



ATHLETICS FEDERATION OF INDIA DECEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER



FEATURED ATHLETE

VISMAYA ACKNOWLEDGES TRAINING WITH GALINA HAS TRANSFORMED HER



VK Vismaya anchoring Indian 4x400m relay team to victory at 2018 Asian Games

VK Vismaya knows she has not only come a long way from humble beginnings and anonymity in the span of three years but also a good distance left to cover in the journey ahead. India's highest-ranked 400m woman sprinter, the 23-year-old is well aware that she has a huge responsibility on her shoulders over the next few years.

She is ranked 54th in 400m on the World Ranking and second in Asia behind the world champion, Bahrain's Nigeria-born Salwa Eid Naser. If she sustains her progress, Vismaya can realistically hope for an individual medal in the 2022 Asian Games and be the leader of the relay squad for some time.

"I did not think that I would get to this level when I started athletics. I am very happy that I have reached this level in a short period," she says, improving from a 56-second runner to a personal best of 52.12 seconds in Memoriál Josefa Sečkáře in Brno, Czech Republic on August 28 last year. "But first I will try my best to make the Olympic Games qualifying time of 51.35 seconds."

Vismaya has slipped into the leadership position with modesty, maturity and an eagerness to continue learning. "We may be forging a new relay team, but we are confident that we will do well because we are doing good work and can improve our times. We have good chances in mixed relay as well," she says.

For one who was inspired by younger sister Vijisha and encouraged by coach Raju Paul at St. George School, Kothamangalam, to give athletics a shot, she did not exactly make waves until she joined Assumption College, Changanassery. "I was good in academics and did not concentrate on athletics. But my performance also improved as I started training a bit more in college," she says. Vismaya, who drew the attention of the then Deputy Chief Coach Radhakrishnan Nair with a 23.90-second record time in 200m and a 53.67-second run in finishing second in the All-India Inter-University Athletics Championships in December 2017 in Guntur, has no hesitation in acknowledging coach Galina Bukharina's role in her evolution as India's top quarter-mile sprinter. "I have reached this level because of Galina ma'am," she says. "She is very friendly but on the ground she is strict. She cares for the whole team and we can ask her anything and she is ready to share her immense wisdom in her response. She is fair in her support of all runners. I have benefitted immensely by training with her."

She points out that one of the advantages of training with Galina Bukharina is the amount of knowledge that the coach imparts. "I have learnt a lot from my conversations with the coach, particularly after racing against Salwa in the Asian Games in Jakarta and in the mixed and women's relays in the Asian Athletics Championships 2019 in Doha," Vismaya says.

Speaking of Salwa Eid Naser, India's premier 400m runner says she has good memories of running with her. "It has been a good experience to run against the world's best and learn. I was tense in the Asian Games was since it was my first time with international athletes. I did my best both in Jakarta and Doha," she recalls.



The soft-spoken Vismaya shares very good bonhomie with her team-mates, especially with the senior-most MR Poovamma. "Besides I draw inspiration from PT Usha ma'am. She is very encouraging and motivates all of us during competition," Vismaya says, getting ready to chisel her dreams in a training session at the Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports, Patiala.



USHA'S CONTRIBUTION GOES WAY BEYOND MEDALS WON FOR INDIA

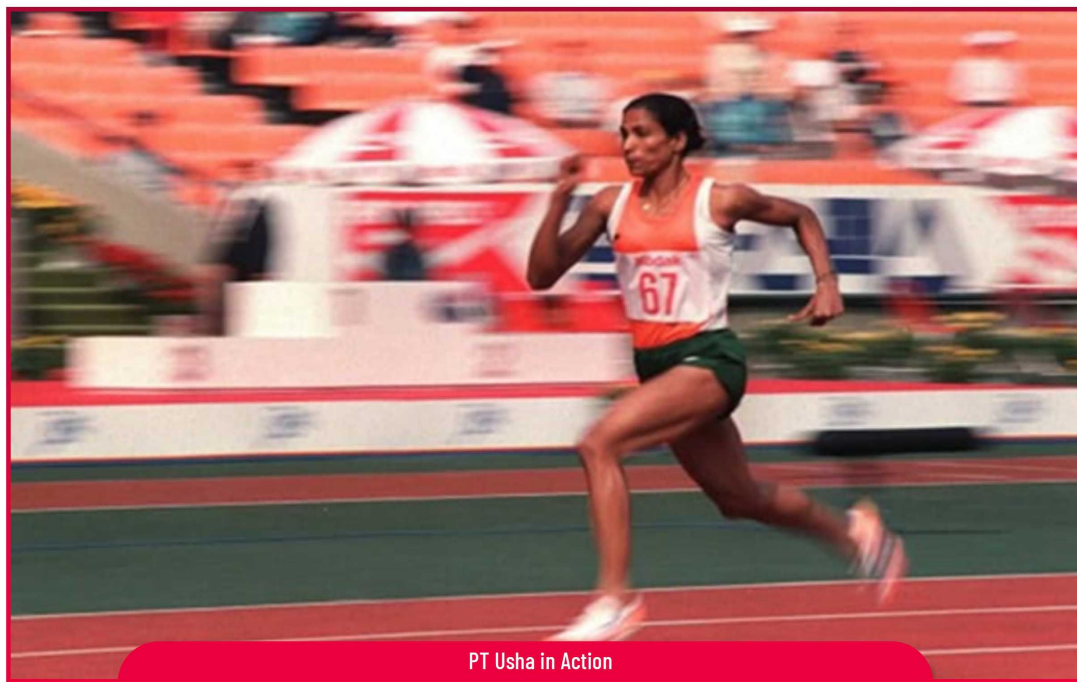
There can be question that PT Usha strode the Indian athletics scene – no, the Indian sports scene – like a Colossus, earning herself the right to be recognised among the country's biggest icons and inspirations. The 56-year-old remains an icon even as Indian sport has made rapid strides in the past two decades.

Overcoming a heart condition that made her drop out of the 1981 Asian Track and Field Meet in Tokyo, Usha captured the imagination of a success-starved country. At a time when a shower between races was the only recovery method available for Indian athletes, Usha inspired the nation with stirring performances.

Taking on an amazing workload, she helped India rise from beyond the top 10 to fifth on the medals table in 1986 Asian Games where she claimed three gold and anchored the 4x400m relay team to another besides winning two silver medals. Few athletes before and since have handled such massive workloads and given Indians so much joy of seeing the Tricolour flutter.

To be sure, it would have a perfect career had she been able to win an Olympic medal, missing out on the bronze in 1984. Not lunging at the finish, she was beaten to fourth place by a hundredth of a second by Cristieana Cojocaru (Romania), the photo-finish judges taking close to half an hour to decide the third place.

"To this day, I believe that I was unsettled by the restart after Debbie Flintoff (Australia) stumbled on the track soon after the starter's gun went off. I did not have a good start after we were all recalled to the start. Trailing everyone till the third hurdle, I chose to accelerate at the wrong time. I put that down to my inexperience," she says.



PT Usha in Action

"I wish I had run a few more 400m Hurdles races before the Olympics but I went there with the experience of running in just three races. Though the AAFI had given me an entry for the event in the National Inter-State Championships in New Delhi, the other competitors refused to step on track. A month later, I ran my first race in the National Open in Bombay and won in 58.5 seconds.

"That secured me a B qualification. Later, the Federation held a selection trial on synthetic track in Delhi and I clocked 55.7 seconds to secure my entry. I ran another race in Inglewood, California before reaching Los Angeles for the Games," Usha says, recalling the dramatic events in the lead up to the 1984 Olympic Games.

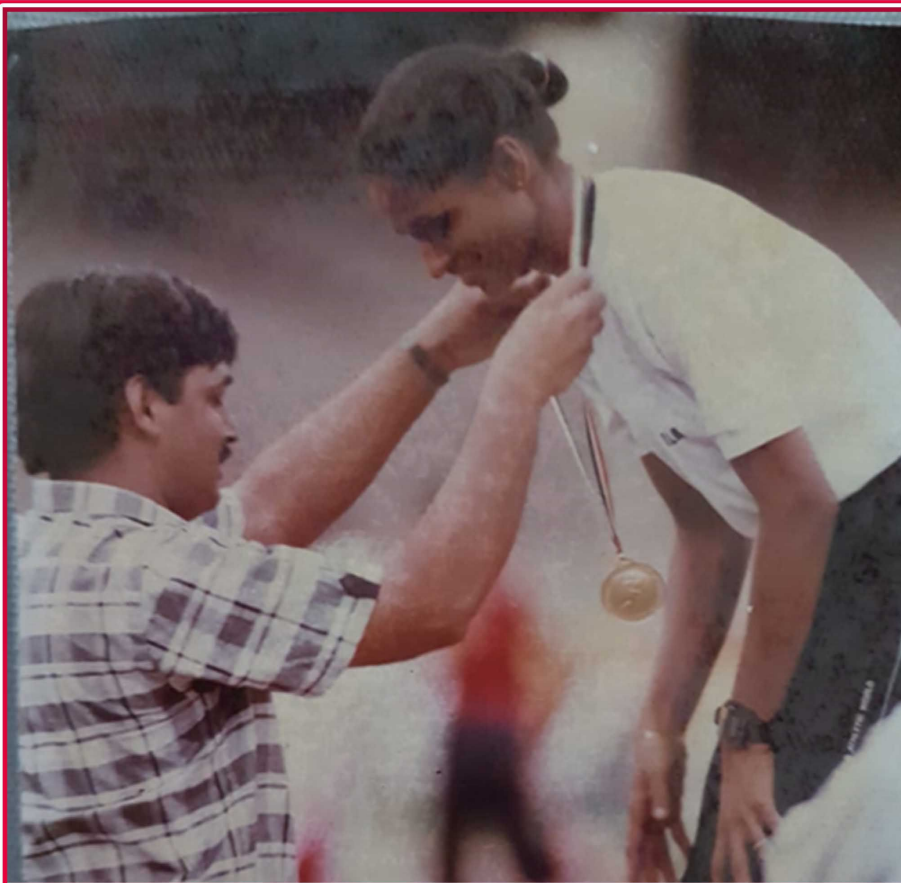
She remembers her tryst with the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow as a 16-year-old as if it were yesterday, remembering running in spikes on a synthetic track for the first time – clocking 12.27 seconds in the 100m and 25.60 seconds in 200m – and losing her way from her lodgings to the Indian team's mess and back. "By the time I got to the Mess, I would be late," she says.

"The only thing on my mind was that I should not finish last in a race. After finishing sixth in the 100m heats, I was not keen on running the 200m a couple of days later, but in coach OM Nambiar Sir's absence, Chief Coach JS Saini Sir encouraged me to compete. I remember finishing sixth in the 200m heats. He really motivated me," she says.

After securing silver medals in the 100m and 200m in the 1982 Asian Games – she was still recovering from an illness – she shifted her focus to the 400m in 1983. And, she very nearly gave up the chance to win the event in the Asian meet in Kuwait City since the final was scheduled within half an hour of the 200m where she finished second.

"Coaches Nambiar Sir and Saini Sir convinced me to run the 400m final. I secured my maiden Asian title and offered that gold medal in gratitude to Lord Guruvayoorappan in Thrishoor," she says. It was an event that she dominated at the Asian level over the next six years, winning the continental gold in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1989

The traits that set her apart are hard work, resilience and mental toughness. These helped her bounce back from an injury that affected her display in the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. Since there was no guarantee that she would return to track after a surgery, she did not go under the knife but chose traditional healing and stole the thunder in 1989 Asian Track and Field Meet in Delhi. Usha won four gold and two silver, letting the home crowd experience the thrill of watching her replicate her success from the 1985 Asian Track and Field Championships in Jakarta and the 1986 Asian Games in Seoul. She returned after a three-year break in 1993, but a knee injury did not let her recreate magic of the same quality in the second half of her 19-year career.



Dr. Lalit K Bhanot, currently Chairman AFI Planning Committee,
presenting a medal to PT Usha in 1986

In her farewell Asian Games, she watched from the sidelines the 4x400m relay team finish second behind China. She chose to quit the sport ahead of the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. She has not rested on her oars, sharing her experience and knowledge with her trainees at the Usha School of Athletics which she set up in 2002.

Surely, if the history of Indian sport is ever written, PT Usha's name will be written in letters of gold. Hers is a fascinating chapter of talent meeting hard work, fortitude meeting success, confidence meeting humility, joy meeting responsibility and dignity meeting knowledge. With such rich qualities, Usha played a big role in making women believe that sport is a career option.

Usha's pioneering contribution goes way beyond all the medals she won for the country.

DUPLANTIS AND ROJAS NAMED WORLD ATHLETES OF THE YEAR



Duplantis (left) and Rojas; Photo: WA website

World Record-breakers Mondo Duplantis (Sweden) and Yulimar Rojas (Venezuela) were named the male and female World Athletes of the Year at the World Athletics Awards 2020, a ceremony held virtually on December 5.

Duplantis broke the World Record in the Pole Vault twice, topping 6.17m and 6.18m on back-to-back weekends in February just a few weeks before the Coronavirus pandemic ground the sporting world to a halt. When competition finally resumed, the 21-year-old produced the highest outdoor vault of all time (6.15m) and finished the year undefeated in 16 competitions.

He is the youngest athlete named World Athlete of the Year. "It was a really strange season, for me and everybody, but I was able to put it together and get some pretty good results," said Duplantis. "I just wanted to go out there and show the world what I was capable of and put my name out there with some big performances.

"I was able to do that and had some good heights, especially during the indoor season. When everything got shut down and things were pushed back to the end of the season, I was able to find some good form there as well which, for me, was more impressive than my indoor season because I'd had two months off," he said.

Like many athletes, Yulimar Rojas competed sparingly in 2020, but she made each of her appearances count. She broke the South American indoor triple jump record in her first competition of the year, reaching 15.03m in Metz, France. At the World Athletics Indoor Tour meeting in Madrid, she leaped 15.43m in the final round to break the world indoor record by 7cm.

She competed just twice outdoors, winning the Wanda Diamond League meeting in Monaco and again in Castellon, Spain, where she sailed 14.71m, the farthest leap in the world outdoors this year. "I honestly didn't expect this, I really cannot believe it," said Yulimar Rojas. "It is such a joy and I'm filled with happiness. Just being one of the finalists felt like winning to me; being nominated among other exceptional athletes was already a wonderful achievement.

"This victory means a lot to me and to all of those who work with me every day, everyone who gives me strength and motivation every day. And now, being the best athlete of the year is an additional inspiration for me for 2021. It is going to be a great year and I have a lot of ambition. This gives me a lot of strength to keep on track with my career."

(Courtesy: World Athletics www.worldathletics.org)

WOMEN SPRINT RELAY SQUAD BEING PREPARED TO QUALIFY FOR TOKYO

(BY: MK RAJMOHAN, SPRINTS COACH WITH INDIAN TEAM)



The Indian 4x100m women's relay squad has moved from general preparation to specific preparation in its bid to qualify for the Tokyo Olympic Games from October 2020.

As many as 16 nations, including the eight finalists of the World Athletics Championships 2019, will qualify for the Olympic Games. With eight slots up for grabs, the Indian team is currently ranked 19th, needing to clock a better time than the 43.81 it got in finishing fourth in the Asian Athletics Championships in Doha in April 2019.

Given the current global challenge caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the coaching staff encouraged athletes to take advantage of every available opportunity for their individual development and urged athletes to prepare themselves because we do not know what the future holds in terms of the fight against this virus.

Their training started with more individualistic approach with an emphasis on sprinting techniques, event-specific strength development and, moreover, developing speed. During the general preparatory phase, the coaches evaluated the merits and demerits of these athletes before we moved to the specific preparatory period.

Our focus is on:

- ◆ Developing speed, power, and endurance required to sprint with maximal effort for 100m.
- ◆ Rehearsing the race and each of its parts – such as the acceleration phase, the maximal velocity phase, and the speed endurance and maintenance phase.
- ◆ Preventing injury by developing the tissues of the body for the demands of sprinting at maximal intensity levels.

The preparatory competitions start in February 2021 with the Indian Grand Prix's followed by the Senior Federation Cup in mid-March. That will be the primary competition for selecting the 4x100m relay team. We are hoping that the girls will be able to clock below 11.5 seconds in the 100m individually and help our relay team clock below 43 seconds to get a berth in Tokyo.

Meanwhile, in the 200m, the very talented Archana Suseendran clocked 23.18 seconds in 2019 and participated in World Athletics Championships 2019 held at Doha. She is placed 68th on the Road to Tokyo, with the cut off at 56. She is improving her speed endurance and strength and the coaches believe she will be able to clock the qualifying standard of 22.80 seconds.

PHOTO-FINISH SYSTEMS MEET TWIN DEMANDS FOR ACCURACY AND OBJECTIVITY

(BY: PK SRIVASTAVA, FORMER TREASURER AFI)

The measurement of Time and Place in sport demands total accuracy and complete objectivity. With greater intensity of top-level competitions today, time-keeping has to be more accurate than ever. In the early years of track events, hand-operated Stop Watches were sufficient, but now electronics has ushered in a sea-change.

When new methods of recording times were developed, it was also essential to be able to precisely determine the order of finishing. With time difference measured to the nearest 1/1000 of a second, it is often impossible for the human eye to determine the respective positions. The slit camera was found a suitable alternative. The Slit of the Camera is aimed at the Finish Line and records it in a relation to time. It thus facilitates the identification of a definite finishing order with the allocation of the respective times. The use of World Athletics-approved Transponders Timing Systems in events for races not held completely in the Stadium are permitted under certain conditions.

The in-stadium use of active transponders attached to the front Bibs offers the possibility of lap scoring and providing intermediate and lap times for all athletes in the race as well as immediate unofficial finish time and better identification of the finishers

In normal conditions, three methods of time-keeping are recognised as official times of any race:

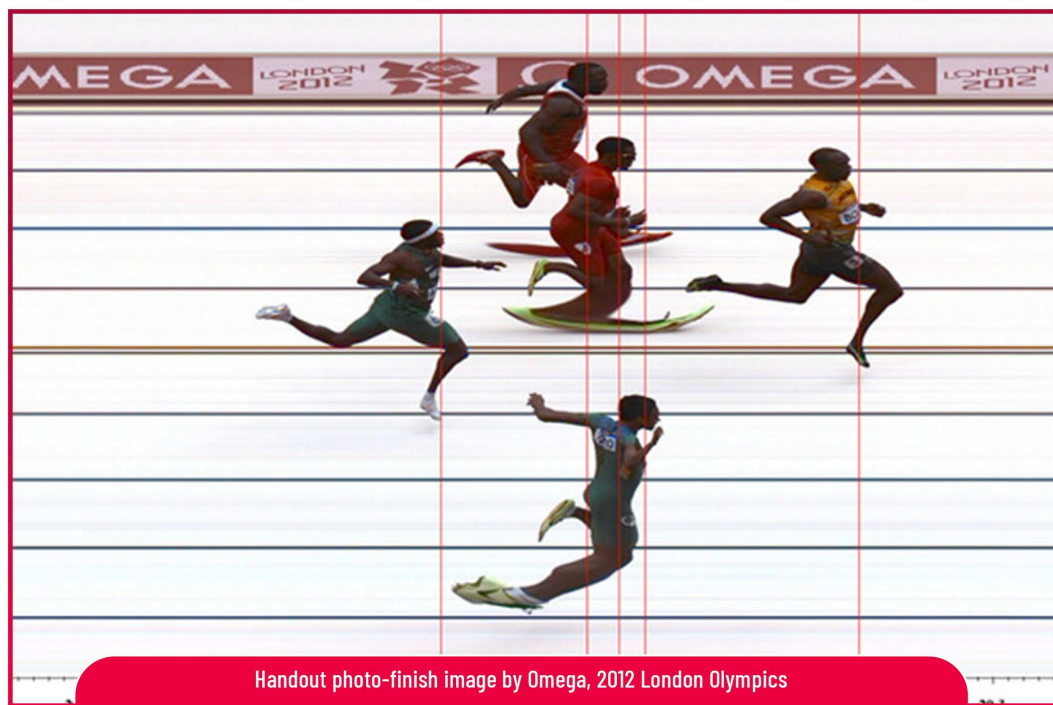
- ◆ Hand times
- ◆ Fully automatic times obtained from a Photo-Finish System &
- ◆ Times provided by a Transponder system for competitions not held completely on the track and in the stadium.

Here are some details of fully automatic timing by a photo-finish are:

Times and Finish Placings in a Race for all Athletics Competitions are determined by the Photo Finish Camera. In the standard competitions two Photo-Finish Cameras are used on both sides of the track on the Finish line. These cameras are capable of taking continues photos (minimum 1000 frames a minute).

The cameras are started automatically by the Starter's gun, or approved starting apparatus, so that the overall delay between the report from the muzzle or its equivalent visual indication and the start of the timing system is constant and less than 1/1000th of a second.

The optical axis of the Main Camera (Official) is adjusted in the same plane as the Finish Line. A second camera - the back-up - is installed at the opposite end and in the same plane.



Handout photo-finish image by Omega, 2012 London Olympics

Both cameras are continuously in operation from the start to finish of any race, with a choice to record the time and place at any time during the race. The system records the finish through the camera with a vertical slit, positioned in the extension of the finish line, producing a continuous image. The image is synchronised with a uniformly marked time-scale graduated in 1/100th of a second.

The time is taken to the moment at which the torso of the athlete, as distinguished from the head, neck, arms, legs, hands or feet, reaches the vertical plane of the nearer edge of the finish line. The times and place for all finishers are recorded. In addition, whenever possible, lap times in races of 800m and over and intermediate times at every 1000m in races of 3000m and over are recorded.



Radhakrishnan Nair

Chief Coach of Indian Athletics Radhakrishnan Nair and national record holder in women's javelin throw Annu Rani bagged the top honours at the FICCI India Sports Awards 2020 held virtually this year owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Annu Rani

Nair bagged the "Coach of the Year" award, Annu Rani was named "Breakthrough Sports Person of the Year". The eminent jury of FICCI India Sports Awards 2020, chaired by Justice Mukul Mudgal selected the winners.

Questions

1. Which athlete was named the male World Athlete of the Year?
2. Which athlete was named the female World Athlete of the Year?
3. Who was appointed by the Athletics Federation of India as the Chief Coach?
4. The World Anti-Doping Agency Prohibited List 2021 now has identified four Substances of Abuse, which if an athlete can demonstrate that the use of any of these substances was out-of-competition and unrelated to sport performance, the suspension imposed will now be three months. Which are these four Substances of Abuse?
5. The World Anti-Doping Agency Prohibited List 2021 identifies as a Specified Method any intravenous infusions and/or injections of more than a total of 100 mL per 12-hour period except for those legitimately received in the course of hospital treatments, surgical procedures or clinical diagnostic investigations. True or False?
6. Who won the men and women's events in the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon?
7. Who were the best Indian men and women's finishers in the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon?
8. Cross-country running will feature in the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. True or False?
9. In which competitions can athletes continue to wear 'Development shoes'?
10. Which event is conducted at the start of the second day in a Decathlon competition?

Answers

1. Mondo Duplantis (Sweden), Pole Vault
2. Yulimar Rojas (Venezuela), Triple Jump
3. Radhakrishnan Nair
4. Cocaine, Diamorphine (heroin), Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA/"ecstasy") and Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).
5. True. This means that an athlete may receive a reduced sanction if it can be proven that this method was not used for doping purposes.
6. Amdework Walelegn (Ethiopia) and Yalemzerf Yehualaw (Ethiopia) respectively
7. Avinash Sable and Parul Chaudhary
8. False. The International Olympic Committee has not approved the inclusion of this event in the Paris 2024 schedule.
9. Athletes can wear 'development shoes' in any competition where World Athletics' competition and technical rules are not applied.
10. 110m Hurdles is the first event on the second day of a Decathlon competition.

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