconds. While it's a big miss for any athlete Singh is satisfied that he and his teammate gave their best. "It's natural to be disappointed when you know that you deserved to win the top prize. However, winning and losing is part of the game and I am quite content with our performance," stresses Singh who is preparing for the National Championship. Their timing was 6:51.661.



Men's Quadruple Sculls

Rajasthan boy **Jakar Khan**, 24, bagged silver at the Asian Championship with his teammates in the quadruple sculls. "Our preparations were up to date and we were quite confident of ourselves. We had worked on our timing and improved our endurance levels. In fact, though we lost to Uzbekistan in the finals we did beat them during the prelims," informs Khan who aims at winning gold next year.

This silver medallist at Asian Championship is as positive as he was before the championship in the Southeast Asian country. **Bittu Singh** who earned silver in Quadruple Scull, tells us, "We had improved our performance since last year and was expecting nothing but gold. However, we brought home silver and it's a great feat for us. We performed and delivered our 100 per cent and that's what matters the most."

Though it was **Manjeet Kumar's** first international medal, the experiences of his teammates kept his spirit and confidence high. "We would have come back home with gold only but we did not get time to practice at the venue. If we had arrived fifteen days ago then we would have definitely performed much better." enthuses Kumar who is elated to have a silver medal on his resume.

A regular medallist at Asian Games, **Sukhmeet Singh** and his scull mates made India proud this year as well. In 2018 he won gold and in 2019 he settled for silver and a photo finish led to silver this year too. The champion who strongly believes that he is efficient in both double and quadruple sculls tells us, "We gave our best and we are happy with our performance." They clocked a timing of 6.33.083, losing the gold by 0.523 seconds.



WOMEN'S NATIONAL CAMP

@ SAI – Jagatpur: 4th Oct to 4th Dec 2021



Inderpal Singh: Coach speaks

All set for the Asian Title

With over 26 years of experience in rowing, Inderpal Singh, whose core strength as a coach is his positive outlook and determination, trained twelve women for the Asian Rowing Championship held at Ban Chang, Rayong in Thailand. The Arjuna Awardee spoke to us before taking his entourage to fight it out at the prestigious championship. Excerpts:

How is the training going on given the new COVID-19 rules for rowers?

Owing to the COVID situation, the training programme was reduced to two months and everyone was put to action from October 4 this year. The new rules included facility of bio-bubble, separate training hours and more, and we all followed it strictly.

Do you have a strategy for getting the best out of the participants?

The past two years of COVID-19 restrictions have immensely affected the players' fitness and health. To reach the maximal level of performance, we took a couple of measures. It included strategic and systematic planning of training sessions, video analysis of the players, thorough health check-ups, psychological testing to assess VO2 max, HRmax, anaerobic capacity and neuro-balance. There was also an anthropometrics assessment for the evaluation of height, weight, fat mass percentage and BMI.

Any request that you would want to make to the federation to make the game better?

I am thankful to the Rowing Federation of India and Sports Authority of India and heartfelt gratitude towards President RFI, DG, SAI and all the respective officials for taking the initiative and leading us in organizing a camp where only elite women rowers will be focused upon and trained to perform the best, both, nationally and internationally. There are a few points I want to put forward, which I consider could help in making the game better. First, promotion of gender equality and equal economic opportunities for women; secondly, promotion of equal participation of women in sports as well as accessibility to the same level of resources of play; conducting Junior/Senior National coaching camps for more talent scouting and lastly, a dedicated training centre for elite women rowers.

BOX

Tips for women looking to make big in rowing

- Set realistic goals: Start with smaller and specific goals as these are easier to achieve and can help to build toward your bigger goal
- Stay motivated: No matter how hard the situation is trust yourself, trust your training and practice positive affirmations
- Stay focused

Participants Speak

Navneet Kaur: I have been rowing since 2013 and have earned many medals in the national championship and two gold and three silver in international arenas.

Rukmani Dangi: I have participated in Asian Championship earlier but have not been lucky with a medal so far. I have trained myself well under my coach and I am sure I am going to get lucky this time.

We welcome the new Office Bearers of our Affiliates

Tamil Nadu Amateur Rowing Association

The following Office Bearers were elected for a four-year period from 2020 to 2024

President: Mr Balaji Maradapa

Secretary: Mr Yeshwanth Badadri

Treasurer: Mr Pratap Kesavan

Jharkhand Rowing Association

The following Office Bearers were elected for a four-year period from 2021 to 2025

President: Mr Suresh Kumar

Secretary: Mr K.K.Singh

Treasurer: Mr Hejaz Asdaque Mohammed



Rowing fraternity applauds

S R Kalidas, national medalist in multiple regattas has yet again showcased an inspirational performance on the ergometer at CRC. At the age of 65 he has rowed for 3 million meters which is a milestone performance by an ex-Asian Games Rower. The countdown which preceded the final performance was as follows:

1. Concept 2 Holiday challenge (2020)
100,000 mts between Nov 26 - Dec 24, 2020
2. Dog Day's of Summer Challenge (2021)
100,000 mts between Aug 1 - 28, 2021
3. Concept 2 Holiday Challenge (2021)
200,000 mts between Nov 25 - Dec 24, 2021
4. concept 2 Revolution Challenge (2021)
15 Hours Indoor Rowing in January 2021
5. Concept 2 Indoor Rower Three Million Meter Club 3000,000 mts in Feb 14, 2021

Umpire Seminar & Exam

It was conducted at Telangana Water Sports Academy from 22nd to 25th Dec 2021. The same was attended by 17 participants from 11 affiliate's states. The following Candidates have qualified as National umpires:

1. Rajesh Kumar (Services Sports Control Board)
2. Gurdarshan Singh (Services Sports Control Board)
3. Mujeeb Rahman (Karnataka Amateur Rowing Association)
4. Sanjay Valvi (Maharashtra Rowing Association)
5. Sushma Bubna (West Bengal Rowing Association)
6. Roshni Mahadevan (Tamil Nadu Amateur Rowing Association)



41ST JUNIOR NATIONAL ROWING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2021

Rowing high



The Junior National Championship saw great sportsmanship from the young rowers who gave tough competition to their competitors and also stood by their mates to bag the yellow metal

After a hiatus of almost two years in all sports activities due to pandemic the 41st Junior National Rowing Championship was organized and hosted by Maharashtra Rowing Association on behalf of Rowing Federation of India at Army Rowing Node, Pune from 8th - 12th Dec 2021. The championship had 250+ participants from 21 affiliates members featuring 78 races. Mr Namdev Shirgaonkar, Secretary-General Maharashtra Olympic Association graced the opening ceremony and raising the spirit of the winners was Hirabai Ghule, Deputy Mayor Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, at the closing ceremony. The jury was presided by Mr Krishnanand Heblekar - President Maharashtra Rowing Association.



Women's Single sculls: Madhya Pradesh

Team Bengal and Kerala did give **Monika Bhadoria** a tough competition but the rower's eyes were fixed on the first spot. During the first 500 m of the 1000 m race, Monika representing Madhya Pradesh was at par with her two main competitors. In the last 500 m the young rower intelligently accelerated her speed and took the lead leaving behind the second and third spot for her opponents. "I enjoyed every bit of the final race. During the heats and semi final races Bengal and Kerala gave me good competition and it was so thrilling to move ahead of them in the final race," enthuses Monika who has been rowing since 2016.



Men's Single sculls: Boys Sports Company

Tokyo Olympics rower Arvind Singh inspired **Gaurav Kumar** to a great extent and just like his idol, the 17-year-old, wants to make it big at the international level. Kumar who clinched the first position in the single scull category says, "Arvind inspires me a lot. I also want to represent my country one day just like him and make everyone proud. I made sure to push the envelope and improved my performance" He finished the race with a time of 3.27.17 seconds.



Women's Double Sculls: Manipur

Thangjam Priya Devi is a regular medalist at rowing championships. She has earned several gold medals in the past; however, this gold medal is close to her heart. The 18-year-old from Manipur says, "I have played in junior levels so far and as I have turned 18 I will be participating in more intense competitions and this win at the Junior National Championship reaffirms my faith in my capabilities."

Haobijam Tendenthoi Devi who partnered with Thangjam Priya Devi in the Double Scull is ecstatic about her partnership and her win. "We both worked hard and helped each other during the competition because we knew the victory will be ours only when there is a great teamwork," says Devi with twinkle in her eyes.



Men's Double Sculls: Boys Sports Company

Nikhil Kumar's main target was to beat team Madhya Pradesh and in a photo finish the national champion did it with the help of his team mate **Akshay Nain**. "Every year they use to lift the trophy so naturally they were our biggest competitor. The thrill to win against them is unmatched and all of us will remember the game for many years to come."

Akshay Nain's elder brother introduced him to the game and since then the young rower has been sweating it out on the waters to emerge as the best. With his father as a constant support, Nain, 17, says, "My brother represented India at the Junior Asian Championship and I want to go ahead in the game and play internationally."



Women's Pairs: Kerala

Arya D Nair made her medal debut with gold after rowing for two and a half years. Unable to contain her excitement on her win, the 18 year old tells us, "I am so glad that I won gold. It makes me feel so happy. After these I intend to get trained further and play at higher levels."

From Volleyball, **Arundathi VJ**, switched to rowing and that has been the happiest decision of her life. The 17-year-old rower tells us. "Frankly speaking, I chose rowing because my father recommended it and I have loved the sport from day one. The adrenaline rush in this game makes me feel so much alive," avers Arundathi.

Men's Pairs: Madhya Pradesh

18-year-old **Soyal** gave his all in the Junior National Championship. Representing Madhya Pradesh, Soyal says, "Getting selected for the camp and performing in the finals at the nationals was like a life-time opportunity to me so I had to put in my best and that's what I did."

This is **Vedant Kulshreshtha's** first gold at the nationals and fourth gold of his bright rowing career. The golden boy who teamed up with fellow rower Soyal tells us, "This is my last Junior National Championship hence I had worked very hard to get a medal. I was pretty confident that I will get a gold because my training was impeccable, all thanks to my coach."



Women's Coxless Fours: Kerala

Meenakshy VS tells us her performance in the 2021 Junior National Championship has been far better than the 2019 one. And it's her extra effort during the training at SAI that the Kerala girl bagged gold for her team at the Women's Four category. She offers, "I made sure to work hard and get gold for my team. I improved my time both on the boat and ergometer and I am quite happy with my performance."

Archa. A trains two hours twice a day to beat her own record. The Kerala rower who had grabbed gold in the Sub-Junior category in 2019 treasures her latest win. Eyeing to play at the Asian Championship and Olympics in the future, the young champ says, "This gold is special for me and my family as well. It has encouraged me to set higher goals for myself."

This was **Aleena Anto's** first national championship and the 16-year-old is thrilled to have earned gold. "Winning the top medal at my first nationals gives me so much of confidence and fills me with pride. I have been rowing for the last four years and I am thankful to my coach and also my team mates who kept motivating me," says Aleena.

"Rowing is her passion," stresses **Vinijamol B** when asked about her love for the water sports. This is the South Indian sportswomen's fourth gold medal and she is eyeing for bigger goals. "I started playing rowing since 2017 and ever since then I have enjoyed every bit of the game. Our coach inspires us to put in hard work. We love the game," says the Kerala rower.



Men's Coxless Fours: Boys Sports Company



It's his debut gold medal and **Ravinder** cannot contain his excitement. The 18-year-old Haryana boy reflects, "We must have trained for 20-25 days and we knew that under the able guidance of our coach we will be coming out with flying colours." The

rower is gearing to score big at the upcoming Junior Asian Championship this year.

Nishant Pilania has been desperately waiting to make it to the nationals and the 17-years-old who practiced hard for four year shares, "I have been waiting to get selected for so long, so playing at the finals was like a dream for me. I hope to make it big in this game because I am very serious about it."

Satish Yadav performs seamlessly in all categories. Whether it is single, double or four, he is a medal winner. At the Junior Championship, the enthusiastic rower won his first gold at the national level. This recognition he stresses will help him aim high and achieve his ultimate goal of winning at the Olympics.

With a time of 3.01.43 seconds **Satendra Chauhan** bagged gold along with his other team mates in Mens Coxless Fours. Giving a short highlight of the game Satendra tells us, "Kerala and Bengal were our main competitors and it was a great show of strength from all the participants. However, in the last 100 meters the game changed in our favour."

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