



# ATHLETICS FEDERATION OF INDIA

## NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2021



(Photo: World Athletics)

### THE GOLD MEDAL

There are no words to express the delight we have felt from the moment we knew Neeraj Chopra had landed a breakthrough gold medal in the men's Javelin Throw at the Olympic Games in Tokyo on August 7. His undeniable talent and his hunger to excel at the biggest stage made a billion and more dreams come true. Magically.

It is a huge milestone and a first in the 75 years of the Athletics Federation of India's existence. We have had successes at many international platforms, including in the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games and even in the World Athletics Championships and the World Athletics U20 Championships but never in the Olympic Games. Until August 7, 2021.

Though Avinash Sable had rewritten his 3000m Steeplechase National Record, Kamalpreet Kaur had finished sixth in the women's Discus Throw and the men's 4x400m relay squad had scripted an Asian Record in Tokyo2020, India's long wait for an athletics medal in the Olympic Games ended when Neeraj Chopra dominated the field.

Watching from the stands in the Olympic Stadium, we saw the 23-year-old exude confidence and execute his throws with utmost belief that his training and preparation had been spot on. There could not have been a more humble lad who caused our National

Anthem to be played in the Olympic Stadium for the first time since 1936.

Barely two weeks after he won gold in Tokyo, the junior squad came back from the World Athletics U20 Championships in Nairobi, Kenya, with the best haul by Indians.

Just 17 years old, Shaili Singh (women's Long Jump) has already raised expectations with a silver medal. Amit Khatri was on the cusp on winning gold in the men's 10,000m Race Walk after an eclectic group of runners in the Mixed Team 4x400m Relay had opened the campaign with a bronze medal.



From upgrading knowledge of coaches to activating athletics associations in 600 districts to tap and encourage talent, from conducting a range of meets for athletes to focusing on events where Indians can do well, AFI has been meticulous in its quest for success beyond continental competitions like the Asian Games and Asian Championships.

AFI has always put the athletes at the centre of its planning. At a time when Indians were not allowed to enter most other countries because of the second wave in India, AFI strung together a dozen National-level competitions this year. Why, even as the Olympic Games athletics competition was on, AFI held the Federation Cup Juniors Championships in Sangrur, Punjab.

I am sure AFI will be in the forefront of the campaign to make India not only a sports-conscious nation but also a sports-playing nation. Aware that our coaching standards need to be raised, AFI has consciously supported a coach development programme, not only for those seeking World Athletics certification but also by developing a pre-Level 1 course.

At the Olympic Games, a long-pending dream came true. It will inspire many others to chase their own. From the Federation's perspective, I can assure you that Neeraj Chopra's gold medal – and the triple-medal haul in the World U20 Championships – only renews our commitment to the development of the sport in this beautiful country.

**Adille J Sumariwalla**

(President Athletics Federation of India)





What a wonderful August Indian athletics has had in the year 2021.

Neeraj Chopra gave India its first Olympic Games medal in track and field sport.

It was the icing on the cake of the 75-year celebrations of Athletics Federation of India.

The juniors (under-20) extended the gaiety with a three-medal haul in the World Athletics U20 Championships in Nairobi.

Indeed, August was a brilliant month for Indian athletics. Let us recap how each day went.

**August 1:** Avinash Sable marked his Olympic Games debut in the men's 3000m steeplechase with a time of 8:18.12s – a new National record. He was the 13th fastest, but he still missed a spot in the 15-runner final after he finished seventh in his heats and finished outside the six non-automatic qualifiers. He was faster than the top three in the third heat.

Sable came from behind and led for a brief period when he realised that the pace was quite slow. From the 2018 National Championships, he has broken the National record multiple times. Sable tested positive for Covid-19 late April when he was at his peak of preparations and that break in momentum with strict quarantine measures in place did not help his case.

**August 2:** Kamalpreet Kaur finished sixth in the women's Discus Throw with a best throw of 63.70m. While she equaled Krishna Poonia's sixth-place finish in the women's Discus Throw in London in 2012, Kamalpreet Kaur was able to register the best throw by an Indian woman in the Olympic Games. Krishna Poonia had a best throw of 63.62m back in 2012.

Kamalpreet Kaur, one of the two athletes who booked their berths in the final by meeting the qualifying standard of 64.00m, raised the hopes of India's athletics community. The 25-year-old from Moga had rewritten the National Record at 65.06m in the National Federation Cup Senior Athletics Championships in Patiala on March 19.

**August 6:** India's 4x400m men's relay team put up a commendable show but missed out on a place in the final by a whisker. Competing in the second heat that had heavyweights Jamaica and Poland, the Indian quartet of Muhammed Anas, Noah Nirmal Tom, Arokia Rajiv and Amoj Jacob clocked 3:00.25 to finish fourth at the Olympic Stadium. India set a new Asian record, breaking the previous best of 3:00.56 set by Qatar at the 2018 Asian Games.

**August 7:** Neeraj Chopra made Indian hearts swell with pride as he made history by winning independent India's first athletics medal, a gold at that, in the Olympic Games when he decimated a strong field with a best throw of 87.58m in the men's javelin throw final.

(PHOTO: WORLD ATHLETICS)



Going in as India's representative in the final event for the 127-member contingent, he seemed oblivious to pressure of any sort. It did not matter to him that India did not have a gold medal in Tokyo2020 nor was he weighed down by the fact that no Indian had ever won a track and field medal in Olympic Games since the country attained independence.

A picture of confidence and belief, the 23-year-old Neeraj Chopra threw down the gauntlet to a very competitive field with an opening throw of 87.03m, only his third best throw of the year behind the National Record of 88.07m in the Indian Grand Prix III in Patiala on March 5 and 87.80m in the Federation Cup championships in Patiala on March 17.

He improved that to 87.58m and virtually decimated the competition with his first two throws. Though he came up with a throw of 76.76m with his third attempt and stepped over the line when he was unhappy with the distance that he managed with the fourth and fifth. By the time he came for his final throw – which he sent over 84.24m, the gold medal was his.

A World Junior Athletics Champion in 2016, Neeraj Chopra completes a fine set of gold medals in the Commonwealth Games 2018, Asian Games 2018 and now the Olympic Games. He recovered from an elbow injury and has been nursed with utmost care by Dr. Klaus Bartonietz and a dedicated support staff.



Neeraj Chopra with AFI Planning Committee Chairman Dr Lalit K Bhanot during Press Conference

**August 10:** Athletics Federation of India announced that August 7 each year would be celebrated as National Javelin Throw Day with competitions in all States and Union Territories to commemorate Neeraj Chopra's feat of winning the country's first athletics gold medal in the Olympic Games in Tokyo with a throw of 87.58m on Saturday.



"We will celebrate August 7 as National Javelin Day from next year to mark Neeraj's victory. All our affiliated units will hold Javelin competitions in the respective States (and Union Territories). And a year later, we will get all our 600-plus district units also to have similar competitions on August 7," said AFI Planning Committee Chairman Lalit K. Bhanot at function to felicitate him.

The 23-year-old Neeraj Chopra, India's first Olympic medallist in track and field sport, said he was humbled by the announcement. "I am feeling good that the AFI is making my achievement to be remembered in the years to come. I will be happier if my gold medal win inspires youngsters to take to athletics, especially Javelin Throw," he said.

"If the children are getting the Javelins and other facilities, I am sure they will come and take up the sport. I will be happy to cheer for them and they can be medal winners in the future, he told reporters at the media interaction that followed the wonderful felicitation ceremony at the well-appointed Taj Palace banquet hall.

He said the turning point in his career was his inclusion in the National Camp after he finished fifth in the National Games in Kerala in 2015. "Everything changed after my joining the National Camp – equipment, training facilities and diet. The feeling of training with the best javelin throwers in the country was special," he said.

"I had already won the gold in Commonwealth Games and Asian Games and now the Olympic Games. So, my next target is the gold in the World Athletics Championships (in Oregon) next year. The World Championships is a big competition and sometimes tougher than the Olympic Games.



**Felicitations Ceremony of U20 World Championships 2021 Medallists**

"I am not going to be content with this Olympic gold. I will want to win the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and Olympic Games titles again," he said, pointing out that he was concerned about a few athletes testing positive for Covid-19 in the Games Village and that he was worried for himself.

**August 18:** The Indian 4x400m mixed relay team claimed the bronze medal on the opening day of World Athletics U20 Championships in Nairobi. Barath Sridhar, Priya Mohan, Summy and Kapil clocked 3:20.60 behind Nigeria (3:19.70) and Poland (3:19.80) to post a creditable time and gave a glimpse of the depth of India's talent in the quartermile event.

The Indian quartet – with Abdul Razak Rasheed running the lead leg – had clocked 3:23.36 in the heats in the morning. Priya and Summy ran their women's 400m heats not long after that. They recovered well to ensure that the efforts of Barath and Kapil, who ran a blistering anchor leg in 46.42 seconds, did not go in vain.

Barath, the Federation Cup Junior Championships winner, was credited with a time of 47.12 for the lead-off leg and handed over the baton to Priya in the second place behind South Africa. Priya dug deep in her reserves and, with a time of 52.77, was the third best among those who ran the second leg. Summy's kept India in the medal hunt and she ran a good leg in 54.29.

Kapil strove hard on the anchor leg but despite being the fastest of the runners in the final was unable to close the gap with Poland and Nigeria. He was credited with having run his lap in 46.42 seconds, inspired by the efforts of his three team-mates.

It was the fifth medal won by India in World Junior Championships after the bronze medals won by Seema Antil (Discus Throw, 2002), Navdeep Kaur Dhillon (Discus Throw 2014) and the gold medals claimed by Neeraj Chopra (Javelin Throw, 2016) and Hima Das (400m 2018).

**August 19:** Rohan Kamble gave the Indian contingent reason to smile by making it to the men's 400m Hurdles semifinals in the World Athletics U20 Championships. He was the only Indian athlete who ensured progress to the next round a day after the Indian 4x400m relay Mixed Team claimed bronze.

On a day when the World Athletics President Lord Sebastian Coe met and encouraged the Indian team, Rohan Kamble took a spot in the 400m Hurdles semifinals, finishing fourth in the last of the five heats. He clocked 55.00 seconds when all he needed to do was finish the race after Saad Hinti (Morocco) did not start and Amar Edded (Qatar) was disqualified for a false start.

**August 20:** Kunwar Ajai Raj Singh Rana raised brief hopes of winning a men's Javelin Throw medal with his second best throw of the year before finishing fifth in the World Athletics U20 championships. Jay Kumar took the sixth place with a best effort of 70.74m.

After two throws past the 70 mark, Kunwar Ajai Raj Singh Rana rose to the bronze medal position with 73.68m on his fourth try, but Nigeria's Chnecerem Nnamdi regained the third place on the charts with a 74.48m response. And in the fifth round, Poland's Eryk Kolodziejczak also bettered the Indian's best throw to nudge ahead of Rana to fourth place.



(PHOTO: WORLD ATHLETICS)





(PHOTO: WORLD ATHLETICS)

**August 22:** Shaili Singh claimed the women's Long Jump silver medal in the World Athletics U20 Championships. Her slight wind-aided effort of 6.59m was only 1cm short of the gold medal jump by Sweden's Maja Askag but her silver medal ensured that Indian athletics continues to showcase the progress it has been making.

Having started with two jumps of 6.34m, Shaili Singh shot into the lead after three rounds when she leapt to 6.59m, with the aid of a slight tail wind. But Sweden's Maja Askag stole that position with her fourth jump that measured just 1cm more. The Indian tried hard but fouled two attempts and then had a 6.37m on her final try to regain pole position.

Shaili Singh's was India's third medal in the World U20 Championships, coming after the bronze won by the Mixed Team in the 4x400m Relay and the silver by Amit Khatri in the men's 10,000m Race Walk. India finished 21st on the medal table, aware that a gold would have lifted it to the top 15.

Until this edition, India had won a total of four medals in the World Athletics Junior Championships, with bronze medals for Discus Thrower Seema Antil (2002) and Navjeet Kaur Dhillon (2014) and gold medals for Javelin Thrower Neeraj Chopra (2016) and 400m runner Hima Das (2018). India has nearly matched that tally here.



(PHOTO: WORLD ATHLETICS)



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# EXCLUSIVE: Neeraj Chopra Merchandise



The Athletics Federation of India is delighted to present EXCLUSIVE Neeraj Chopra memorabilia for fans of track and field sport.

After his warm interaction with fans on Facebook Live on August 26 involving thousands of fans, the Olympic Champion launched the sale of memorabilia through AFI. It is one way to give back to the sport that he loves so much.

Click here to book your orders: <https://bit.ly/3t5JNMT>



Vijay Agarwal · 10:30  
AFI KO thanks a lot for Bringing our national hero Live



Malavika Damodaran · 21:06  
Thankyou for this live interaction ❤️



Taral Vaishnav · 14:56  
Thanks To AFI for this Live Conversation with Neeraj Chopra .  
We never see this from Indian Cricketers



Chandra Nandi · 14:46  
Thank you AFI for giving us this opportunity to interact with our National Hero..



Kaji Krichena · 17:19  
Thank you Athletics Federation of India This is one of the best platform for giving us fans the chance to see Neeraj chopra live and interact with him. Keep inspiring us Neeraj Chopra . We will keep supporting and cheering for you.



Sanjeev Mishra @Sanjeevmishrarc · Aug 26  
Replying to @Neeraj\_chopra1 and @afiindia  
मैंने ज्वान किया था आपके लाइव सेशन को। सर आपने मेरा भी नाम लिया था। आप सभी को उत्तर देने की कोशिश कर रहे थे। आपने जो भी बात कही वो काफी प्रेरणादायक थी। धन्यवाद। आगे के लिए देरों शुभकामनाएं। अपनी सेहत का ध्यान रखिए गा।।।



Jenisha @JenishaNagar · Aug 26  
Replying to @Neeraj\_chopra1 and @afiindia  
Thank u for such an inspirational session.. perfect role model of youth , most humble Champion nd purest soul..❤️🙏 wish u many more success nd all the happiness @Neeraj\_chopra1 Sir 🙏🙏🙏🇮🇳

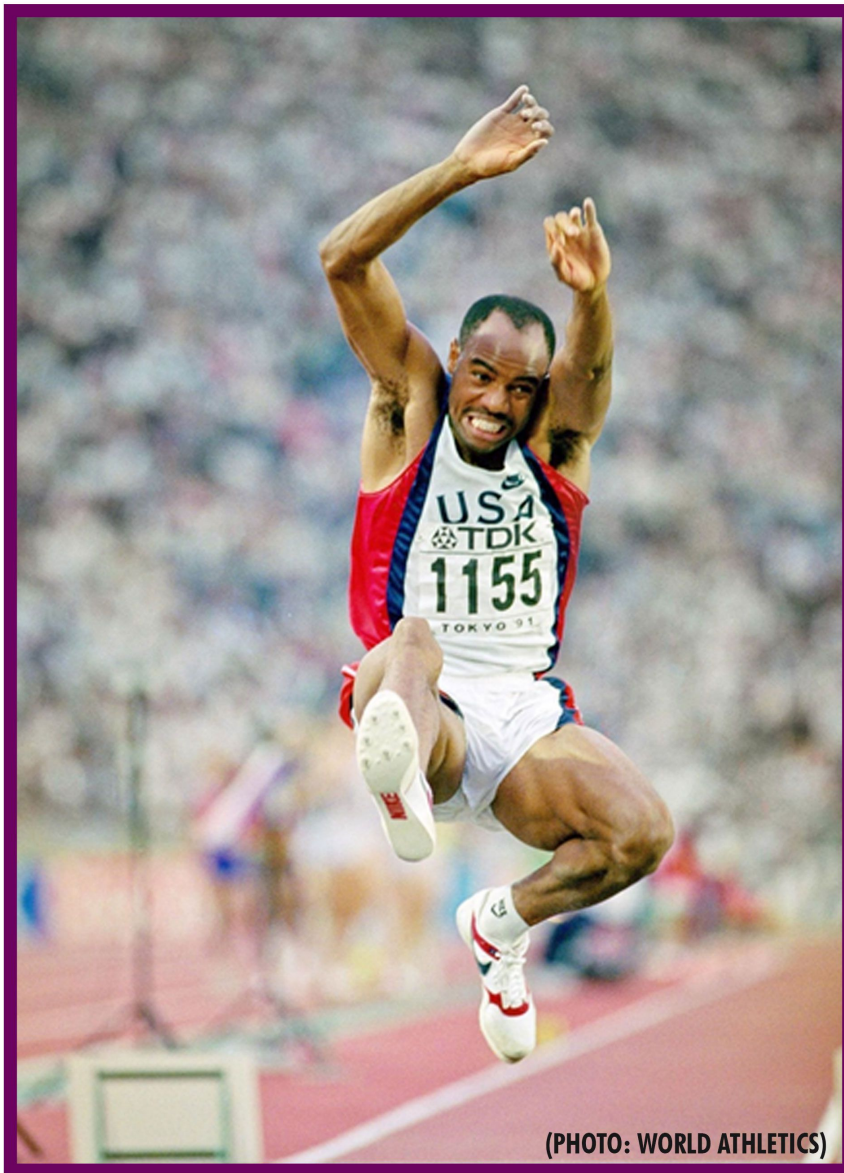


JaySas @jaysas\_xyz · Aug 26  
Replying to @Neeraj\_chopra1 and @afiindia  
@Neeraj\_chopra1 #NeerajChopra thanks so much for coming live and answering so many questions. I can repeat this in a loop , you are the most humble and purest soul. Good luck always





## THIRTY YEARS ON REMEMBERING POWELL'S RECORD BREAKING LEAP



(PHOTO: WORLD ATHLETICS)

A measure of a true champion is how they respond when the pressure is on, their ability to produce the biggest performance of their life when it matters most.

For Mike Powell, that moment came on 30 August 1991 – 30 years ago – at the World Championships in Tokyo in what went down as one of the greatest duels in athletics history.

Going into the event, it hadn't particularly been billed as one of the big clashes of the championships as Carl Lewis was such a heavy favourite. The US superstar was undefeated in 10 years in the long jump and had won the past two world titles and Olympic gold medals in the event. He also went into the final in the form of his life, having set a world record to win the 100m title just five days prior.

But Powell was quietly confident that he could end Lewis's winning streak.

"I had been chasing Carl for eight years," Powell recalls. "When I first started competing against him, he was beating me by 50 centimetres. But in the last competition before the World Championships, he only beat me by one centimetre on his last jump. I knew that I was closing the gap and I felt like at the World Championships that was going to be my opportunity to finally beat him.

At that point, the world record had stood to Bob Beamon for 23 years with his other-worldly 8.90m leap from the 1968 Olympic Games. Heading into 1991, Lewis owned four of the top six jumps in history – 8.79m, 8.76m, 8.76m and

8.75m – and looked the most likely candidate to one day break Beamon's mark.

Powell, meanwhile, had a best of 8.66m and had taken silver behind Lewis at the 1998 Olympic Games. But when he set foot in Tokyo, Powell could sense something different in the air – quite literally.

When the final got underway, the first round went in Lewis's favour. The defending champion sailed out to 8.68m to add one centimetre to his own championship record. Powell, meanwhile, managed just 7.85m.

"When Carl jumped 8.68m, I wasn't surprised at all. My first jump was horrible, because I was pressing really hard. But after that I said, 'okay, calm down, just go back to your normal stuff and get a good jump in'."

The calm approach worked well for Powell, and in the second round he landed an 8.54m jump to put pressure on Lewis, who had fouled his second attempt.

Just as Powell was getting started, Lewis extended his lead in the third round, bounding out to a wind-assisted 8.83m.

"I thought to myself, 'that's far but I don't think it's quite a world record,'" recalls Powell, who managed 8.29m in that same round. "He was definitely letting it be known that he was going for it."

Lewis landed another big leap in the fourth round. The wind reading came up first – 2.9m/s, over the allowable limit – followed by the distance, 8.91m. It wouldn't be accepted for record purposes, of course, but the fact it was farther than Beamon's mark was significant. In round five, Powell produced the jump of his life – 8.95m

(By Jon Mulkeen and Jess Whittington for WA; Read full feature here- <https://bit.ly/2WuC5jJ>)



# QUIZ CORNER

1. What has the AFI decided to do to commemorate Neeraj Chopra's Olympic Games gold medal in Tokyo?
2. How far did Neeraj Chopra throw the Javelin with his first attempt in Tokyo2020?
3. What distance did Neeraj Chopra manage for his gold-winning throw in Tokyo2020?
4. What was Kamalpreet Kaur's best throw in the women's Discus Throw final in the Olympic Games when she finished sixth?
5. What was the feat achieved by the men's 4x400m relay team when it clocked 3:00.25 in the heats in the Olympic Games?
6. What was Long Jumper Shaili Singh's effort that earned her a silver medal in the World Athletics U20 Championships in Nairobi?
7. Name the four runners who featured for India .in the final of the 4x400m Mixed team relay in the World Athletics U20 Championships and won the bronze medal?
8. What difficulty did Amit Khatri overcome during his silver medal-winning effort in the men's 10,000m Race Walk in the World Athletics U20 Championships in Nairobi?
9. Who was the key speaker at the July 20 send-off ceremony organised by AFI for the Indian athletes travelling to Tokyo for the Olympic Games?
10. When the Olympic Games athletics competition was on, AFI conducted a meet itself. What was that meet in India?

**July 2021 Quiz Winner**

**Abhijay  
Naresh Shelke  
Aniruddha Pramanick**

**\*Send your replies to [communications@indianathletics.in](mailto:communications@indianathletics.in) by 15th Sep 2021.  
Winners with all correct answers will receive an Exclusive AFI T-shirt**

