



Sports psychologists find Indian athletes' energetic approach and motivation endearing

New Delhi, May 14: A panel of sports psychologists, working with many of India's Tokyo2020-bound athletes, agreed that those who had qualified for the Olympic Games have surprised them with their energetic approach, motivation and a powerful will to prepare well for the Games despite the uncertainties imposed on them by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Tokyo Olympics, postponed by a year because of the pandemic, can take a toll on athlete's mental health given the amount that athletes invested both physically and emotionally into their preparation. But they can draw solace from the fact that they have put their best foot forward and missed out due to circumstances beyond their control.

"It has been heart-breaking for some whose qualifying or ranking events were cancelled and for others who could not travel for training or competition. Even for those who have qualified, the uncertainty presents a challenge but most of them are now looking forward to the Games," Mugdha Bavare, who works with many athletes, said. "They are good at bouncing back."

Sanjana Kiran, who works with some Olympics-bound athletes, said the sportspersons are now used to the idea of things not being normal. "The pandemic threw a googly at athletes, who are used to controlling situations. However, they now understand that it is okay to be uncomfortable, to feel helpless and that it could take a while for things to be normal," she said.

The third panelist in the symposium, facilitated by the Sports Authority of India, Mrinal Chakraborty said that the pandemic offered the athletes an opportunity to see where they could get better by spending time with themselves, "The pandemic offered athletes a good repairing time. They could work on areas of improvement and make it their strength."

Mugdha Bavare agreed that the pandemic brought athletes' mental health to the forefront. "Mental health, especially for athletes, is often overlooked or ignored. The most important thing that athletes have learnt during the pandemic is to express themselves if they are feeling emotionally not up to the mark," she said.

Sanjana Kiran pointed out that while some athletes do feel upset that their Olympic Games chances have been affected by the pandemic, they have learnt to look at it from a perspective of acceptance. "It is not going to be easy especially for those athletes who are looking at Tokyo as their last Olympics," she said.

"To athletes who have been hurt by the cancellation of tournaments affects their Olympic hopes, I would suggest that they vent their emotions and frustrations, but to adopt problem-focused coping. When you know you can't control this situation, when you know you have been honest with your craft and effort, when you know have given your best, draw the comfort out of it."

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