

ATHLETICS FEDERATION OF INDIA

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NEWSLETTER



AFI DETERMINED TO COUNTER CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19: ADILLE J. SUMARIWALLA

It looked everything, carefully planned and crafted was falling in place. The splendid results in the Federation Cup Senior Athletics Championships in Patiala came as shot in the arm to the Athletics Federation of India and we got busy making plans for the rest of the season leading to the Olympic Games in Tokyo.

And then the second wave of Covid-19 changed a lot of that, making a lot of our work come unstuck. It has presented us with the enormous task of finding training locations for our athletes away from the heat of the Indian summer. And yet, I am proud that the coaches as well as AFI officials and staff are burning midnight oil to find reasonable solutions to the current problem.

Yes, we are working very hard to find ideal places for the Indian athletes to train in the run up to the Olympic Games. The AFI office in New Delhi is in touch with many diplomatic missions and I am seeking help from my counterparts in Europe to see how best we can ensure that our athletes do not miss any training and are ready for the Olympic Games.

There is no doubt that the present situation is the most challenging I have faced in my tenure as AFI President. Then again, the whole world has faced something unprecedented and of such a magnitude. Yes, these are uncertain times, but the support that AFI is giving the athletes in the long-duration residential National Camps will help them stay safe and in competitive readiness.

We were on track with our Olympic Games preparations until the second wave of Covid-19 swept India. It meant that India was red listed by not a few countries. The visa protocols and quarantine regulations have got tough, throwing a lot of plans out of gear. As if that were not enough, Indians now have to face travel restrictions as well with many countries make it is very hard, if not impossible, for our athletes to travel either for training or competition or both.

With the Olympic Games less than three months away, we are clear that this is not the ideal time for an athlete to spend 15 days in isolation and not be training at all. The break in training can be very critical and leave the athletes with a lot of catching up to do after a fortnight in quarantine. They understand that these are challenging times, and we are doing the best for them.

Take, for instance, the Javelin Throwers. We moved them for a couple of months to the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar at short notice when the team could not go to Potchefstroom in South Africa. Neeraj Chopra rewarded us with a National Record of 88.07m in the Indian Grand Prix III and followed it up with another fine effort in the Federation Cup.

We are now working on finding the relay runners a base in Europe after they have had to skip the World Relay Challenge in Poland. The middle- and long-distance runners are already based in Bengaluru where the climate is conducive for training. There are a few who need to be relocated from the heat in Patiala so that they can train for the Olympics without interruption.

We believe our athletes will overcome the challenges and deliver their optimum performances in the Olympic Games while others will ready themselves for the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games next year. We are confident that our efforts to unearth talent and groom it in the National Camps will bear fruit both in the short- and long-terms.

We are sure we can find a way out of the tricky situation that we are facing. Yes, it is the biggest challenge we are facing, ensuring safety of our athletes during their training in ideal conditions. We realise that we are not alone in this. And we will continue to care for our athletes and look after their day-to-day needs, both for training physically and for supporting them emotionally.



Adille J Sumariwalla

**President
Athletics Federation of India**



WE HAVE TO WORK WITHIN THE LIMITATIONS IMPOSED BY CIRCUMSTANCES: SREESHANKAR

Long Jumper M Sreeshankar lives with Hope in his heart and reveals his human side when he speaks about the lack of opportunity to finetune his competitive skills in the run up to the Olympic Games in Tokyo later this year. "We will have a day when we can be mask-free but, until that time, we have to work within the limitations that the circumstances have imposed on us," he said.

"It is important to be able to compete with top athletes but, right now, there are greater chances of finding a million dollars on the road than securing a visa to Europe for competition. I hope that the Grand Prix and the National Inter-State Athletics Championships in Bengaluru, scheduled for June, will go ahead as planned. We are making do by simulating competition in training," he said.

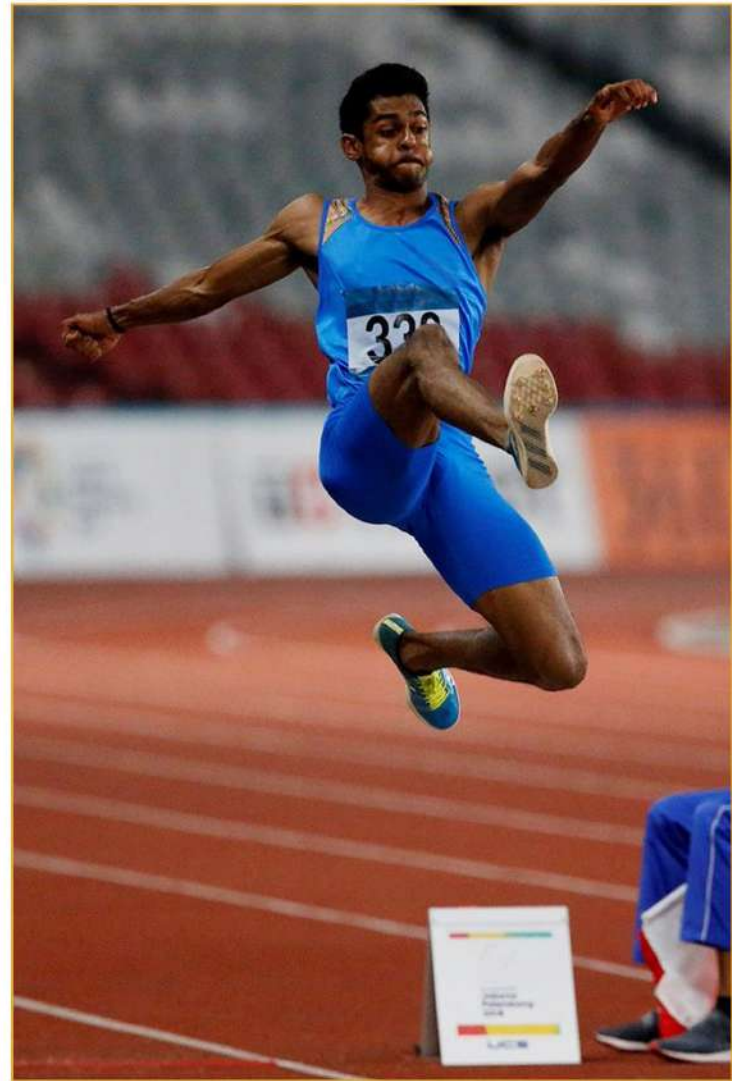
"I do not look at the situation and see if it is easy or difficult. Instead, I focus on how I can face the situation. I did it through all of 2020 when I did not take part in any competition. I trained hard and moved in the right direction, making progress all the time," Sreeshankar said on phone from Palakkad.

"Physiotherapist Ishant guides me online and since finding a masseur isn't easy in these times, my father doubles up to ensure the release after each training session," he said, sharing details of how he gets his needs met. "Luckily, before the lockdown last year, we sourced equipment for strength and conditioning and have it all home."

It is such foresight that enabled him to hit the ground running when competition resumed in India. "Had it not been for a technical issue in the Indian Grand Prix II in Patiala, I would have attained Olympic qualification at the first opportunity this year. I was confident and expecting to past my earlier record of 8.20m. I am glad I did it in the Federation Cup later that month," he said.

"I was really happy with the series of jumps in the Federation Cup," Sreeshankar said of how he kept improving with each jump. He produced a series that read 8.02, 8.04, 8.07, 8.09 and 8.26 before he registered a no mark on the last try. "Having decided to shed the fear of a committing a foul at the take-off board, I also was able to own the runway rather than let the runway own me."

Nearly a month later, he shared images from the Federation Cup that he captured in his mind's eye. "The standout memory is of the heartbeat being in control that afternoon. It did not rise or fall, and I am glad I had a good night's sleep going into the competition. The breathing exercises, the meditation and the positive affirmation I made helped me immensely," he said.



"There was no undue stress or anxiety. There was great control over the thoughts, the unnecessary ones not surfacing at all. When things fall in place like this, one can surely deliver a good performance," he said, confident of going farther in the months ahead. "I am sure I will be able to carry these things with me to all competitions."

Sreeshankar pointed out that Long Jump is a very technical, if explosive, event and the focus is on getting the take-off right. "But the jumper has to concentrate on all other aspects of the jump too. Find the proper speed, attack the board fearlessly, hang long enough and land correctly," he said. "I am glad I got my landing right by hanging right."

It was time for him to get some rest ahead of another training session in the afternoon, putting into practice his philosophy of working within the limitations that circumstances have imposed on athletes.

SHINY WILSON: THE FIRST WOMAN TO CARRY THE FLAG OF INDIA AT AN OLYMPIC GAMES



Shiny Wilson is a Titan in her own right. And no praise would be too high for her rich contribution to Indian athletics, both on and off the track. The legend, who will turn 56 on May 8, will be worthy and automatic entrant in the AFI Hall of Fame for her stellar performances and her incredible work in promoting athletics in the country.

She represented India in four Olympic Games, three Asian Games, six Asian Championships and seven SAF Games apart from other international meets. She has a collection of 1 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze in the Asian Games as well as 7 gold, 5 silver and 2 bronze medals from the Asian Track and Field Meets.

Besides owning the two-lapper, she was among the pioneers in the women's 400m in the 80s, breaching the one-minute barrier back in the National Open in Lucknow in November 1981.

Encouraged by her father to pursue a career in athletics, she made Kurishankal Abraham and the entire family proud with her exploits over a number of years.

Shiny Wilson has been a pathbreaker in more ways than one. She was the first Indian track athlete to make it to the semifinal stage at the Olympic Games, achieving the feat in Los Angeles in 1984 when she finished fourth in her heats in a time of 2:04.69. Eight years later, she was given the honour of being the first woman to carry the Flag in the Athlete's Parade at an Olympic Games.

Yet, her return from matrimony and motherhood to produce an 800m National Record, breaking free of the old template when marriage usually meant athletes faded away distinguishes her. By returning to the track within months of childbirth, she raised the bar for India's women athletes in a quiet, dignified manner and getting her actions to speak louder than words.



To be honest, she was distraught at having to leave her daughter at home when she travelled to the Asian Track and Field Championships in Kuala Lumpur in 1991. The manner in which she held herself together to win India's only gold medal in the meet spoke highly of her temperament and desire to keep the Indian flag flying.

As a 30-year-old, Shiny Wilson rewrote her own 800m National Record during the SAF Games in Madras in 1995, setting it at 1:59.85, becoming the first Indian woman to dip in under two minutes. That record lasted a good decade and a half. She finished her career on a high with a rich haul of medals to show. Small wonder then, she was accorded the Padma Shri in 1998.

One of her most admirable and endearing qualities is her readiness to assist the AFI in every way possible, sharing her insights and opinion with candour. Her contribution to Indian athletics extends way beyond her time on the track, dominating the 800m. In doing sustained work to keep the sport on the path of evolution, she ensures that her legacy is rich and unforgettable.

ON YOUR MARKS, SET, FIRE: THE ROLE OF START TEAM

(BY: CK SATHYAN, START OFFICIAL AFI)

Shiny Wilson is a Titan in her own right. And no praise would be too high for her rich contribution to Indian athletics, both on and off the track. The legend, who will turn 56 on May 8, will be worthy and automatic entrant in the AFI Hall of Fame for her stellar performances and her incredible work in promoting athletics in the country.

In track and field, except the eight field and jump events, for all the rest 19 events i.e. from 100 meters to marathon, the start team is directly involved in the conduct of the competition.

STARTING COMMANDS

For the first time in 1926, the rule book stated that- "the starters shall have entire control of the competitors at their marks", till date this rule stands. Before the start signal the starter must ascertain that the time keepers/judges are ready after getting the final confirmation from the start coordinator. He or she shall start the start process with the command "on your marks" and time must be given to the athletes to settle down on their starting blocks. The command "set" is given, when all the athletes are steady and still. The starter then shall fire the gun. The hold time between the set and fire differs from race to race.

The starting command from 1934 to 1956 was "Get on your marks", "Get Set", "Fire". However, from 1957 till date as recommended by the World Athletics (formerly IAAF), the starter's command has been "On your marks", "Set", "Fire" and for the races beyond 400 meters, it is "On your marks", "Fire".

STARTING APPARATUS

Until the end of 1920, a wooden clapper board was used to start the races. However, from early 1925 a 0.9mm pistol came into use for starting the races. With more advancement in the technology, an electronic gun certified by the World Athletics is being used since the year 2001.

FALSE START

A significant change has taken place in the rules regarding a false start over the years. In the modern times, from January 2006, a Start Information Systems (SIS) certified by WA is made compulsory for the international competitions.

The sprint races are re-called if an athlete starts 0.100 seconds before the gun is fired. It is considered as a "false start" as per the WA rule and the athlete is disqualified. However, in the middle and long distance races the command and rules are different. A warning is given to all the athletes and the race is started again.



100 meters finals, World Championship Doha 2019; PC- World Athletics

TIMETABLE RELEASED FOR WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS OREGON22



The World Athletics Championships Oregon22 timetable revealed today has been designed to allow the world's best athletes to showcase the full range of their skills in the newly reimagined Hayward Field at the University of Oregon.

Athletes wishing to contest any of the traditional doubles – the 100m and 200m, 200m and 400m, 800m and 1500m, 1500m and 5000m, 5000m and 10,000m – will be able to do so, without having to contest more than one discipline on any given day. Other possible doubles include the long jump and triple jump, and the 20km and 35km race walks.

The 10-day schedule from 15–24 July 2022 comprises 16 stadium sessions and six road events. Medals will be decided in all evening sessions and a number of morning sessions in the stadium, as well as during all six road events, to enhance the visibility of athletics across all time zones.

The championships will have unprecedented prime time broadcast coverage in the United States under a long-term media rights agreement with NBC Sports.

The first evening session will end with the mixed 4x400m final, bringing the opening day to an exciting climax with the only event on the

programme in which men and women compete together for medals.

The men's 100m will be in the spotlight on the second day as athletes compete for the honour of being crowned the world's fastest man.

Day three begins with the men's marathon in the morning and ends with the women's 100m final in the evening, with the men's shot put final in between to provide a sequel to the titanic competition in Doha in 2019.

The women's marathon gets underway on the morning of the fourth day. About 12 hours later, the women's heptathlon title will be decided.

There are no morning sessions on days five, six or seven, but the evening sessions promise plenty of action. The men's 400m hurdles – one of the highest quality events in the world at the moment – tops the bill on day five.

The women's steeplechase final features on the sixth day, while both 200m finals will be held on day seven.

Day eight is a one-lap spectacular as both men's and women's 400m flat finals are scheduled to take place, followed by the women's 400m hurdles final, which produced

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a world record to American Dalilah Mohammad in Doha. Four-time world champion Christian Taylor, meanwhile, could contend for another major triple jump honour on day nine.

The final individual event of the championships on day ten will be the decathlon 1500m, in tribute to Oregon's home-grown Olympic and world decathlon champion Ashton Eaton.

And for the first time ever, the championships will end with the women's 4x400m, fulfilling the pledge to greater gender equality that World Athletics made on International Women's Day in March. Five of the ten evening sessions will conclude with a women's final.

"The design of our world championships timetable is both an art and a science, with a lot of moving parts to fit together," World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said. "We've strived to create every opportunity for our athletes to shine, in the stadium, on the road and on screens around the world, and we're looking forward to watching them do that in Oregon, as our flagship event is held in the United States for the first time. You won't want to miss it."

OUTRUN BY COVID DRIVEN TRAVEL BAN, INDIA RELAY TEAM STRANDED AT HOME

New Delhi, April 28: Indian women's 4x100m and men's 4x400m relay teams are left stranded at home as the new Covid-19 driven travel bans are put in place by various countries. The Indian squad will be missing from the action at the World Athletics Relays Silesia 21 on May 1 and 2 at Chorzow in Poland after the Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM) that was to fly the runners intimated that it would be unable to let them board the flight from Mumbai in the wake of the Netherlands government ban on passenger flights from India.

India was set to field the men's 4x400m and women's 4x100m relay squads in the World Athletics Relays Silesia 21.

Adille J Sumariwalla, AFI President said, "We are very disappointed at this moment. There are no direct flights between Indian airports and

Warsaw, Poland. This meant that despite the best efforts, the squad could not be rerouted on another airline,"

"For the last 24-hours we have been consistently trying to find alternatives, we have used all the resources to sort this out, we have been constantly speaking to the Organisers, the World Athletics, various consulates and airlines to reroute them. Under the present scenario nobody has obliged,"

The women's 4x100m team includes India's top sprinters such as Hima Das, Dutee Chand, Dhanalaxmi Sekhar, Archana Suseentran, Daneshwari TA and Himashree Roy while men's 4x400m squad is comprised of Muhammed Anas Yahiya, Arokia Rajeev, Amoj Jacob, Nirmal Noah Tom and Sarthak Bhambri.

QUIZ CORNER

1. Which Javelin Thrower sent the spear past the 90m line in Offenburg on April 24, 2021 and took the World lead for 2021 from Neeraj Chopra (88.07m)?
2. What did Fred Kerley (USA) recently do to emulate Wayde van Niekerk (South Africa) and Michael Norman (USA)?
3. Which is the latest group of athletes which was asked to register for AFI-Unique Identification?
4. Why was sprinter Blake Leeper (USA) in the news recently?
5. Which country is hosting the World Athletics Relays 2021?

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*Send your replies to communications@indianathletics.in by 15th May 2021. Winners with all correct answers will receive an Exclusive AFI T-shirt

*Winners of T&F Quiz March 2021- Rakesh Kumar, M Balasubramanyam, S Saraboji