

Press Release

Madhya Pradesh boxing's Cuban coach Drake sees a good future for women's boxing in India

Pune, January 20: Indian women boxers are doing a great job lately and if you look at the young generation of the pugilists who took part in the Khelo India Youth Games, you can definitely see a bright future waiting ahead for them, said Romain Romero Drake, a former Cuban boxer and now an international boxing coach.

Drake, who is training the boxers of Madhya Pradesh State Boxing Academy for the last three months, was also part of Indian women's coaching team in 2014, when the Indian contingent participated in the Commonwealth Games at Glasgow. India's Sarita Devi had won a silver while Pinky Rani returned with a bronze medal.

Drake's efforts saw MP boxers win one gold and three bronze at the Under-17 School Nationals in December and here at Khelo India Youth Games, they won two golds through Ruchir Shrivastava (Boys U-17, 46kg) and Divya Pawar (U-21, 54kg) and one silver through Anjali Sharma (Girls U-21, 48kg).

"What I admire in Indian women pugilists is that they are quite disciplined. They have a good posture and strength. In the last four years, the Indian women boxing has come a long way. More facilities are available and the players are getting good exposure. Haryana and Manipur were already into women boxing, but other states like Madhya Pradesh are also doing a great job," he said.

Drake, who was a silver medallist in Cuban national championship, was forced to retire from competitive world due to right wrist injury in an accident in 1977. However, his love and passion for the game couldn't keep him away from the ring, and he started training young pugilists.

"Unfortunately, I wasn't able to win any international medal, but my students have. Many of them are junior and sub-junior medallists in various international tournaments. That gives me the greatest satisfaction," Drake said.

Cuba is known as the nursery of Olympic medallists in boxing. So far, the country has bagged 73 Olympics boxing medals including 37 gold medals, which is far more than any other country. Asked about the success mantra behind Cuba's domination over the sport, Drake said, "In our country, boxing is a way of living. Several boxers have come from poverty and started earning a living through the sport, which motivated others to take up the sport. Also, the government and private academies play a big role. We start training kids at the early age of 11-12 and some start even earlier. There are kids' arenas where they train and fight friendly bouts. Thus, they become quite experienced when they reach their prime age."

Drake who had also coached Botswana national boxing team feels that India can reap more medals in 2024 Olympics.

"I sincerely wish that my students in Madhya Pradesh will get into the Indian team and win a medal in 2024," he said.