

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 24





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CONTENTS

				1 From The Founder's Desk - Parth Jindal	3 Empathy And Sensitivity In Sport - Manisha Malhotra
7 Shaping India's investment in Sports - Divyanshu Singh	11 Planning For The Next Olympics - Rushdee Warley	13 A Secure Future	16 Year In Review	22 Programme Reports	28 Sports Science Department
30 Our Satellite Centres	34 A Fillip For Grassroots Judo In Manipur	37 Our Campus is alive and buzzing	40 Acing Academics	42 The Fight Against Doping	44 Establishing Tight Bonds With The Community
46 IIS USA: A Helping Hand For Indian Sport	47 Our Donors	48 Forging New Partnerships	51 Financial Report	52 Testimonials	54 Life of An Athlete - Suchithra S.
55 Diversity the Key in IIS' Success	57 Train Hard, Train Smart	59 Nurturing Excellence - Rishi Wadhera	61 Growing The Sports Science Ecosystem	63 Creating Livelihoods	



FROM THE FOUNDER'S DESK

PARTH JINDAL

I always use the edition of the Annual Report of the Inspire Institute of Sport as a chance to reflect on and reaffirm our single-minded pursuit of Indian sporting excellence, and it ends up leaving me with both – a sense of pride owing to all we have achieved, and a renewed determination to get to where we want to see ourselves in the world of sport.

The strength of the IIS has always been in the commitment of everyone involved with it, beginning with all our donors. Right from the outset, we wanted IIS to be India's collective effort, not just JSW's. I often recall the founding years, when I personally reached out to corporate India with a plea to join us in our dream. Only a few saw merit in the blueprint, while the rest were skeptical. Three Olympic cycles, four Olympic medals and a long list of global accolades later, it is a matter of great pride that as of today, we have 47 donors contributing to the programme. It has always been my firm belief that a robust public-private partnership model, coupled with a competitive and professional sports system at the school and college levels is India's surest way to becoming a global sporting giant.



Corporate India has a massive role to play in our nation's sporting progress. We must graduate from a slow amble to a determined stride, and eventually begin setting the pace, one sport at a time.

I am amazed how seamlessly the IIS has transformed from being a facility in Bellary, to a movement that is now looking to have footprint in every state in India. What we have always referred to as satellite centres, will now be known as IIS Haryana, IIS Himachal, IIS Manipur and IIS Odisha, and this presence will only increase.

We have always been honest in our assessment of our progress, and an area that we have fallen short has been the lack of strength and depth of our scouting network. This is an aspect we are working hard on improving by way of putting together a battery of some of the best scouts who will bring talented 12-15-year-olds from across the country to the IIS. We will also lend complete support to sporting nurseries – big and small – across the country to make sure that no talented athlete falls through the cracks. Every hurdle will be crossed if it means getting to the talent our nation possesses.

The IIS will begin conducting and hosting regular competitions across the disciplines we work with, which will serve as a talent identification platform. The competition calendar will be announced well in advance with the aim of getting as much participation as possible. We have an eye on the future, and our work for LA 2028 and Brisbane 2032 has already begun.

Speaking about the Olympic Games, it was disappointing that a large number of our athletes couldn't register either their personal best or their season best in Paris. Our staff have already begun analysing every single performance to see how we can do better.

Our endeavour to leave no stone unturned in our pursuit of glory will involve going to every corner of our country, and that is what the IIS has begun doing. As I write this, we are fixing the nuts and bolts on a multi-sport high-altitude training centre in Uttarakhand, and I can't wait to show all of you what it will look like.

It is encouraging the way in which corporates have come forward to join hands with the government in giving Olympic sports the fillip it needs and deserves. What is even more reassuring is the success stemming from these efforts. It serves as the perfect validation that we are headed in the right direction. The IIS is playing so many roles – taking the lead where it must, and ably supporting federations and government-led initiatives where the need arises.

We have been supporting the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) since 2019, and our efforts have seen 21 shooters qualify for the Paris Olympic Games. That number was 15 in Tokyo.

We've lent the Boxing Federation of India our expertise in terms of technical support. Our coaches – Indian and foreign – have been a part of BFI's think tank, and the doors to our state-of-the-art facilities at the IIS have always been open to federations to conduct camps or national championships. A concentrated, consistent and collective push – that's what it will take to keep moving the needle of India's sporting ambitions.

Indian sport is in a period where its athletes have the kind of appetite, vigour and confidence that was previously nonexistent. There is a belief in both – those competing, and us watching, that we aren't there to simply make the numbers, but that we can win. We find ourselves regularly qualifying in events like the World Championships and the Diamond League. We are closing in on the world's best, at times, even putting it past them. We are responsible for this change.

I would like to thank every one of you who has played a part in making the IIS the finest sporting programme in the country. The largesse and faith of our donors has given us the confidence to surge forward, and the dedication and efforts of our staff have been second to none. Every time I have made the trip to IIS, the energy is infectious, and that is down to the atmosphere our people have created there.

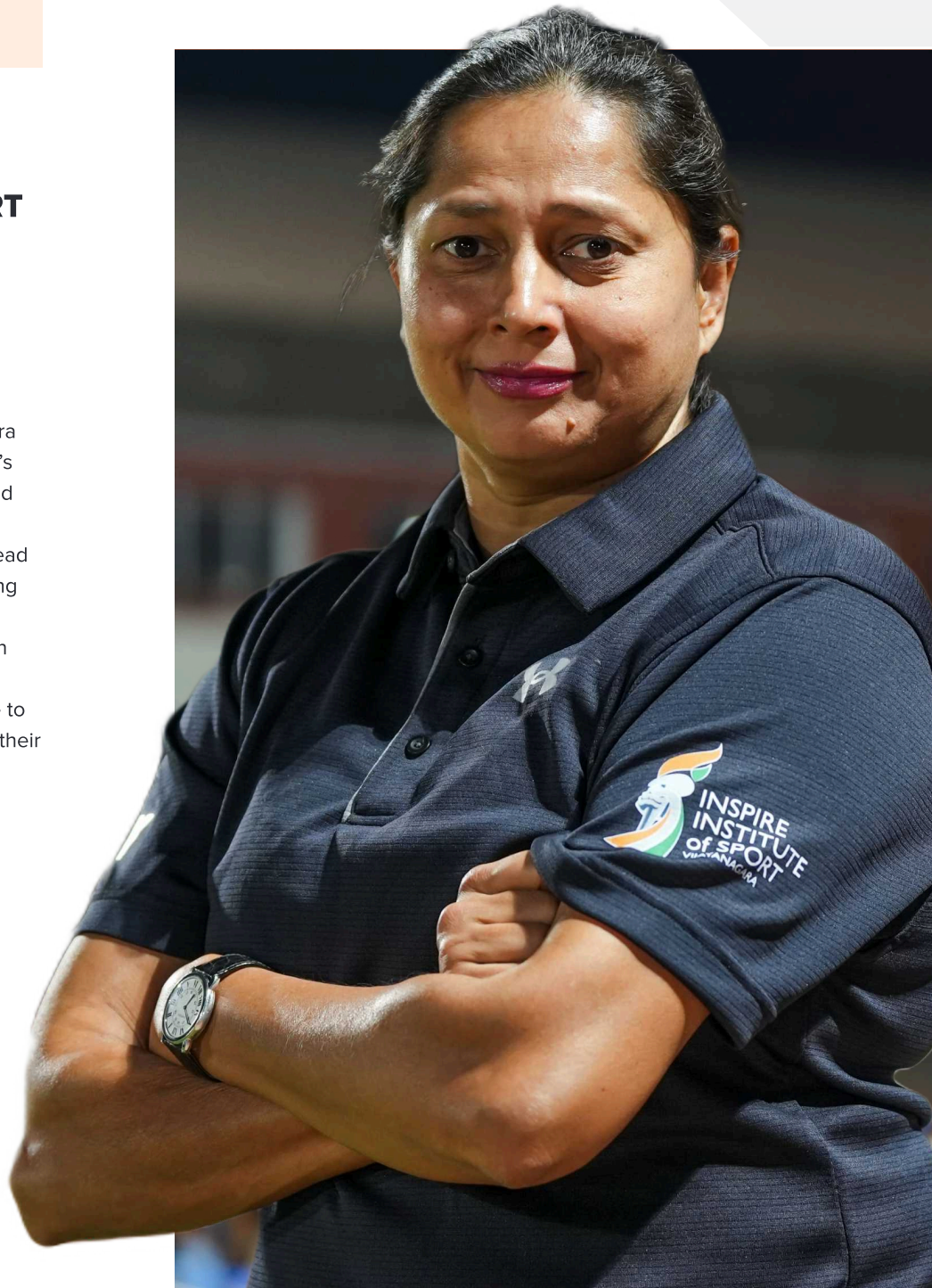
For all of us on this journey to take Indian sport to the very top, it is a responsibility – one that doesn't stop till the Indian flag is the highest, and our national anthem is the loudest in every arena at the Olympic Games.

A WOMAN BRINGS A WHOLE LOT OF **EMPATHY AND SENSITIVITY TO SPORT**

MANISHA MALHOTRA

**THE PRESIDENT OF
THE INSPIRE
INSTITUTE OF SPORT
TALKS ABOUT HER
ROLE AND VISION
FOR THE FUTURE...**

As The President of The Inspire Institute of Sport, Manisha Malhotra has her hands full most days. She's the one responsible for the 80-odd elite athletes under the Sports Excellence Program, who are spread across geographies and are honing their skills to compete against the best. From her command centre in New Delhi, Manisha oversees everything from their daily routine to how they're progressing towards their eventual goals.



Her job brings anticipation and expectations, emotions and stress, the result of a bond that she's developed with each of the athletes over the last five years. Manisha has often had to set it all aside, medal or otherwise, to be objective about her goals. "I measure success in very different terms, some of it is quantifiable and certain things are not. But there's a generic graph that makes it easy to see whether an athlete is levelling up or not. That's how I measure the growth of the program," she says.

In 2018, Manisha started out with 22 promising athletes under the Sports Excellence Program. The scope of her work was wide and needed all her experience in sports management, and the equally tireless efforts of her team. Through an expansive scouting network, tie-ups with national federations and international organisations, besides a holistic approach to growth, the program has been able to identify and groom talent who have the potential to take on the best in the world.

"For a program to grow, I need to have all kinds of athletes. And be clear that not everyone is going to win you an Olympic gold. For instance, there are some who are there as sparring partners and others who are unproven but come highly recommended in terms of potential. Everyone has a certain purpose and that is to grow the sport as a whole," she says.

The former tennis pro, an Asian Games silver medallist, has a simple word of advice for those joining the program - to give their best while training and in competition and leave the rest to her. Over the years, her presence has been enough assurance that every aspect of an athlete's development would be taken care of. She's worked with coaches to design training programs and plan competition calendars. She's assembled an efficient support team to aid performance and recovery alike.

In turn, the progress report is a good indicator of what the program has managed to achieve. Last year, the trainees at the Inspire Institute of Sport accounted for 17 medals at the Asian Games in Hangzhou. Then, there was Antim Panghal's bronze on her World Championships debut, silver at the Asian

Championships and gold at the World Junior Championships. And the Asian record set by the men's 4x400m relay team at the World Athletics Championships that Manisha holds in high regard.

There's the hope that the swimming program added last year will achieve more of the same in the time ahead.

"It's a very different sport as compared to the others that we've had. The swimmers bring a very different colour to the place and it's been really interesting to watch them train. The judo and wrestling programs have drawn a lot of young talent as well, so it's been really exciting over the last year," Manisha says.

In her position, she sees certain advantages and disadvantages of being a woman. And she feels the need for more women to take on leadership roles in Indian sport.

"A woman brings a whole lot of empathy and sensitivity that stems from how they view sport. It's certainly missing because men have dominated this field worldwide, even women's sport for that matter, whether as coaches or federation heads. I believe that in a country like India, women hold the key to the medal tally and several different growth parameters,"

The shorter three-year Olympic cycle due to the Covid-19 pandemic has been demanding even for master planners like her. There have been relentless competitions, poor results and untimely injuries to contend with. It's often led to heated discussions to realise what's best for the athletes. But her time as an active sportsperson has taught her that it's all a part of the game and that at times, there's little option but to grin and bear it.

“Results don’t always go the way you want, but that’s sport for you. If I’m disappointed with a performance or a development, one can only imagine how difficult it must be for the athlete,” she says.

That said, she knows what it means to be at the Olympics. Years of sweat and practice, without any guarantee of success. Courage and hope when the chips are down. A steady effort to make the cut alongside the best in the world. And then perhaps,

the opportunity to bask in the glory of walking out with the Indian contingent, like Manisha did at the Sydney Games in 2000.

“In tennis, you’d much rather win Wimbledon than an Olympic gold. But it’s an unparalleled feeling to be part of an Olympic contingent, something you can never imagine. So I’m very blessed to have experienced it,” she says.





CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IS

SHAPING INDIA'S INVESTMENT IN SPORTS

**FOR MANY DECADES
INDIA'S SPORTING
REVOLUTION RELIED
SOLELY ON GRIT AND
GRIND. THE TIMES
ARE CHANGING...**

DIVYANSHU SINGH

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,
JSW SPORTS

The landscape of sport and development in India has witnessed a significant transformation, driven largely by the rise of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In recent years, with the introduction of mandatory CSR spending, India has opened doors for increased corporate involvement in sports. The new regulations, which came into effect in 2014, presented a unique opportunity for large corporate entities to invest in youth development in sports and the infrastructure needed to nurture it.



THE SHIFT TOWARDS SPORTS CSR

Before the mandatory CSR regulations, Indian sports development struggled to attract substantial corporate sponsorships. Corporations were hesitant to invest in the long-term, often prioritising more immediate returns on their investments. What we saw is the creation of a significant gap in funding for sports development programmes, which left many sports initiatives under-supported and has been one of the reasons for high dropout rate of Indian athletes.

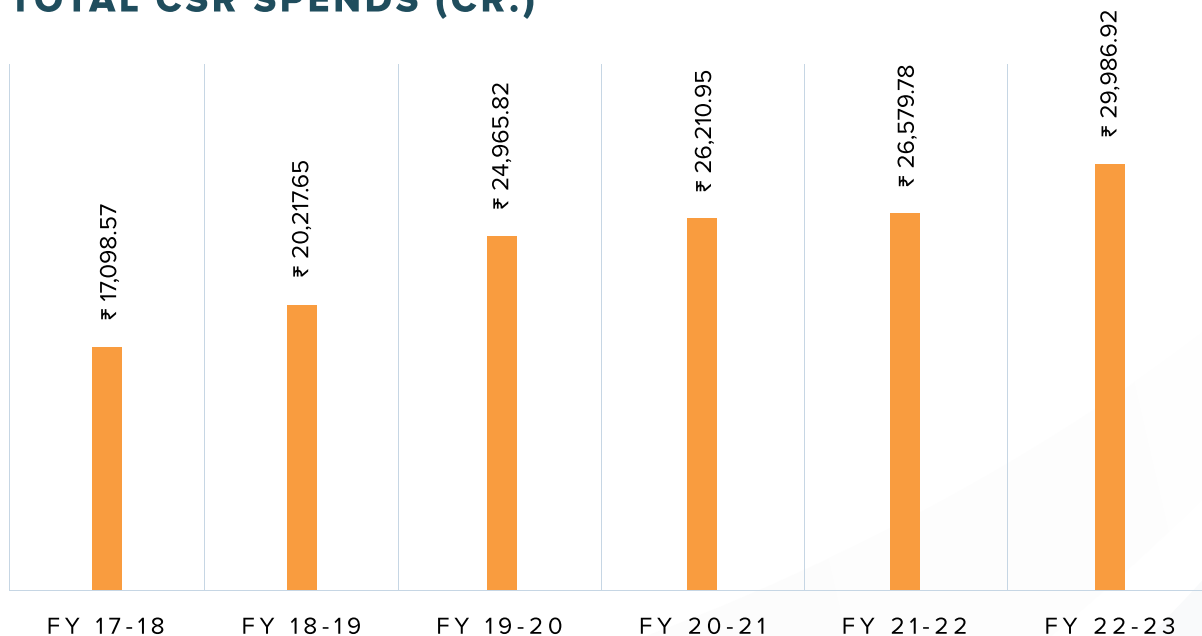
However, the implementation of CSR regulations in 2014 marked a turning point. Under these regulations, companies with a net worth of over ₹500 crore or an annual turnover of ₹1,000 crore or an annual profit of over ₹5 crore are required to allocate at least 2% of their average net profits of the preceding three years to CSR activities.

This shift has provided a much-needed boost to various sectors, including sports, especially to channelize investments in development.

GROWTH OF SPORTS CSR IN INDIA

The growth trajectory of sports CSR in India has been impressive. If I am to go by the most recent data available to me, CSR spending on sports has seen a noticeable increase. While sports-related CSR contributions once represented a modest fraction of total CSR expenditure, there has been a marked rise in this allocation over recent years. Graphs depicting CSR spends in India showcase a positive trend, with sports now capturing a more significant share, though still under 2% of the total CSR expenditure.

TOTAL CSR SPENDS (CR.)



The integration of sports into CSR strategies aligns well with the broader agenda of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By investing in sports, companies are not only contributing to sporting success but also supporting a range of SDGs, including those focused on health, education, gender equality, and economic growth.

THE ROLE OF IIS IN SPORTS CSR

Through Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS), we have managed to emerge as a pioneer in leveraging CSR funds for sports development. By adopting a programme-based approach, IIS successfully partnered with over 50 corporates and conglomerates over the last six years, including blue-chip companies such as Citi Bank, Kotak Mahindra, Bridgestone, Philips, IndusInd Bank, Nestle and many more. These partnerships have become case studies in Indian sport by elevating the profile of Indian sport and focusing on nation building.



OUR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

IIS's approach includes discipline-based programmes across five key sports disciplines and function-based programs covering education, nutrition and sports science. This strategic model has attracted significant corporate support and has set a benchmark for integrating CSR with sports development.



SUCCESS IS BEYOND MEDALS

Investing in sports through CSR is not solely about winning medals; it encompasses a broader impact on national pride and societal well-being. Corporate investments in sports help build infrastructure, develop grassroots programmes, and support young athletes, which in turn contributes to national pride and aligns with multiple SDGs.

The emphasis on sports as a vehicle for achieving SDGs highlights its role in fostering community development, promoting physical and mental health,

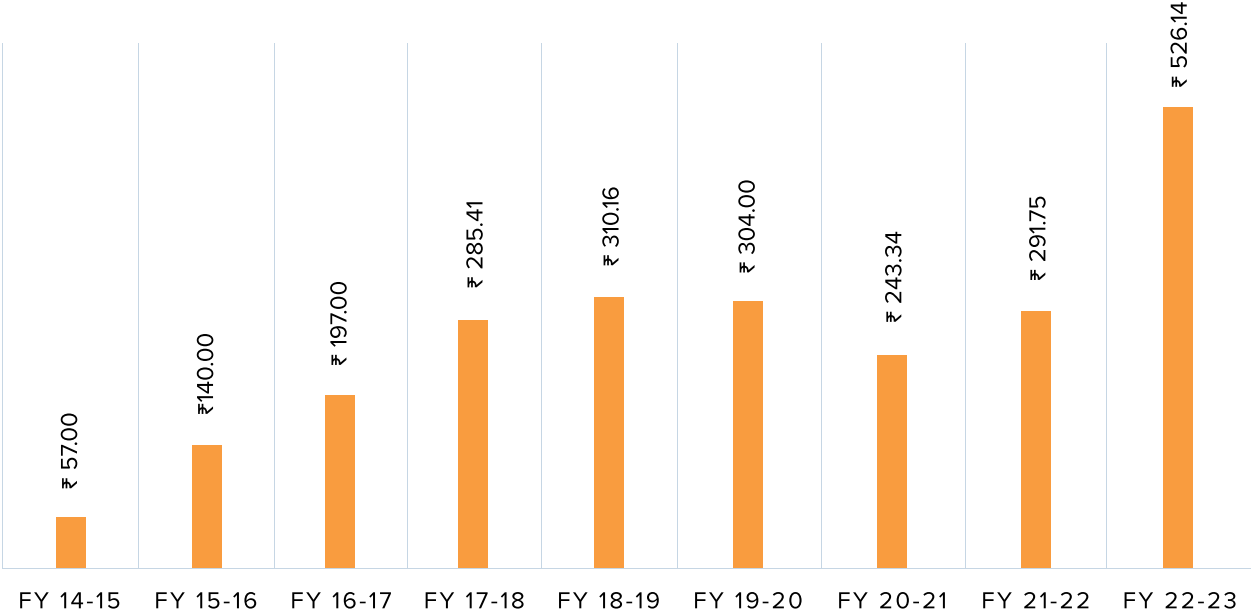
encouraging social inclusion, building valuable life skills including discipline, consistency, perseverance, teamwork, equanimity and resilience. Corporates recognize their involvement in sports can achieve meaningful social impact while fulfilling their CSR obligations.

LOOKING FORWARD: THE FUTURE OF SPORTS CSR IN INDIA

To fully realize the potential of sports CSR, there is a pressing need for the 1-2% current spend on sports to increase. Expanding this percentage over the coming years will be crucial for India to enhance its sporting

infrastructure and support emerging talent. The opportunity for sports CSR in India is vast. With the continued support of corporate partners and the strategic approach of organizations like IIS, India is well-positioned to rise as a prominent sporting nation. By investing in sports development through CSR, corporates not only contribute to the success of Indian athletes but also support a range of social and economic objectives that benefit society in general.

TOTAL CSR SPEND IN SPORT (CR.)



TO CONCLUDE

The growth of sports CSR in India represents a promising avenue for enhancing the nation’s athletic prowess and achieving broader social goals. The collaboration between corporates and sports organizations is paving the way for a brighter future, where sports can thrive and contribute to the country’s development on multiple fronts.

WE ARE NEVER TOO FAR AWAY FROM

PLANNING FOR THE NEXT OLYMPICS

RUSHDEE WARLEY

THE IIS CEO SPEAKS ABOUT THE LONG TERMS GOALS AT IIS THAT HAVE HELPED ACHIEVE SPORTING EXCELLENCE...

Even as you get down to reading this, Indian athletes would have taken the field at the grandest stage of them all, the Summer Olympics. A dream for most, driven by an insatiable desire to give their best.

What unfolds as a spectacle every four years is an art that has taken immense patience to fine-tune, even as mastering it remains a continual work in progress.

The Paris Games will be unique in that everyone has had just three years to prepare for it, after Tokyo 2020 was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It's been demanding, but it has also brought out the best in our athletes, if their stellar performance during the Olympic qualification cycle is anything to go by.



Neeraj Chopra was a cut above the rest when he picked up gold at the World Championships in the javelin throw and signed off the year with the Asian Games title defence. Antim Panghal had a stunning senior debut as she notched up a bronze at the World Wrestling Championships, while boxer, Preeti Sai Pawar too put on an exceptional show en route to the Asian Games bronze. And though they didn't make the podium, the 4x400m men's relay team walked away with their heads held high and an Asian record in tow at the World Championships.

These are just some of the performances that make us realise we are on the right track. That gives us direction on the steps to be taken in the time ahead. And why it's important to believe in your abilities when faced with challenges.

It's no mean feat to plan and monitor the progress of hundreds of young athletes. This takes a certain chemistry among all the stakeholders involved - the athlete, the coaches and the support staff - to live that dream of excellence every single day.

Our family at IIS grew last year with another batch of eager judokas, boxers and wrestlers coming onboard. We inaugurated the Aquatics Centre and inducted our first batch of swimmers, while also launching a High-Performance Camp in Odisha, a part of which is working towards simply getting more kids in the water.

The IIS campus hosted elite teams from India and across the world for training camps before important competitions. Boxing teams from the Philippines and Saudi Arabia showed up, as did a wrestling team from Iran. This was good exposure for our athletes but more importantly, it indicates how IIS is being recognised as

a world class facility in terms of what's on offer.

Our sports science lab was accredited by the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) and is the only such facility outside Europe today. This is where our team continues to spend many hours working with data to better our understanding of performance, before introducing our athletes to minor changes that are likely to bring big results. Through significant collaborations with renowned global institutions, our sports science team has also published research papers that will help other practitioners improve their knowledge of this complex world of elite performance.

Technology has been an important part of sport over the last decade, and we continue to make significant progress with its implementation.

One project that excites us is a collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, who are using artificial intelligence to give us key insights on boxing. Over the next few months, we would have gathered and processed enough data to give our boxers vital feedback on their performance in the ring.

Alongside sport, we've also looked at holistic development for the younger lot of athletes at IIS. While the pursuit of academics is an integral part of their daily workload, we also encourage them to engage in extracurricular activities to ensure that they continue to grow off the field as well.

There's been a lot of significant progress at IIS during the pre-Olympic year, which has been as important as this Olympic year. Then again, we are never too far away from planning for the next Olympics.

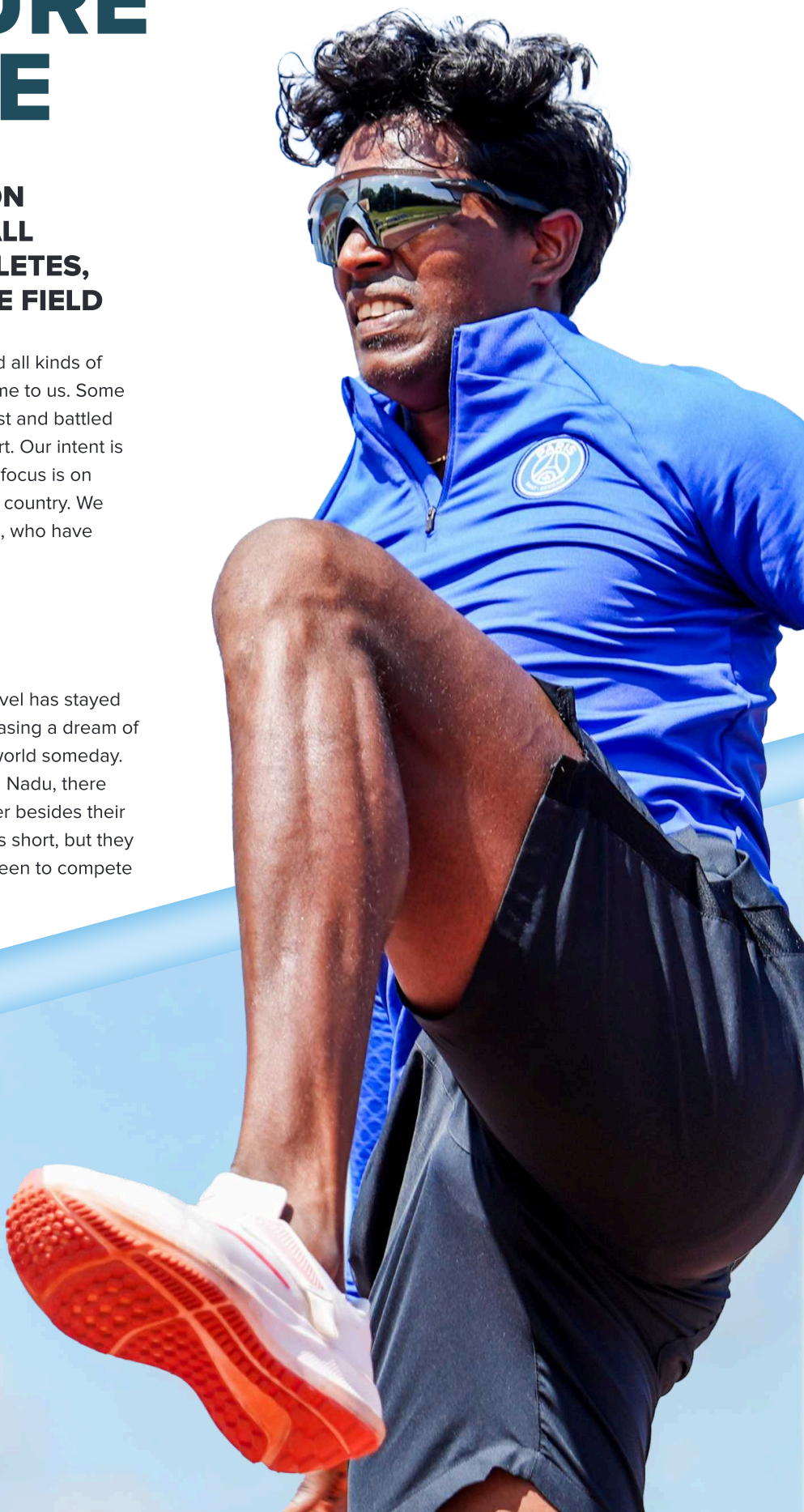
A SECURE FUTURE

AT IIS, THE FOCUS IS ON ENSURING THE OVERALL GROWTH OF OUR ATHLETES, BOTH ON AND OFF THE FIELD

Since we started out in 2017, we've had all kinds of athletes from diverse backgrounds come to us. Some of them have seen hardships in the past and battled the odds to continue chasing their sport. Our intent is to ensure that once they are at IIS, the focus is on honing their skills to bring glory for the country. We track the journey of two of our athletes, who have blossomed since joining the IIS family.

PRAVEEN CHITHRAVEL

For over fifteen years, Praveen Chithravel has stayed away from home in pursuit of sport, chasing a dream of being among the best jumpers in the world someday. While growing up in Thiruvapur in Tamil Nadu, there wasn't much that his parents could offer besides their support. As farmers, money was always short, but they did everything possible to enable Praveen to compete at local competitions.



As he kept improving, the search for better facilities took Praveen to different corners of the state. There was a time he travelled an hour and a half each way just to get to training, before returning home, cooking a meal for himself and having just about enough energy to hit the sack. It often got lonely, he missed his family, but he knew just why he was making those sacrifices.

Then came the bronze at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires that spoke volumes of his potential. IIS stepped in when he was transitioning to the senior level and exposed him to an environment that left him in awe during the early days.

“For the first time, I didn’t have to worry about things like long travels to get to the ground or preparing a meal. I had access to the best training facilities and support of every kind off the field. All my attention was now on training,” he recalls.

The results followed soon after. Domestic success in senior competitions put Praveen in the top bracket of athletes in the country. Last year, he took silver at the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships and followed it up with bronze at the Asian Games. In between the two successes, he smashed the national record for triple jump at a meet in Cuba.

“The environment at IIS has helped me grow. I regularly exchange notes with the boxers and judokas to understand the things they’ve been doing at training and what’s working for them. World champions like Neeraj Chopra are a call away whenever I’m in need of motivation. These things have gone a long way in the things I’ve been able to achieve,” he says.

Through the stipend and the prize money that he’s received over the last few years, he is now able to support his family back home. Recognition for him often comes in other forms as well.

“Last year when I went with my mother to see a doctor, he handed me flowers and took photos with me. People know me today for the things I’ve achieved in athletics,” he says.

The team at the NTT Data Learning Centre and

Academic programme took on the job of shaping him off the track. They worked on improving his language skills and over time, he’s become a lot more confident when it comes to carrying himself in the public domain.

“I’m a lot more confident today as a person and of my abilities. Since joining IIS, I have been able to manage not just my life, but also that of my family. Every athlete makes sacrifices to get to a certain level and I’m glad mine are paying off,” he says

NIHARIKA GONELLA

By the time she hit her teens, Niharika Gonella was hooked on boxing. The second eldest of four sisters, their parents had encouraged the girls to try out everything from gymnastics to volleyball and handball during their growing years. On the advice of a local coach, Niharika first stepped into a boxing ring at a local gym in her hometown of Hyderabad in Telangana. They soon realised that her height gave her an advantage over the other girls and there was no looking back.

Niharika soon moved to Visakhapatnam to better her prospects. The move paid off for a bit, but the facilities there didn’t allow her to progress beyond a point. With no other option, she decided to move back to Hyderabad in order to continue training.

At a tournament in 2016, her abilities were spotted by the scouts at IIS. The following year, she joined the boxing programme.

“It was different from anything that I had experienced in the past. All my training until then was about putting in a high volume of work all the time. I would often burnout by the time I had to compete. But at IIS, I was put through a systematic workload that allowed me to peak when required,” she recalls.

Over the next few years, she made rapid progress but it all came to a standstill when she suffered a shoulder dislocation at a competition in 2019. IIS took care of the surgery expenditure and she underwent an extensive rehab programme before hitting the ring again. It took a while for Niharika to be at her best

again, but at the National Championship in 2021, she finally managed to take bronze. Then last year, she won two bronze medals at the National Championship and the National Games.

Alongside her growth in the ring, the team at the NTT Data Learning Centre and Academic Programme ensured that her education remained on track. Under their guidance, she cleared her 11th grade and 12th grade examinations and secured admission for a Bachelor of Arts degree, specialising in mass media and political science. She is currently in her final year.

“Boxing is my dream and I want to win an Olympic gold. But I also know that education is important and I owe a lot to my teachers at IIS,” she says.

A lot of things changed after her father’s recent passing. Besides losing a constant source of support, she realised that she would now have to fend for herself when it comes to her boxing needs.

“It’s only through IIS’ backing that I am able to continue pursuing my boxing goals. And I know I have a long way to go,” she says.



NEW HIGHS FOR **NEERAJ CHOPRA**

CHOPRA PICKED UP INDIA'S FIRST GOLD AT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS; SPARKLING SENIOR DEBUT FOR ANTIM PANGHAL

There's pressure, and then there's the pressure of being Neeraj Chopra. And refusing to wilt under it when the stakes are high.

It's been a recurring theme over the last year, where he's brought on his best under different circumstances to stake his claim among the best in the world. He started the year with success at the Doha Diamond League and though he missed a few competitions due to injury here on, he marked his return with yet another gold in Lausanne.

As he took the field at the World Championships the following month, he knew just what was missing. His trophy cabinet back home dazzled with a gold each at the Olympics, the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games, besides the Diamond League Final trophy. A World Championships gold would complete his collection. And that's just what he went out and did.

NEERAJ'S BEST THROWS

88.88m

Oct 2023
Asian Games
GOLD

88.17m

Aug 2023
World C'ships
GOLD

88.67m

May 2023
Doha Diamond
League
GOLD

87.66m

June 2023
Lausanne
Diamond League
GOLD

85.71m

Aug 2023
Zurich Diamond
League
SILVER

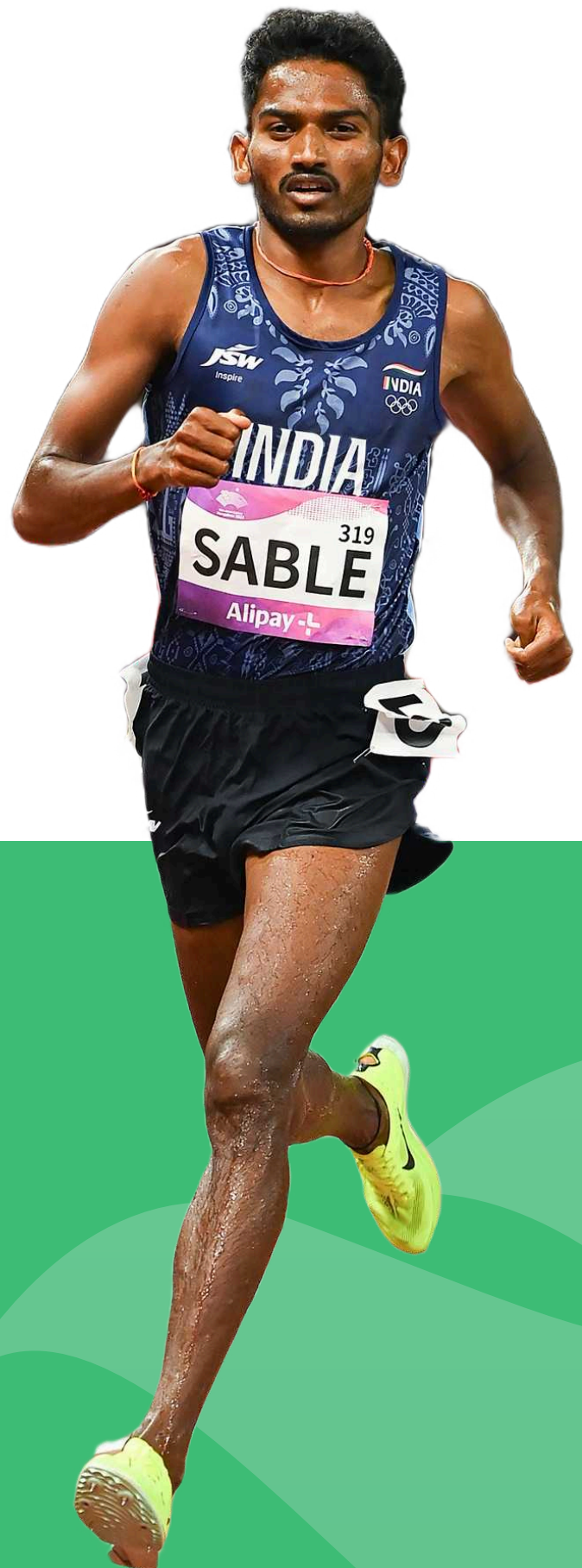


By the end of the evening in Budapest, he won gold - a first for an Indian athlete at the World Championships - going one better than the silver he had picked up at the 2022 edition of the event.

Chopra wasn't done. In October, he signed off the year by defending his Asian Games crown in Hangzhou with a season's best throw. It was now time for a well-deserved break, before getting his preparations underway for another title defence - the Olympic gold.

Besides Chopra, there were other IIS athletes who had a lot to celebrate at the Asian Games. Avinash Sable knew he needed to make amends after failing to qualify for the 3,000 metre steeplechase final at the World Championships. He went back to the drawing board and alongside IIS coach Scott Simmons, analysed his shortcomings.

Come October, there was no stopping Sable. He blazed a trail in the 3,000m steeplechase at the Asian Games to lead from start to finish and picked up gold - India's first at the event. Three days later, he stormed to a silver in the 5,000 metres.



AVINASH SABLE'S SEASON BEST

3,000m

Steeplechase
Oct 2023
Asian Games
GOLD

5,000m

Oct 2023
Asian Games
SILVER

PARUL CHAUDHARY'S SEASON BEST

5,000m

July 2023
Asian Athletics
Championships

SILVER

5,000m

October 2023
Hangzhou
Asian Games

GOLD

3,000m

Steeplechase
July 2023
Asian Athletics
Championships

GOLD

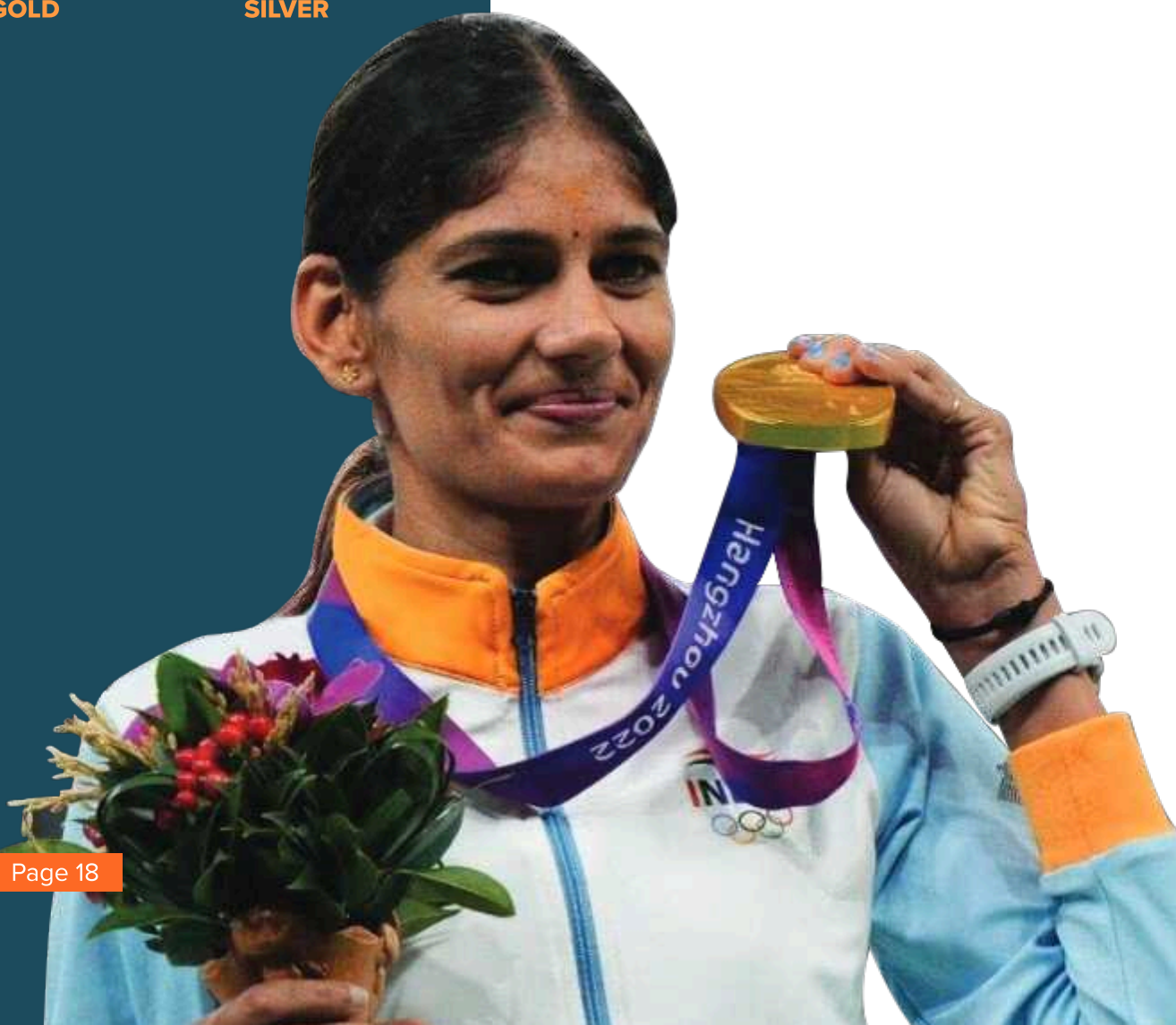
3,000m

Steeplechase
October 2023
Hangzhou
Asian Games

SILVER

His training mate from Colorado Springs, Parul Chaudhary, was not to be left behind. Her 11th place finish in the 3000 metre steeplechase at the World Championships rewrote the national record (9:15.31) and helped her secure qualification for the Paris Olympics. But she longed to be on the podium. At the Asian Games, she took silver in the same event and returned the following day to secure India's first gold in the women's 5,000 metre race.

Another spectacle on the track was the blazing effort of the men's 4x400m relay team at the World Championships. The IIS quartet of Muhammed Yahiya, Amoj Jacob, Muhammed Ajmal and Rajesh Ramesh ran the race of their lives to qualify for the final behind the Americans, landing a new Asian record along the way. It is what Manisha Malhotra, Head of Sports Excellence and Scouting at JSW Sports, calls her cherished moment from last year.



The boxers marked India's most successful campaign at the World Championships in May. Of the three bronze medals, two were won by IIS pugilists, Nishant Dev (71kg) and Mohammed Hussamuddin (56kg).

In 2022, Dev underwent surgery to tend to an old injury and was in rehabilitation through most of the year. But his intentions were clear after he clinched gold at the National Championship in January last year.

Hussamuddin too looked unstoppable when he took gold at the National Championship. However, a knee injury at the World Championships meant that he had little choice but to hand his opponent a walkover in the semi-final.

MEN'S 4x400m ASIAN RECORD

2:59.05

Aug 2023
World C'ships
**NEW RECORD,
INDIA**

2:59.51

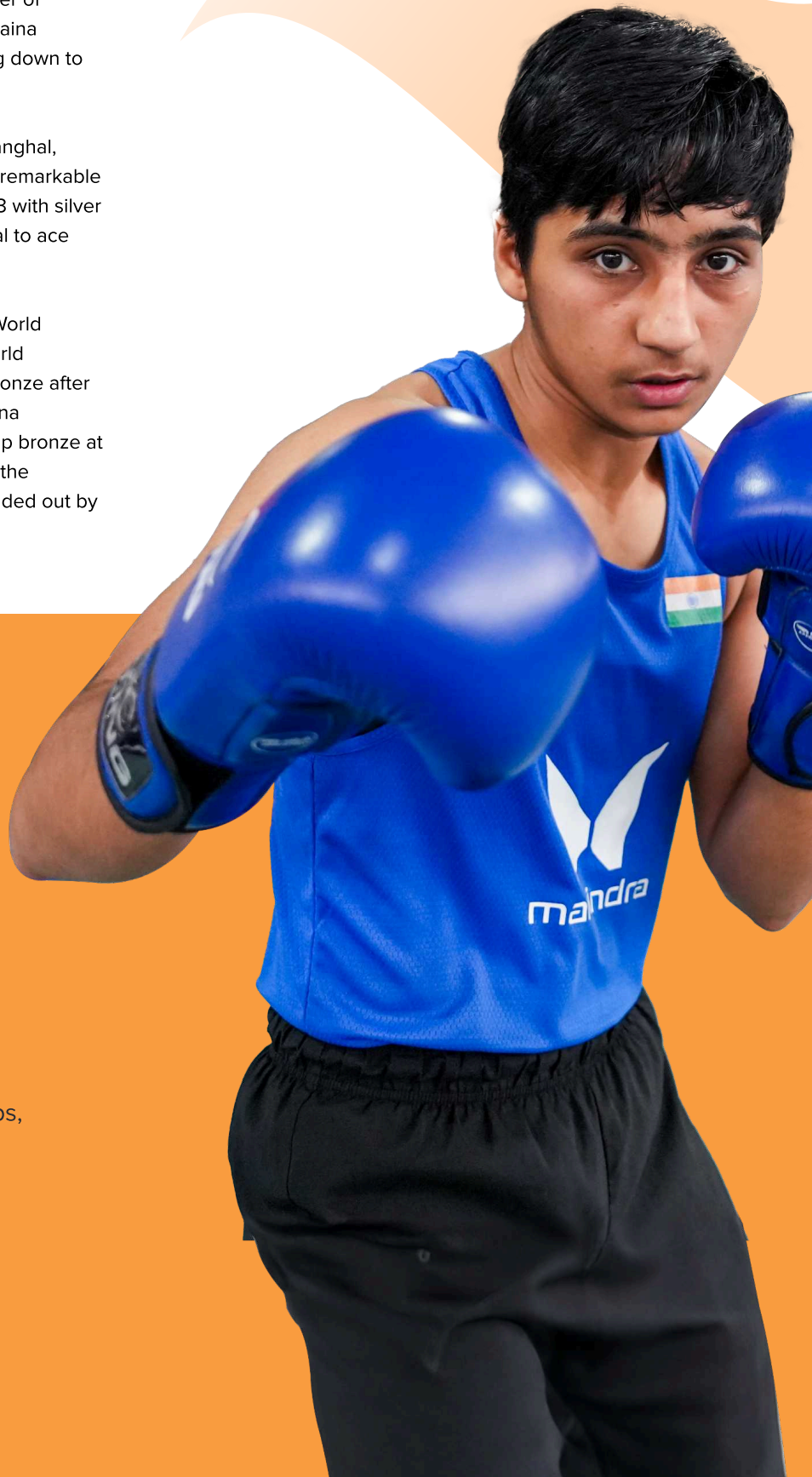
July 2022
World C'ships
**PREVIOUS
RECORD
JAPAN**



One of the youngest boxers at IIS, Preeti Sai Pawar justified her billing as one for the future when she picked up bronze (54kg) at the Asian Games and alongside, qualification for the Paris Games. Her first major senior competition saw her overwhelm Alhasanat Silina of Jordan and get the better of multiple World Championship medallist, Zhaina Shekerbekova of Kazakhstan, before going down to home favourite, Chang Yuan.

Another youngster from Haryana, Antim Panghal, sealed her Olympic berth and signed off a remarkable debut year in the seniors. She started 2023 with silver at the Asian Championships, losing the final to ace grappler Akari Fujinami of Japan.

Then in August, she defended her Junior World Championship crown and at the Senior World Championship in Belgrade, she secured bronze after beating two-time European champion, Jonna Malmgren. Just a month later, she picked up bronze at the Asian Games and justified her claim to the Women's Rising Star of the Year award handed out by United World Wrestling.



PUGILISTS' KITTY

54kg

PREETI SAI PAWAR

Asian Games, Oct 2023

BRONZE

56kg

**MOHAMMED
HUSSAMUDDIN**

World C'ships,
May 2023

BRONZE

71kg

**NISHANT
DEV**

World C'ships,
May 2023

BRONZE

ANTIM'S HAUL

Senior World C'ships

Sep, 2023

BRONZE

Junior World C'ships

Aug, 2023

GOLD

Asian Games

Oct, 2023

BRONZE

Asian C'ships

Apr, 2023

SILVER

The judo programme had much to celebrate as well. Oliviya Devi Huidrom clinched bronze at the World Cadet Championships in Zagreb - the second IIS judoka to make the podium at the event after Linthoi Chanambam's gold in 2022.

And though launched just last year, the swimming program has also made speedy progress. At the Senior National Aquatics Championships, Aryan Nehra created new national records in the 400 metre freestyle and 400 metre individual medley events at the Senior Nationals. At the 37th National Games in November, Kushagra Rawat set new Games records in the 400 metre, 800 metre and 1500 metre freestyle events. And at the Dubai Open Swimming Championships in February this year, nine IIS recruits returned with five medals, a sign of things to come.

Five of our athletes, Parul Chaudhary and Sreeshankar Murali (Track and Field), Mohammad Hussamuddin (Boxing), Antim Panghal and Sunil Kumar (Wrestling) were honoured with the Arjuna Award for their accomplishments.

All the focus will undoubtedly be on the Paris Olympics this year. And as always, our athletes at IIS will be on show to give their best.



WITH AN EYE ON THE **WINTER OF 2026**

THE WINTER SPORTS ATHLETES HAVE BEEN MAKING STEADY PROGRESS TOWARDS THE WINTER OLYMPICS IN ITALY

The agony of missing out on competing at the Winter Olympics is something Arif Khan is all too familiar with. In 2014, he had to make peace with it after he was ruled out due to injury. But four years later, he couldn't go simply due to a lack of funds.

All that changed when he was included as part of IIS' Milano-Cortina 2026 Sport Programme that is preparing athletes for the Winter Olympics in 2026. Arif's training received structure and for once, he had to only focus on putting in the work on the ski slopes, rather than run around addressing other issues involving his sport. It then came as little surprise when Arif made the cut for the Slalom and Giant Slalom disciplines at the Beijing Winter Olympics in 2022 - the first Indian to qualify for two events at the same edition of the Games. The talent was never in doubt, but with the right support, he finally landed the opportunity to flourish at the biggest stage for winter sports.

Arif's success paved the way for other winter sport athletes from Jammu & Kashmir. The program currently also has two young downhill skiers, Faizan Ahmad Lone and Syed Zain, and a snowboarder, Mehraj Uddin Khan. Last year, the four athletes were put through a customised training programme designed by international experts, while they also had the opportunity to travel abroad in order to work with experienced coaches.

In March 2023, Arif competed in Eastern Europe,



while also attending a training camp alongside Syed and Faisan. After a short break back home, the athletes travelled to IIS to prepare for the next season. They were put through multiple rounds of testing by the sports science team, before arriving at a structured training and nutrition plan for each one of them. The consultation continued virtually over the next few months to monitor their progress and introduce minor tweaks when needed. Ever since they've joined the programme, their travel and equipment costs have been taken care of, making it possible for them to compete at elite competitions around the world.

In January, the four athletes had their training scheduled for a few weeks in Italy. This proved to be crucial this winter when a lot of training and competition schedules were disrupted due to scanty snowfall in the Indian mountains.

The results from last year have been overwhelming to say the least. Arif made it evident why he's the face of Indian winter sports after taking a gold and bronze at the FIS Alpine Slalom Race in the United Arab Emirates. It recorded another major milestone for him, the first Indian athlete to pick up a gold medal at an FIS ski race. Mehraj created history of his own after taking two bronze medals at the FIS Via Stars Cup in Serbia, the first international snowboarding medals for India.

The teenagers made their mark at the national level. Faizan picked up two gold medals at the Khelo India Winter Games, while Syed took two silver at the same event. They also won two medals each at the J&K State Championship. In a short period of time, these athletes have made steady progress to prove their worth. It's just a matter of time before they are taking on the best in the world.

The IIS family is grateful to SBI General Insurance for their support of our Winter Sports Programme.

ARYAN NEHRA

MIZUHO

SHINES AMID POOL OF RAPIDLY IMPROVING SWIMMERS

IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, OUR SWIMMERS AT IIS HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS...

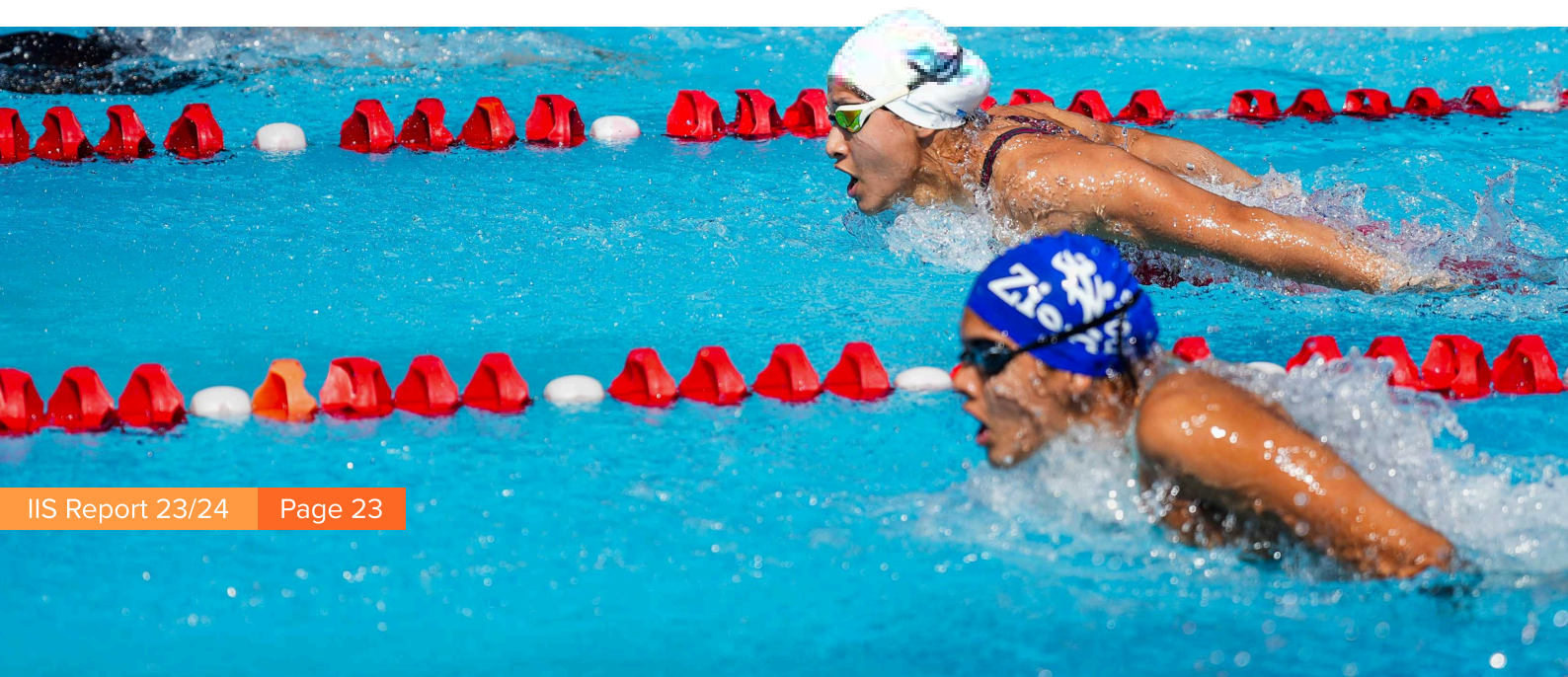
At the Senior National Swimming Championship in July 2023, Aryan Nehra smashed four National Records to be declared the best male swimmer of the meet. His gold medals came in the 400m freestyle, 800m freestyle, 1500m freestyle and the 400m individual medley events.

By the end of September, the IIS athlete had bettered two of those marks - the 800m freestyle and the 1500m freestyle. On the latter, he dropped close to nine seconds, a remarkable feat for any athlete. And by the time the Asian Age Group Championships arrived in February this year, he had achieved five personal bests in other events.

It's a sign of the rapid gains that the first batch of IIS swimmers have made in the few months since the programme got underway last year. Maana Patel had four personal bests at the Senior National Swimming Championship, while returning with a silver at the Asian Age Group Championships. Kushagra Rawat also took bronze at the Asian Age Group Championships and followed it up with two gold medals at the Dubai Open, besides five medals at the National Games. Four other swimmers - Bikram Changmai, Tanmay Das, Swadesh Mondal and Anurag Singh - were among the medalists at the Dubai Open, as the IIS contingent returned with seven medals in all.

On the domestic front, Uttara Gogoi, MJ Anbu Kathir and Krishna Gadak had a busy February at the All Indian University Games and the Khelo India University Games. Uttara was the pick of the lot with eight medals in the two meets.

The Inspire Institute of Sport is grateful to Mizuho Bank for their support of our High Performance Swimming Programme.



NISHANT DEV



A HOMEGROWN SUCCESS

THE 2023 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BRONZE MEDALLIST WAS AMONG THE FIRST BATCH OF BOXERS AT IIS...

It seems like yesterday when a young Nishant Dev joined the IIS boxing programme, aspiring to be among the top boxers in the country someday. Last year, he took a big step towards it.

The World Championships is where it all started for Nishant in 2021, his first senior international outing where he made it to the quarterfinal stage. Then last year, he went one better to make the semis and take bronze, marking the biggest win of his career.

It was special for multiple reasons. After undergoing surgery in 2022, he had spent many months in rehab, closely monitored by the sports science team at IIS. Working his way back into the ring took steady effort and the gold at the Senior National Championship in January last year did wonders for his confidence. It showed when he earned a unanimous decision against Jorge Cuellar in the quarterfinal of the World Championships to seal a medal for India.

Another IIS pugilist, Mohammad Hussamuddin, also made a deep run at the World Championships, until he was laid low by an ACL injury, forcing him to concede the semi-final bout and settle for bronze. Alongside Deepak Bhorla's bronze, it marked India's most successful campaign at the prestigious event.

Then at the Asian Games, Preeti Sai Pawar became the youngest member of the boxing contingent to seal a spot at the Paris Olympics. In the crucial quarterfinal bout, she caused an upset after getting the better of three-time World Championships medallist, Zhaina Shekerbekova, before going out in the next round.

Over time, these boxers have managed to raise the bar for others at IIS and the results are gradually coming. At the Golden Glove of Vojvodina in Serbia, IIS boxers picked up eight medals, while at the Boxam International Tournament in Spain, they clinched five medals earlier this year. A mixed team of young boxers from IIS and the Hisar centre had a successful outing at the Asian Youth & Junior Championship, landing three gold and two silver medals.

Behind these results are the tireless efforts of the coaching team and support staff at IIS, and the technology being made available to them. The Indian Institute of Technology Madras is currently working on a video analysis system that uses analytical tools driven by artificial intelligence. It continuously monitors every boxer's progress in the ring and gathers vital data that can be assessed to aid performance.

With these organised systems in place and a consistent effort at developing young boxers at our satellite centres in Hisar and Sangla, the future of Indian boxing looks bright in the time ahead.

The Inspire Institute of Sport is thankful to Kotak Karma for their support of our Boxing Programme.

NEERAJ CHOPRA



Gameskraft
FOUNDATION

REGISTERS A FIRST FOR INDIA

A GOLD AT THE WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIP MARKED A STELLAR YEAR FOR THE JAVELIN THROW EXPONENT

In October 2023, Neeraj Chopra wrapped up competition with a season's best throw to defend his Asian Games title. It was his fourth gold of the year, which included the World Championship triumph - a first for an Indian athlete. He also took silver medals at the Zurich Diamond League and Prefontaine Classic in Eugene.

He's been a constant source of inspiration for the other javelin throwers at IIS and there's a healthy rivalry brewing between Manu DP and Rohit Yadav these days. At the Indian Grand Prix 4 in April, Manu was miles ahead of the field as he picked up gold, relegating Rohit to second spot. Then at the Federation Cup the following month, Rohit landed a personal best to take gold, pipping Manu to silver this time around.

It was good preparation for Manu, who finished second at the Asian Athletics Championship in July where the IIS contingent took eight medals that included two gold, five silver and a bronze. It was a sign of things to come.

A few months later at the Asian Games, IIS athletes accounted for 17 of the 29 medals won by India in track and field.

To put things in perspective, India landed 12 medals (2010) and 13 medals (2014) in track and field at previous editions of the Asian Games. This time around, IIS athletes alone bagged more medals than that tally to help India pick up 20.1% of the total track and field medals on offer at the event. It remains the most successful discipline at IIS, raising the bar for Indian athletes on the whole.

Avinash Sable and Parul Chaudhary returned with two gold and two silver medals, while Ajay Kumar Saroj (Men's 1500m) and Vithya R (Women's 400m hurdles) took silver and bronze, respectively. The relay teams featuring Vithya, Amoj Jacob, Rajesh Ramesh and Muhammad Ajmal V landed a gold and two silvers.

Ancy Sojan E and M Sreeshankar were the pick of the jumpers, picking up silver in the long jump, while Praveen Chithravel took bronze in the men's triple jump. And there was much to celebrate for Tejaswin Shankar, who smashed a 12-year decathlon national record en route to bronze.

The juniors from the satellite centre in Hisar have also made significant progress. In the time ahead, keep an eye out for Yash Krishnan, a National School Games gold medallist, and Aditya, the Khelo India Youth Games bronze medallist. These young javelin throwers are one for the future, just like Neeraj was a few years ago.

The IIS is thankful to the Gameskraft Foundation for their support of our Athletics Programme.

A STELLAR SEASON FOR

OLIVIYA DEVI

THE TEEN FROM MANIPUR WAS THE PICK OF THE JUDOKAS WITH HER WORLD CADET CHAMPIONSHIP BRONZE

At the end of July last year, Huidrom Oliviya Devi sat pretty with the two gold medals that she had picked up at the Hong Kong Asian Cadet Cup and the Macau Cadet & Junior Asian Cup. However, there wasn't much time to celebrate as a bigger test arrived the following month - the World Cadet Championships in Zagreb.

And Oliviya didn't disappoint. Though she lost her semi-final bout to eventual champion, Clarice Ribeiro, she bounced back to claim bronze after getting the better of Kristina Lili Krizova. And three months later in November, she took another bronze at the Asian Cadet & Junior Championships.

Two other Judokas, Leishangthem Nungshithoi Chanu and Ngangbam Dipapati Devi, had stellar seasons as they celebrated their first international success with three medals at various Asian championships.

The three Manipuris are the latest success stories from IIS, following in the footsteps of India's first Judo

IndusInd Bank 

world champion, Linthoi Chanambam. Linthoi had a great start to the year, picking up silver at the Cadet European Cup in April and another silver in Hong Kong, before she was laid low by injury.

Also among the medals were Jasleen Singh Saini at the Asian Open in Taipei, Yamini Mourya at the World University Games, and Maibam Indubala Devi and Unnati Sharma at the Asian Open.

On the domestic front, IIS athletes were a cut above the rest, picking up 14 medals at the National Games. They also enjoyed success at important tournaments such as the National Cadet Judo Championships (10 medals), Junior National Judo Championships (13 medals), Senior National Judo Championships (six medals), National Judo Championships (two medals) and the Senior National Ranking Championships (10 medals).

A sign of things to come were the three National Games medals picked up by Huidrom Birkamal, L Roshni Devi and Y Sunil, who train at our satellite centre in Manipur. IIS supports two grassroots academies near Imphal where around 100 young Judokas are currently training. The inaugural Sangai Cup hosted by IIS in Manipur handed a lot of these young athletes a taste of competition, as they look to emulate their state mates in the time ahead. The Judo program has been a work in progress and each of these results is a step in the right direction.

The Inspire Institute of Sport is grateful to both IndusInd Bank and MUFG for the support they have extended to our Judokas.

A MEMORABLE SENIOR
DEBUT FOR

ANTIM PANGHAL

**THE WRESTLER FINISHED ON
THE PODIUM AT THE ASIAN
CHAMPIONSHIPS, SENIOR
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS AND
ASIAN GAMES IN 2023**

At her first senior international event in April last year, the Asian Championships, Antim Panghal finished with a silver. And by the end of the year, she had sealed bronze at the Asian Games and alongside, a spot at the Paris Olympics. In between the two competitions, she took bronze at the Senior World Championships and gold at the Junior World Championships.

It's been a stunning performance for the teenage wrestler and not just for her rich medal haul. Through all of last year, she beat a World Championship gold medallist, a two-time European Championship gold

IndusInd Bank

medallist and a three-time Asian Championship bronze medallist. And at just 19 years, she's led the charge of a young group of wrestlers at IIS, who've made their mark at the world stage.

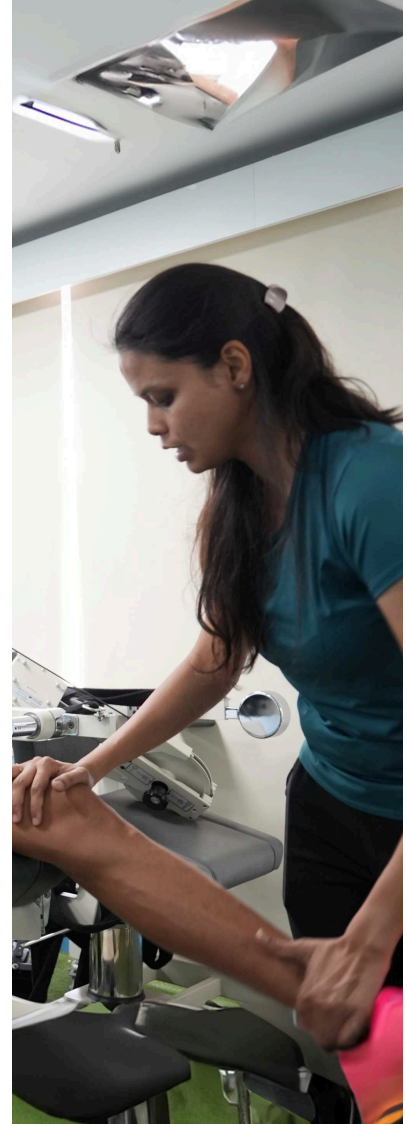
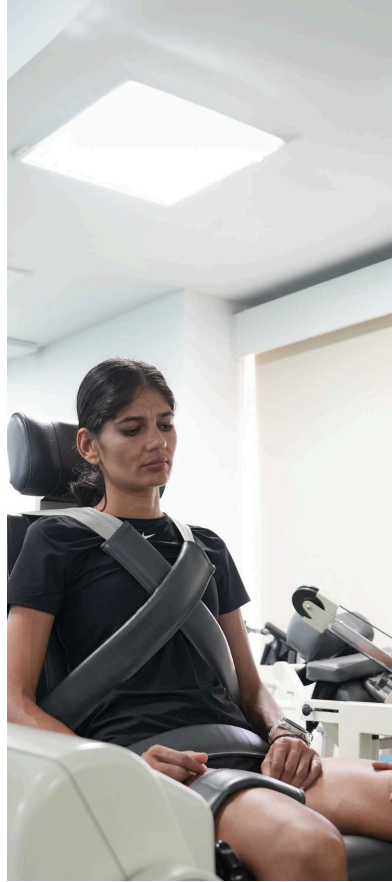
IIS grapplers Harshita, Radhika and Neelam took gold at the under-23 Asian Championship in June, while Nitika finished with a bronze. The following month, Jaskaran Singh clinched gold at the under-20 Asian Championship. Six wrestlers from IIS - Sagar Jalan, Abhimanyou, Ashish Hooda, Nikhil Yadav, Deepak and Jaiveer Singh - finished second on the podium at the World Freestyle Wrestling Clubs Cup in Iran.

It was no different with the group training at the Hisar Centre, where the wrestlers enjoyed success in domestic competitions such as the Khelo India University Games and Khelo India Youth Games, besides a rich haul of eight medals at the National School Games.

The Asian Games also had another momentous achievement when Sunil Kumar took bronze in the 87 kg category - India's first medal in Greco-Roman wrestling in 13 years at the quadrennial event.

The IIS is grateful to IndusInd Bank for their support of our Female Wrestling Programme.





A FIRST FOR

IIS' SPORTS SCIENCE LAB

OUR SPORT SCIENCE LABORATORY BECOMES THE FIRST OUTSIDE OF EUROPE TO GET ACCREDITED BY THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCES.



Sports science around the world is a constantly evolving field today. It is no different at IIS and the learning never stops for our team. Understanding performance is one of the key areas of our work at IIS. While our coaches monitor our athletes in the sporting arena, our sports science team has a round the clock role in gathering data and evaluating it to better understand the gains being made.

This in turn has led to improvements not only for the athletes at IIS, but also those at our satellite centres through a constant exchange of learnings and ideas between the sports science teams. One of the things that makes this possible are the training facilities.

Last year, the sports science lab at IIS was accredited by the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES). Experts from BASES visited our campus to conduct a detailed inspection of the equipment, the procedures being followed and the staff's proficiency. It certified our lab's readiness to conduct physiological testing for elite athletes that is on par with the rest of the world.

The Female Athlete Health Programme was introduced last year to provide additional support for our female trainees. Besides IIS, it has also been implemented at our satellite centres in Odisha and Hisar. We have provided menstrual, nutrition, medical and psychological support, while keeping track of their menstrual cycles to look out for anomalies. Our female athletes also have easy access to sanitary pads and hot water bags to tackle cramping during menstruation and have received training kits to ensure they can perform at the optimal level. We have conducted regular education and counselling sessions on menstruation that proved to be beneficial for the athletes who come from rural backgrounds and were not aware of the best practices to be followed.

Dr. Samuel Pullinger, Head of Sports Science at IIS, attended a 'Sports Science and Coaching' conference in Singapore that was organised by Singapore Sports Institute and National Youth Sports Institute. The theme here, 'Fundamentals of Athlete Development', focused on the importance of a holistic environment to strengthen the fundamental knowledge of our athletes and push them towards high performance. It also looked to enable sports administrators, coaches, practitioners and educators to keep abreast with the biopsychosocial, environmental and contextual factors related to youth athlete development. The rest of the sports science team has been constantly upgrading their skills and knowledge as well. Fourteen members gained their Level 1 or Level 2 accreditation from the International Society for the Advancement of Kinanthropometry. It is the area of science that deals with the measurement of human body composition and determines its capability for function and movement in a range of settings. This in turn has helped our team provide additional support to the athletes.

Four members underwent their Australian Strength and Conditioning Association (ASCA) Level 1 accreditation, which honed their fundamental knowledge of strength and conditioning coaching and helped them design programmes to improve athlete performance.

Five members visited the global conference hosted by the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) that was attended by over 250 members of the fraternity. Besides this, four from the team were a part of an international conference at Aspetar Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, a FIFA-approved medical centre in Doha, Qatar, that worked closely with the FIFA World Cup in 2022. They primarily worked on acquiring knowledge on Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) injuries that tends to regularly afflict our athletes, especially female athletes, a trend observed around the globe.

Some members of the team were picked out to attend a conference organised by the Australian Consulate for females in sport and three international webinars related to recovery, injury prevention and athlete assessment allowed our team to interact with the global sports science community and learn new evidence-based practices. Since our inception, we have found knowledge sharing to be a useful exercise and we hope to be at it in the months ahead.





IIS' SATELLITE CENTRES ADD TO OUR GROWING LIST OF VENUES RESPONSIBLE FOR NURTURING TALENT TO CHASE INDIA'S OLYMPIC DREAM...

At IIS, we are privileged to work with the cream of Indian sport, most proven names at the international and national levels. But alongside these proven performers, we are also working towards growing other centres across the country.

A few we work with at the grassroots; others at a more proficient level. The centres in Haryana, Manipur, Odisha and Himachal Pradesh are today feeder centres for IIS. There is also a constant process of knowledge exchange that has been put in place, which is helping the athletes as well as the support staff.

The desire is to continue raising the bar for elite Indian sport. And we know that it all begins with taking that first step, just like we did in Odisha.

ODISHA: HIGH PERFORMANCE SWIMMING PROGRAMME

Last year, we started working with a project close to our heart. Through a tie-up with the Government of

Odisha, we launched a world-class High-Performance Swimming Programme at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar.

“Odisha has started making the finals of various events at the National Championships, which is a big step forward. It means they are getting the right training, nutrition and support,” says Rushdee Warley, CEO at IIS. But that’s not only what this programme is all about.

While we are best known for producing champions, our first step with the Odisha programme was to work at the grassroots level. To empower kids with the life skill that is swimming and simply get them to have some fun in the water.

We have created 15 swimming centres in different parts of Odisha that are run by coaches trained by us. We’ve also executed pilot projects with a few schools from various districts and invited their students to take lessons with us. So far, we have over 15,000 kids learning how to swim and that number is likely to double over the next few months.

It’s the ideal public-private partnership that has often been spoken about in sporting circles. The infrastructure at the main centre in Bhubaneswar has been created by the government of Odisha, while IIS brings all the operational expertise that has helped it flourish.

“Think of it as an end-to-end programme that runs from the grassroots to the elite. While they are currently having fun with swimming, the natural consequence of this programme is talent emerging over time. And eventually, a young pool of swimmers who keep progressing up the ladder. It’s going to have a massive impact,” Warley says.

The program has also groomed young coaches and upgraded the skills of the existing ones. In fact, our last batch had 24 female coaches, who are today spread out across our centres.

“We had to teach some of the coaches from scratch. And that’s not a bad thing since they are learning the right methods at the start of their coaching careers,” Rushdee says.

In the time ahead, we want to start clubs across these centres and get each one to host competitions on a monthly basis. This will give our swimmers enough opportunities to hone their skills, besides handing them a little dose of our competitive world.

HARYANA: HAU GIRI CENTRE

Olympic, World Championship and Asian Games medallists; Asian champions and National Champions - you name it and Haryana has produced them. We wanted to support athletes from this state and it took us little time to find the right ally.

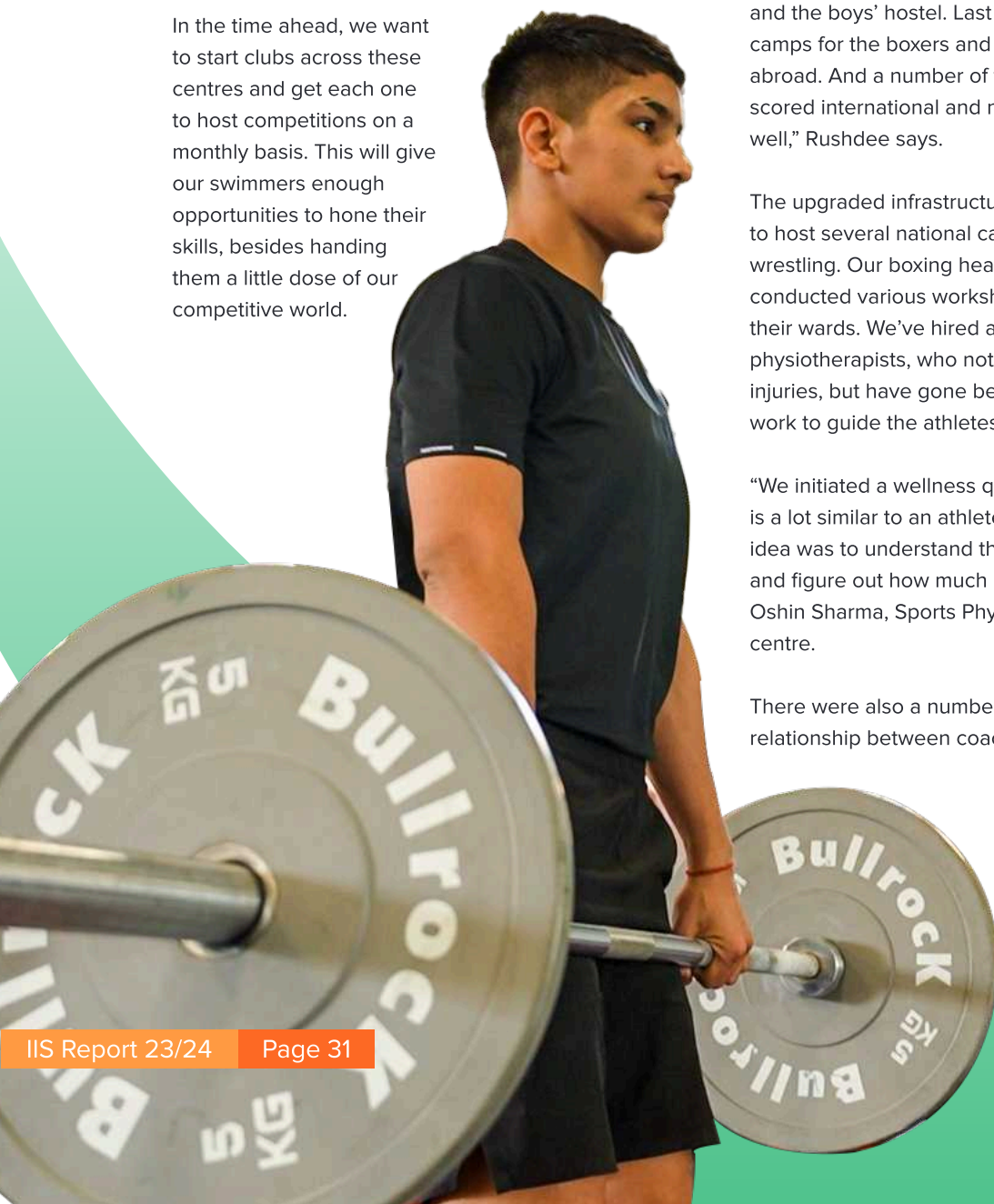
The Sports Authority of India has designated the HAU Giri Centre in Hisar as a SAI Training Centre. It has around 150 athletes training in boxing, wrestling and track and field. Through a public-private partnership, we’ve collaborated with the Sports Authority of India to upgrade the infrastructure and partly fund the daily operations at the centre.

“We’ve refurbished the combat hall, the gym building and the boys’ hostel. Last year, there were exposure camps for the boxers and wrestlers in India and abroad. And a number of the athletes from Hisar scored international and national level medals as well,” Rushdee says.

The upgraded infrastructure has also made it possible to host several national campers for boxing and wrestling. Our boxing head coach, John Warburton, conducted various workshops with the coaches and their wards. We’ve hired a crack team of physiotherapists, who not only tend to niggles and injuries, but have gone beyond the scope of their work to guide the athletes.

“We initiated a wellness questionnaire last year, which is a lot similar to an athlete monitoring system. The idea was to understand the load on these athletes and figure out how much recovery they need,” says Oshin Sharma, Sports Physiotherapist at the Hisar centre.

There were also a number of sessions on the relationship between coaches and athletes, injury prevention and the first steps to take in case of an injury, besides creating awareness regarding doping.



The team ran sessions to create awareness about these topics, besides counselling injured athletes and their parents to get them to understand the importance of recovery.

“We’ve seen so many injured athletes trying to rush their return to training. Sport is very important in these parts, since a lot of athletes come from underprivileged backgrounds and depend on it to secure their futures. We have to ask them to be patient and keep them motivated when they are injured,” says Ashutosh, physiotherapist at Hisar.

The physiotherapists and strength and conditioning team in Hisar regularly reach out to their counterparts at IIS when needed. They also frequently visit the IIS campus for workshops to upgrade their skills.

Oshin has spent a little over a year with us and is quite aware of the diverse nature of her work. On a certain day last year, she was attending a Women in Sports conference in Mumbai, and then a few weeks later, she had to work with female athletes on certain issues outside of sport.

“A lot of the girls come from rural backgrounds and have no knowledge about menstrual hygiene. I had to patiently run them through it,” Oshin says. It’s a part of the job and our team certainly knows how to excel at it.

MANIPUR: ELITE JUDO ACADEMIES

India’s first world champion in judo was a product of Manipur. So, we decided to work backwards, reach out to the source and get cracking at the grassroots.

We have been working with two academies in Manipur, Mayalambi Academy and United Judo Academy, and have upgraded their infrastructure last year, besides handing out gear to the kids who train here. The idea is to identify young talent that can be brought to IIS at some point. The five coaches we’ve hired have been making good progress over the years.

“There are about 100 young judokas training across these two centres. The potential is immense and there’s a lot to look forward to in the time ahead,” says Jiwan Sharma, senior judo coach at IIS.

Our strength and conditioning coaches have visited the centre when possible and share their knowledge with the local team. Over the next few months, Dr Samuel Pullinger, the Head of Sports Science at IIS, wants to launch the Female Athlete Health Programme and conduct a workshop on nutrition.

“The judokas at these centres are still very young and there’s a language barrier as well. The visits to Manipur are also uncertain because of the situation there. So we are gradually trying to build this programme,” he says.

But what’s a yearlong cycle of training, without having a platform to showcase your skills. To encourage healthy competition among our trainees, we hosted the Sangai Cup in Manipur for sub junior and cadet judokas last year. The competition featured athletes from other north-east states as well.

“Coaches from IIS were there during the competition to scout talent. They also conducted coaching clinics



and sports science workshops for the staff. Next year, we want to invite two teams from outside the north-east to raise the level of competition at the Sangai Cup,” says Tathagatha Mukherjee, COO at IIS.

HIMACHAL PRADESH: HIGH ALTITUDE BOXING ACADEMY

Sangla Valley in Himachal Pradesh is known for its juicy apples; in the time ahead, we know it will be in the limelight for its talented boxers.

At the various championships across the country, it was hard to ignore the gritty Himachali boxers. We set out to go see them for ourselves and soon decided to establish the High-Altitude Boxing Academy, which will act as a feeder centre for IIS. Last year, our boxing head coach, John Warburton, made regular visits to this centre to work with the coaches and in turn, picked out 10 boxers to train at IIS.

“I spoke to the local trainers about issues around coaching in particular. A few tend to push their boxers

really hard without focussing on recovery. It’s not sustainable and often leads to plateaued performances. So a lot of the work was about changing mindsets and planning sessions well in order to develop young boxers,” John says.

John’s sessions also addressed coaching styles, safety and health, and planning various training cycles with appropriate volume and intensity to ensure the right load. The sports science team also made a visit to share their knowledge.

The progress is evident. During his visit to Sangla two years ago, John recalls how these tiny centres hadn’t gone past the grassroots stage. Today, they are grooming boxers who have the potential to take the next step, in spite of the remoteness and inclement weather conditions in the mountains.

“A lot of the facilities are cramped since the ring takes up most of the space. The next step would be to create a residential facility. And of course, this would be a great facility for us to conduct regular high altitude training camps,” John says.



A FILLIP FOR GRASSROOTS

JUDO IN MANIPUR

**THROUGH THE TWO
ACADEMIES IN MANIPUR
THAT IIS SUPPORTS, WE
HOPE TO CREATE FUTURE
CHAMPIONS...**

Though it was a good six years ago, it seems like yesterday when Linthoi Chanambam walked into the IIS campus. She was just 11 years old at the time, tentative and shy, far from the confident teen that you see today, fierce on the mat and indulging in banter with her mates at lunch.

It's a memory firmly embedded in senior Judo coach Jivan Sharma's head, who has seen her progress over time. The Judo programme was as young as Linthoi and let's just say they have both grown up together at IIS. And the progress has been remarkable for either.

In 2022, Linthoi became India's first world champion after picking up gold at the World Cadet Championships in Sarajevo. Then last year, her state mate, Oliviya Devi, followed in her footsteps with a bronze at the same competition to make it two podium finishes in consecutive years for our Judokas. The dream is to create more Linthois and Oliviyas and it's been a work in progress over the last few years, as we've looked to tap the source.



In 2022, IIS tied up with the Manipur Judo Association to strengthen the talent pool that laid the foundations for these Judokas. We went a step further and scouted two academies, Mayalambi Academy and United Judo Academy, both on the outskirts of the state capital of Imphal, that have been consistently working at the grassroots. Jiwan remembers a time back in the early 2000s when he had a chance to visit Mayalambi Academy in Mayang. It explains why he made another scouting trip here before joining IIS.



Back then, the area wasn't very big but there were little kids training all over the place. And this was the same facility that had produced top notch Judokas like Arjuna Awardee and Asian Championships medallist, Anita Chanu, and Olympian Tombi Devi. What I saw was quite incredible." - Jiwan Sharma

The potential was evident and IIS decided to tap it. Today, we have five coaches from these two academies on our payroll, which also includes a former IIS trainee, Tababi Devi.

Back in 2018, Tababi created history by winning a silver at the Youth Olympic Games in Argentina, but soon decided to quit the sport for personal reasons. We knew her potential and asked her to return to the sport, even meeting her family to gain their approval.

Today, she's back as a coach, invested in our dream of producing the next Judo champion for India. These coaches are constantly being monitored by Jiwan and IIS Judo Head Coach Mamuka Kizilashvili to constantly upgrade their skills. The idea is to improve their technical knowledge and introduce better training practices at the two centres, where around 100 young Judokas are currently training. IIS also supports the academies with basic gear, besides aiding their administration capabilities by improving the office infrastructure.



“We plan to spruce up their infrastructure further in the coming months, definitely provide more equipment and gear, and perhaps figure out residential facilities for the Judokas. The intention is to work with them long term, so we are looking at longer contracts for the existing coaches, besides bringing more such grassroots coaches onboard,” says IIS COO Tathagatha Mukherjee.

Today, we have around 30 Judokas from Manipur training at IIS, a number of them Judo internationals and a few who’ve turned out for the state team. Besides their performance on the mat and the laurels that they’ve brought, Jiwan gauges their progress on other fronts as well.

“When these Judokas first arrived, they couldn’t speak a word of English or Hindi, and usually remained in their circles. Today, they’ve developed a personality that you cannot help but notice. A lot of young Manipuri Judokas have followed them here with the same dreams, which in turn has made these academies good feeder centres for us,” Jiwan says.

And that, we certainly hope, can make more Linthois and Oliviyas in the time ahead.



OUR CAMPUS IS

ALIVE & BUZZING

**BESIDES THE INAUGURATION THE AQUATICS CENTRE,
IIS ALSO HOSTED A NUMBER OF TEAMS AND COMPETITIONS**

Every year, we have events and activities that add to the aura of our vibrant campus. Last year was massive in that we inaugurated our Aquatics Centre and welcomed our first batch of swimmers. Then, we had international and national teams of repute come

down for training camps, which speaks highly of our facility and the reputation it's gaining.

And lastly, our athletes took on extracurricular activities that added to their learning, while helping them break away from their daily routine at play.



INAUGURATION OF AQUATICS CENTRE

We rang in our Foundation Day on August 15 last year with the opening of the Aquatics Centre at IIS. It was inaugurated by Mrs Sangita Jindal, Chairperson of JSW Foundation, alongside two special members of our family – Indian football legend Sunil Chhetri, and explosive wicketkeeper-batsman, Rishabh Pant. We conducted a camp that featured 24 swimmers and picked out our first batch for the programme. They've taken little time to settle into training, while bonding well with the other athletes. They also had the opportunity to rub shoulders with our elite swimmers from the Odisha centre during an exposure camp.



JUDO CADET NATIONALS

The three-day competition in July 2023 brought down some of the most talented young judokas from across the country. We had 800 competitors and around 200 coaches and support staff on campus. Eleven IIS judokas featured as part of this competition including Linthoi Chanambam, Oliviya Devi and Yash Vijayran.

EXPOSURE FOR BOXERS AND WRESTLERS

It's been our endeavour to hand our athletes the opportunity to flourish. Last year, we invited a team of wrestlers from Alborz province in Iran for three weeks as part of a camp. It gave our own wrestlers the chance to experience a different style of wrestling and develop their skills. The IIS boxers had the opportunity to train with the senior national team of the Philippines and a youth team from Saudi Arabia. We also had a couple of occasions where we invited two boxing teams and conducted a round robin format tournament where the third team comprised our boxers. The visiting teams featured promising boxers from the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, besides the Indian Army.



TRAINING CAMPS

The top notch facilities at IIS have been a draw for elite athletes across sport. The Indian national boxing team visited our facility for a three-week training camp that featured some of the boxers who will be competing at the Paris Olympics. The Manipur state judo team came down for their preparations before the Sub Junior and Senior National championships. Besides the Haryana Steelers, the U Mumba team was also here as part of their preparation for the Pro Kabaddi League. The coaches from Bano Champion CSR Programme, who work with underprivileged kids in rural Rajasthan, were part of a four-day training event where we addressed topics such as strength training and nutrition.



EXTRA CURRICULAR EVENTS

Alongside the focus on academics for our athletes between Grade 5 and 12, we also look at their overall development through extracurricular activities. We conducted debate competitions, media training sessions, life skill workshops and a social science exhibition at our campus that was attended by students from Jindal Vidya Mandir. Another subject-enrichment activity required athletes to write on a topic given out by our teachers, while two of them participated in the Indo-Vietnam essay competition. Every quarter, we ran cleanliness or tree plantation drives on campus to create awareness about our surroundings. We also did a field trip with our athletes, where they soaked in the sights and sounds of Mysuru. Our quarterly Athletes Newsletter, which is entirely planned, compiled and edited by our students, has been the perfect outlet for their creativity, encouraging them to continue making small gains outside the field of sport.

ACING ACADEMICS



OUR ATHLETES HAVE BEEN MAKING SPEEDY PROGRESS OUTSIDE THE SPORTING ARENA AS WELL

At IIS, there are all kinds of students who walk into our classroom. A few take to their books with ease; others would rather spend a few extra hours at training, rather than sit there with their teachers.

The team at NTT Data Learning Centre and Academic Programme welcomes either with open arms, ready to take on every challenge that comes their way.

When Asad arrived at IIS, he was struggling on the education front. Back home, training took up most of the day and as a result, this young boxer from Maharashtra had been unable to clear his ninth grade examination.

During the very first class, we saw his potential. All he needed was some attention and the opportunity to be regular with his studies. We started with the ninth grade coursework, which he cleared with ease. He was really eager to appear for his tenth grade Board examination, so we filled up the forms and got down to working with him.

In January, he requested leave to go back home, in order to put in a few weeks of intense work with his books. And to tell you the truth, we weren't exactly surprised when he scored the highest among all tenth graders at IIS.



**SHAH ASAD
MUNSHAD ALI**



**JEENY
CHANAMBAM**

There was little scope of pursuing an education given the background Hamza hails from. Wrestling has always been a lifeline for him and the opportunity to improve the condition of his family. The routine back home in Uttar Pradesh was an endless cycle of training and recovery.

While he did go to school during his younger days, he hadn't pursued his education for four years when he arrived at IIS. His progress was particularly slow at the beginning, since it took him a while to get used to having books around him and even longer to start reading them. It was a big change to his routine, but he was ready to put in the effort. These days, he's a happy tenth grader, at ease on the mat and the classroom.

Like her sister Linthoi, Jeeny was a quiet kid when we first met her. Then we saw the other side of her personality, at complete ease when among her state mates from Manipur.

The moment you took her out of her comfort zone, the judoka struggled to fit in and it was evident that while she was really confident about conversing in her mother tongue, Manipuri, she felt a little out of place when it came to dealing with Hindi and English.

Our team started working on her linguistic skills alongside the academics. There was joy when she got respectable grades in her Class seven examination, but what makes us happy today is how beautifully she's taken to the art of writing.



**MOHAMMED
HAMZA ABDUL
KHALIQ**

THE FIGHT

AGAINST DOPING

THROUGH GLANBIA'S SUPPORT, OUR TEAM HAS PUT EVERY MEASURE IN PLACE TO ENSURE THAT WE PLAY CLEAN AND FAIR

Let's just start by saying that we have a zero tolerance policy at IIS when it comes to doping. We have taken every measure to ensure that this practice, that has ravaged sport globally, has no trace at any of our campuses.

In WADA's latest report released this year, India topped the world in the percentage of positive dope cases against the number of samples tested. A total of 142 Indian athletes were caught in doping-related cases between April 2022 and March 2023 according to NADA. Quite clearly, this is a serious problem for Indian sport.

That said, we have often seen cases where athletes have fallen into the doping trap quite unknowingly. There were cases where a young athlete simply consumed a product on the advice of a senior. Other times, our team has encountered injured athletes, who have visited "quacks" in order to speed up their healing or recovery process and in turn, tested positive for a banned substance.

The golden rule for our athletes is to run everything past our team of qualified sport science practitioners before they consume any supplement or substance.

"Neither WADA nor NADA certifies any product or supplement fit for consumption. There is only a list of prohibited substances that is out there for reference. So, it's very important for any athlete to know what they are consuming, which is often not the case. This makes the nutrition and medical team's role all the more important," says Rushdee Warley, CEO at IIS.

We have come to realise that a lot of incidents simply stem from a basic lack of understanding around doping. Last year, we ran multiple awareness programmes at IIS and our satellite centers to educate all of our athletes. They were asked to attend international anti-doping workshops that were conducted online by WADA and a few months later, we conducted refresher sessions as well.

Our team underwent training on WADA's educational platform that highlighted various topics such as anti-doping awareness, the procedures that are followed during a dope test, and the things to be done by athletes and the support staff at the time testing procedures are conducted.





“We often have surprise room checks on campus or go through all of our athletes’ bags when they return from a break or competition. In case we find supplements, we check if it is tested by a third party and create awareness about its use,” says Uma Kale, Senior Nutritionist at IIS.

Supplements today have become an integral part of sport. But at IIS, we follow a ‘Food First’ policy, where we prefer that our athletes gain their required nutrition through natural food and resort to supplements only when this is not a possibility or there is an additional requirement, such as a long-term injury.

“We inform them about the importance of consuming third party-tested supplements, rather than something that has been handed out to them by coaches, peers and/or seniors. This is a message we reiterate time and again through regular conversations with athletes and coaches,” Kale says.

Through a tie-up with Glanbia, our official Performance Partner, IIS has been able to source high quality supplements that have been tested by a third party and are hence “safe” to use. Whenever we find an athlete consuming a particular supplement, we try to find alternatives provided by Glanbia that can fulfil the same requirements.

“Our supplements policy is quite strict. We ensure that any athlete consumes a supplement only after it has been run past our nutrition and/or sport medicine team,” Rushdee says.

Because that’s how any sport must be played, clean and fair.



ESTABLISHING TIGHT BONDS

WITH THE COMMUNITY

A HOST OF ACTIVITIES HAVE HELPED US ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITIES AROUND OUR CAMPUS...

Every once in a while, we open up our world at IIS to the communities around us. The idea is to engage the younger lot through the magic of sport, and hand our athletes and staff a little break from their demanding routine.



KABADDI EXPOSURE

During the pre-season camp for the Haryana Steelers, we invited a local girls kabaddi team to interact with them. These promising young players had the opportunity to watch the Steelers train and meet the players as well as the coach to improve their skills. The girls had a lot to learn during an exhibition match against the Steelers, where they gave a good account of their abilities. Through opportunities like these, we want to inspire the next generation to dream of competing at the highest level someday.

LECTURES IN THE COMMUNITY

As part of World Physiology week in November, Ragini Adhikari, Lead Exercise Physiologist at IIS, conducted a workshop for the students of Jindal Vidya Mandir to impart valuable insights on sports science. We took them around our sports science lab, where we got them to be part of various tests that are usually taken by our athletes. The idea was to get them to understand the importance of sports science and how essential it is in professional sport today. We ended the week with team building activities for the sports science team, which was a welcome break from their intense routine on campus.





KIDS ON CAMPUS

Since our inception, IIS has produced athletes who've gone on to compete against the best in the world. People line up and log in days in advance to land tickets to watch them in action. A lot of these athletes were once inspired by someone to don shoes and step out for that first run.

And today, they are in a position to motivate others to follow in their footsteps. We regularly open up our facility to the kids who live in the villages and towns around campus, to give them a taste of what happens within a High Performance facility.

As many as 400 children aged between 12 and 15 years visited the IIS for the National Cadet Judo Championships in July. They've seen our athletes during training and in competition, and our hope is that it will inspire them to give their best at play.



HOST FAMILY PROGRAMME

We are quite aware of the sacrifices that our athletes have made to train with us. Most of them are just teenagers, who've left the comfort of home and family to start new lives at the IIS campus. Through the Host Family programme, our attempt is to give them another family away from home. We went about understanding the interests of our athletes and then connected them with families around IIS, who were willing to adopt and share their lives with them. Our athletes have celebrated festivals and birthdays, cooked and relished meals, and gone out on picnics and for movies with their host families. We've also organised events where they've exhibited their design skills and put their general knowledge to test during quizzes. Of course, there's no feeling like home, but at IIS, we want them to get as close to it as possible. Today, our athletes have another family they can call their own.





A HELPING HAND FOR

INDIAN SPORT



THROUGH IIS USA, THE INDIAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT INDIAN ATHLETES

The cheer for Indian athletes goes far and wide. IIS USA was launched last year to rally support and raise funds for the Sport for India Movement through the Indian diaspora spread across the United States of America.

During the first year, IIS USA reached out to supporters across five cities - New York, Rhode Island, Washington DC, the Bay Area and Houston. The programme has found great support in Dr Prakash Sampath, Associate Professor of Neurosurgery at The Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University, as well as Director of Brain Tumor Immunotherapy Programme and Director of Neurosurgery at the Roger Williams Medical Center.

Dr Sampath, Torchbearer for IIS Club of Providence,

hosted IIS' first 'Reception with India's Sporting Hero' in Rhode Island in June last year. It gave Non Resident Indians and People of Indian Origin the opportunity to interact with national record holder, Aryan Nehra, who is a part of the Sports Excellence Programme at IIS and also turns out for the Florida Gators' swimming team.

The idea is to help India become a powerhouse in world sport. All funds raised through IIS USA will be utilised towards supporting athletes who will represent India at the Los Angeles Olympics Games in 2028.

IIS USA hands well-wishers of Indian sport the opportunity to be a part of the journey of athletes like Aryan, much before they see them in person at the Games in Los Angeles.

DONORS

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FORGING NEW

PARTNERSHIPS



TIE-UPS WITH THE ODISHA GOVERNMENT AND ELITE INSTITUTIONS HAVE HELPED THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR ATHLETES

We've found several like-minded allies to grow and keep learning over the last year. These have been mutually beneficial ventures with the sole aim of helping Indian athletes flourish.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

The High-Performance Swimming Programme was started in collaboration with the Government of Odisha through a public-private partnership. At the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, we have developed a High-Performance Centre, alongside a world class swimming pool, residential facility and a cafeteria. IIS picked out the coaching team and has taken over all operations at this centre, besides the overall maintenance of this facility. A new batch of elite swimmers have been training here under head coach Douglas Eager. We bear the apparel, travel and stay expenses of these athletes when they go for competitions and attend training camps. We also have 15 other centres spread across the state where we are empowering 15,000+ kids with swimming lessons.



IIT MADRAS

The premier institute has been working closely with our boxing head coach, John Warburton. We are in the process of developing and testing a video analysis system that will use analytical tools driven by artificial intelligence to assess the performance of our boxers. Through this, it will be possible to study different metrics such as accuracy of punches, positioning in the ring, and defence and attack patterns. We are also developing gloves with sensors that can measure punching power and insoles to improve the stance of our boxers. The idea is to back up the expertise of our coaching team with solid data that can help each boxer. Besides, it will also help us identify the areas where our boxers need improvement.

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

Since Abhinav Bindra's 2008 Olympic gold, Indian shooting has reached new heights and enjoyed a lot of international success. The talent pool today is vast and continues to grow. The average age of the contingent going to global competitions has consistently dropped with every passing year. We are certain there are good things in store for this sport and want to continue backing it. IIS has an annual association with the National Rifle Association of India, where we provide support to Indian shooters for their training to continue building on their skills and bring laurels to the country in the time ahead.





INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

Last year, IIS led several collaborations with researchers at international universities through Dr Samuel Pullinger, the Head of Sports Science. We worked with the University of Birmingham on talent identification in young athletes. In the coming months, we plan on hosting a few university students to be part of a two-month internship at IIS, besides inviting experts from their team to deliver lectures for our staff.

With Liverpool John Moores University, we studied sleep with respect to Indian athletes, where we tracked various parameters, such as sleeping patterns, sleep quality and the reasons for sleep deprivation, and how these three are related to performance. Another study with Aspire Academy in Doha, Qatar, was around blood profiling and blood markers in elite Indian athletes.

OTHER FEDERATIONS

Over the last year, IIS has regularly hosted athletes from across sport to aid their preparation before important competitions. We have also worked with injured athletes and tended to their rehabilitation. The Boxing Federation of India conducted their senior national camp and conducted the sub junior nationals at our facility. Through our tie-up with the Manipur Judo Federation, a training camp was organised for the state team before the national championships. In the time ahead, we want to continue offering our world class facility for the development of Indian athletes.



FINANCIAL REPORT



Particulars	Boxing	Wrestling	Judo	Athletics	Winter Sports	Fencing	Swimming	Squash	Total
Technical Coaches' Professional Fees	0.95	1.28	0.65	1.35	-	-	3.22	0.03	7.47
Stipends	0.39	0.59	0.07	0.72	-	-	0.13	-	1.91
Sports Science, Physiologist & Physiotherapist, Athlete Management & Other Professional Fees	2.04	2.23	1.72	1.94	-	-	-	-	7.94
Travel & Conveyance	2.64	2.16	1.86	3.61	-	-	1.09	0.10	11.46
Meals & Nutrition	1.27	1.58	1.22	1.10	-	-	-	0.00	5.17
Insurance	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.11	-	-	-	-	0.52
Education, Apparel, Training, Technical Equipment, & Medical Services	1.19	1.58	0.89	2.08	-	-	0.85	0.3	6.62
Educators' Professional Fees	0.10	0.12	0.10	0.09	-	-	-	-	0.41
Operational Expenses	0.33	0.38	0.33	0.29	-	-	-	-	1.34
Facilities' Maintenance And Security Expenses	0.92	1.05	0.92	0.79	-	-	-	-	3.69
Facility Rent And Usage Charges	0.63	0.72	0.63	0.54	-	-	-	-	2.52
National Championship Events	0.01	0.00	0.58	0.00	-	-	-	-	0.60
Winter Sports Olympics	-	-	-	-	0.50	-	-	-	0.50
Capex Equipment	2.90	3.31	2.90	2.28	-	-	-	-	11.58
Total	17.28	16.22	12.71	16.71	0.50	0.00	5.29	0.17	69.88



At NTT DATA, the mantra of “Tech for Good” guides our initiatives to harness technology to drive a positive impact in the communities we serve. Our partnership with the Inspire Institute of Sport aligns with this ideal. We’re immensely proud of the work that has gone into developing this platform under the NTT DATA Learning Centre and Academic Programme. Witnessing it being used by athletes to learn and educate themselves is deeply fulfilling. We’re glad to supplement IIS’s efforts in sport with our contributions in the classroom.”

ANKUR DASGUPTA

HEAD OF MARKETING - INDIA

NTT DATA



It has been fascinating to witness the growth of the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS), a global-scale sports academy that is committed to give India high-performance athletes in Judo, Boxing, Wrestling, Swimming and Athletics. Citi has supported the IIS high performance programme since 2020. Over the course of the last four years, the Institute has expanded from one center in Karnataka to four across four different states, helping it tap into sporting talent from a much wider geographical base. The programme has helped debunk the myth that India cannot produce top-notch sportspersons. The accolades that Olympians like Neeraj Chopra continue to earn have established beyond doubt that with the latest equipment, scientifically developed training regimen, world-class coaches and a tech-driven strategy, we can indeed nurture champion athletes. What is also admirable about IIS is the emphasis they have on training sportspersons in life skills and investing in their education, which helps make sports a sustainable career option. On behalf of Citi, we wish IIS all the very best in nurturing future generations of winners in the sporting arena.”

ASHU KHULLAR

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
CITIBANK INDIA





As a long-term nutrition partner of the Inspire Institute of Sport, Borosil understands the fundamental role that nutrition plays in an athlete's life. Our commitment to supporting the Institute through our comprehensive nutrition programme stems from a belief that optimal performance is achieved through a holistic approach, where proper nutrition is paramount. By providing a world-class nutrition-centric environment, we align our support with our mission to empower athletes to reach new heights and inspire them to become the best versions of themselves. We are proud to contribute to the well-being and success of these exceptional athletes."

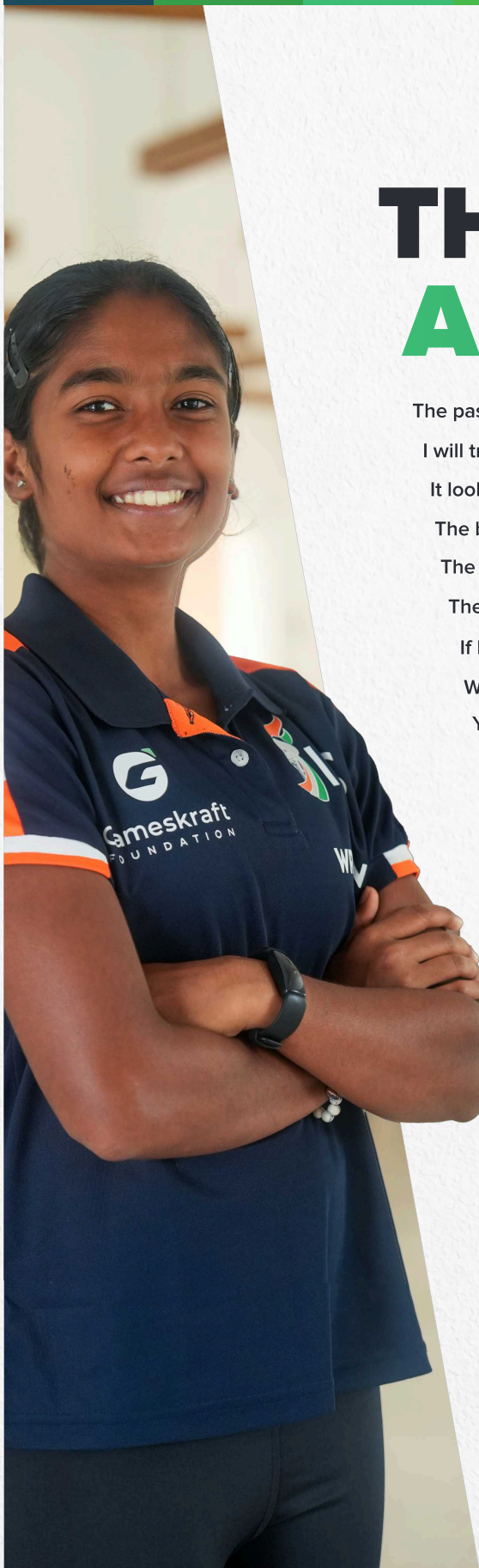
SHREEVAR KHERUKA
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
BOROSIL INDIA LTD.



Gameskraft Foundation takes immense pride in partnering with the Inspire Institute of Sport to support the Gameskraft Foundation Athletics Centre of Excellence, which has consistently brought significant success to India. Our collaboration, combined with IIS's rigorous efforts, has strengthened the programme and earned numerous accolades. We are honored to contribute to the holistic development of athletes, enabling them to excel internationally and bring laurels to the nation. Inspired by IIS's impressive operations, we feel privileged to be part of this journey, helping athletes reach their highest potential."

RISHI WADHERA
VICE PRESIDENT, CORPORATE
COMMUNICATIONS & CSR
GAMESKRAFT TECHNOLOGIES
PVT LTD





THE LIFE OF AN ATHLETE

The passion to play runs in my veins.

I will train myself hard though it rains.

It looks cool when you hear everyone cheering your name!

The breeze that is felt when you run,

The knees that feel stronger in every step that you take,

The hardest phase of an athlete is when he goes through injuries

If he gives a comeback after that nothing can stop him

When you have felt cold by someone's eyes or words

You have felt bold when you rise

The blood, the sweat, the pain it will all pay off

When my thoughts are too heavy,

My feeling too numb

The moment I put on my spikes

And start to train it all vanishes away

There a lot of things to learn in this field,

More than a gold medal on your neck.

*Suchithra.S,
Track and Field*





Anier Garcia

Sprints Coach

DIVERSITY THE KEY IN IIS' SUCCESS

IIS DRAWS SOME OF THE BEST INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL COACHES TO GROOM THE ATHLETES



Dr. Samuel Pullinger

Head of Sports Science

In 1996, Anier Garcia lined up for his Olympic debut in the men's 110m hurdles. He was still only 20 years old, but arrived with the reputation of having clinched the Pan American Junior Championships the previous year.

Though he bowed out in the quarterfinal at the Atlanta Games, it marked the beginning of a remarkable career that saw him clinch a gold at the Sydney Olympics in 2000, a silver at the Athens Olympics four years later and two silver medals at the World Championships.

Two years ago, Anier joined the IIS family to groom the next generation of Indian track and field athletes. Alongside him came compatriot, Yoandi Betanzos, a two-time World Championship silver medallist in the

triple jump.

They took little time to settle in and get to work. And over the last couple of years, they've accelerated the progress of promising IIS athletes such as Priya Mohan, Praveen Chithravel and Jeswin Aldrin.

At IIS, the intent is to rope in the best coaches to guide emerging talents from across the country. In turn, there is a diverse international and national presence and a flurry of languages that do the rounds on campus.

The wrestling programme is headed by Amir Tavakolianhaghghi of Iran, who has groomed a number of young wrestlers in the past including 2022 world champion, Rahman Amouzad Khalili, while boxing head coach, John Warburton from the



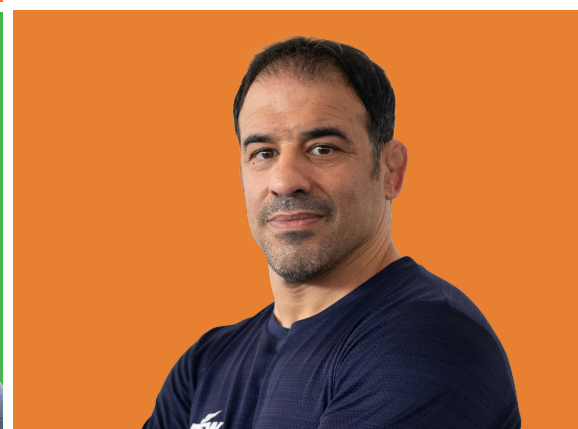
Jiwan Sharma

Senior Judo Coach



Rushdee Warley

Chief Executive Officer



Amir Tavakolianhaghghi

Head Coach, Wrestling



Yoandri Betanzos

Jumps Coach

United Kingdom, has previously trained the likes of Amir Khan and David Haye. And the judokas and swimmers have been working under the watchful eyes of Georgian Mamuka Kizilashvili and Arilson Champam of the United States, respectively.

Our CEO, Rushdee Warley comes from South Africa, while Dr Samuel Pullinger, the Head of Sports Science, has his home in Cheshire in the United Kingdom. It's no different when it comes to the support staff and athletes, who have travelled from across the country to find a new home at the IIS campus.

Former judo national team coach Jiwan Sharma and physiotherapist Ishaan Marwaha are from New Delhi, boxing coach Arul Vanan, who has trained the Royal

Bhutan Army in the past, hopped over from Bengaluru, while physiotherapist Heera Mundluru comes from Gwalior in central India.

A lot of the judokas hail from Manipur, while the boxers and wrestlers come from Haryana. Four of our winter sports athletes belong to Jammu and Kashmir, while the athletes and swimmers have been scouted from different pockets of the country.

This practice since IIS' inception has allowed the athletes to experience the best practices in terms of training and exposure under the mentorship of proven coaches from around the world. And the hope is to help them make steady progress all the way to the top, just like Anier did back in the day.



TRAIN HARD,

TRAIN SMART

THE SPORTS SCIENCE DEPARTMENT HAS INTRODUCED NEW PRACTICES TO AID THE PROGRESS OF OUR ATHLETES

Progress can be assessed in two ways – one is based on triumphs and medals, and the other is related to solid data that indicates a work in progress, on the cusp of blooming. A lot of our focus through most of last year has been on the latter, where we have followed evidence-based practices to build our knowledge bank. We have set up processes to gather data from our athletes and spent hours poring over it to assess and monitor various parameters related to

performance, strength and conditioning, nutrition, injury and rehabilitation. The equipment at our facility and the personal monitoring devices used by our athletes are all synced to our athlete database management system that constantly records data. In turn, it has helped us work on the performance side of their craft.

“It records all data related to physical performance metrics, besides nutrition and psychology consultations. It has all medical records as well - prescribed medication, MRI and X-Ray scans and past injuries. It gives us the baseline data to understand the progress being made by each athlete,” says Dr. Samuel Pullinger, Head of Sports Science at IIS.

We onboarded a sports psychologist last year to work on the mental aspect of performance and to monitor the mental health of athletes. An athlete is often under immense stress both pre and during competition, and we have started working with them and their coaches to better understand their needs and help them tackle performance pressure.

Dr. Samuel recalls the case of a wrestler who received fast-track intervention that aided his performance on the mat. Dr. Samuel and his team had been monitoring

him for a while since he started underperforming, just a few months after an important win. Doubts, if any, were cleared when Dr. Samuel witnessed a wrestling trial where he saw our athlete go from a winning position to losing the bout in the dying seconds.

“The psychologist received my feedback and started working with him closely over six weeks. At the next competition, he returned with a medal and looked like a different person in general,” he says.

We have made significant progress in the field of rehabilitation as well. A wrestler who had picked up a knee injury underwent an intensive rehabilitation programme at IIS that lasted a few months. The next time the wrestler took to the mat, there was sheer delight for our team after qualification for a major competition was ticked off.

Every athlete at IIS has started undergoing regular blood testing to record vitamin and iron deficiencies. We have corrected this by introducing basic supplements to improve overall health and performance.

Nutrition has been another important area where we have made rapid gains. We meet our athletes on a regular basis to monitor their food intake and conduct hydration testing to get a clear understanding of the fueling needs of their body.

Some of the cases go beyond the scope of just basic nutrition. We have received requests from coaches related to weight gain or weight loss, injury recovery and performance enhancement, and tweaked their diet to achieve these goals.

“One coach wanted an athlete to gain weight. We first conducted a few basic assessments to understand the body and the current nutrition plan. Based on the weight she needed to be at, we worked alongside the strength and conditioning team to put the athlete through a new programme that had a different plan for the gym work, nutrition and supplements. We kept monitoring her every two weeks and by the end of two months, she had met her goal,” says Uma Kale, Senior Nutritionist at IIS.

Then again, not all our work is on the technical front. And you must believe us when we say that some of the simplest things can often take time to grasp. For instance, when we have recommended 100 grams of chicken per meal, nobody quite knows what this portion looks like in reality!

The nutrition team is currently in the process of creating a photo library to create sample food portions and plates that can be of easy reference for our athletes. We have also introduced international meals to get them to sample different cuisines from around the world and to ensure that they understand what food they ought to consume when heading out to competitions abroad.

“There’s no point ringing in big changes all at once. So, we have done these things in a phased out manner to make the entire process seamless for us as well as the athletes,” Dr. Pullinger says.



NURTURING EXCELLENCE:

THE GAMESKRAFT FOUNDATION AND IIS COLLABORATION

RISHI WADHERA

VP - CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AND CSR
GAMESKRAFT TECHNOLOGIES PVT. LTD.

On my first visit to the IIS campus in late 2022, I was genuinely impressed. Nestled in a lush, green environment, the facility was perfectly equipped for athletes to thrive. Some of the best talents were training here, poised to make their mark on the global stage.

When I had the opportunity to speak to a few of them, I sensed a common thread that had brought them there from the comfort of their familiar settings. There was a fierce determination to excel while at training, a desire to bring their best each day. They were rivals on the field and all smiles off it, mates who constantly pushed each other with the sole aim of growing as athletes and individuals.

Since we established the Gameskraft Foundation, we've focussed on sports and education as our main pillars of CSR efforts. Our mission is to create a legacy of giving back to communities and individuals whose skills and perseverance inspire us.



As I travelled back home, I realised the common vision that we shared with IIS - to be the best in class, with a focus on transformative impact and commitment to holistic development. I knew we had to get involved with this project.

Of the many disciplines that IIS supports, we found an instant connection with athletics due to its wide reach and accessibility. Quite unknowingly, it is what every kid starts off with - a mad dash in pursuit of a friend, that big jump to pluck a mango, or get over a wall. And soon, they are out there on the field, trying to run faster, soar higher. And most importantly, dream bigger.

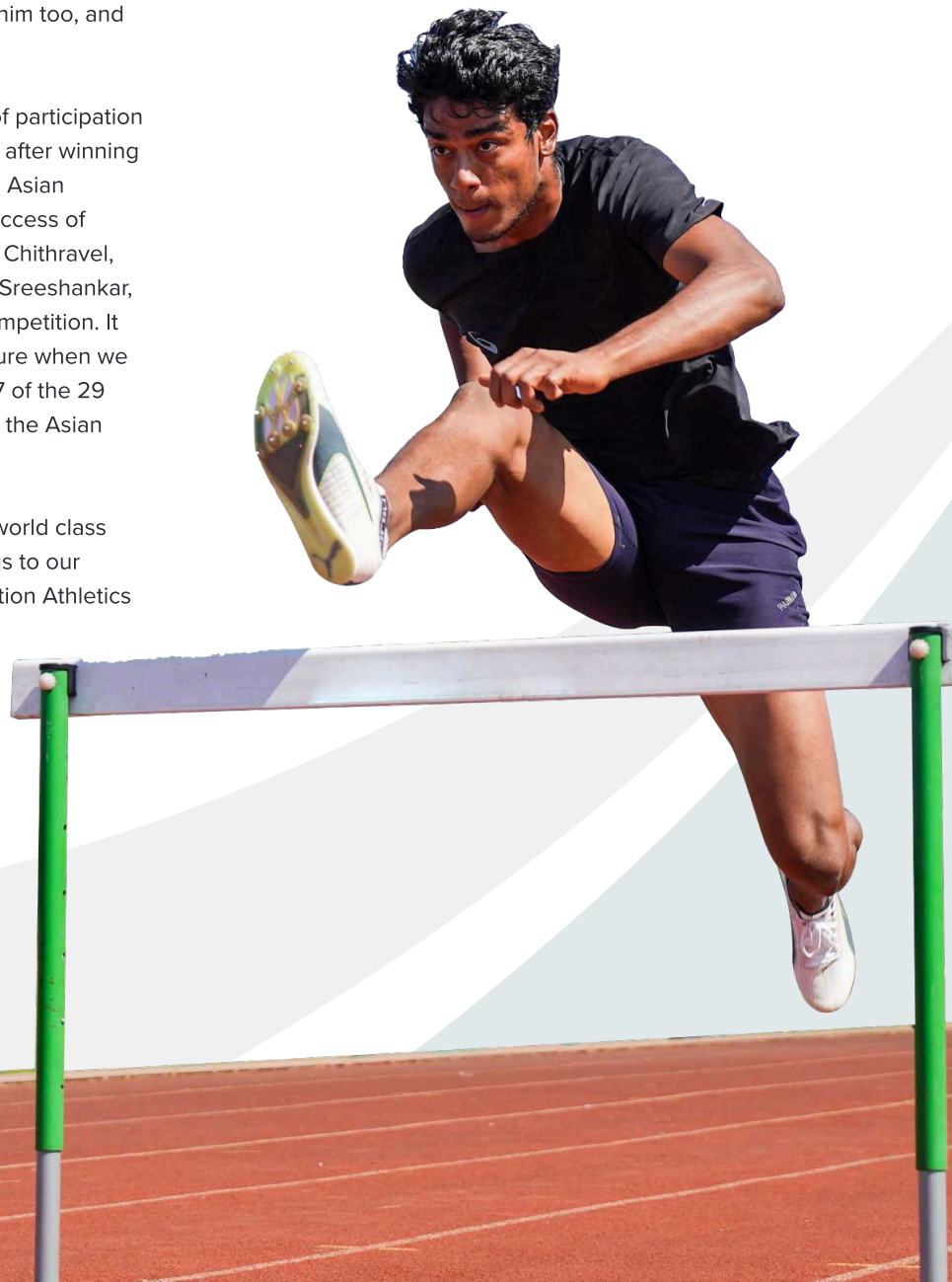
Besides, at any multi-sport event, swimming and track and field have the most medals at stake. Neeraj Chopra had already shown us what was possible through the IIS training programme. We wanted to aid the progress of other diverse talents like him too, and revel in their transformation over time.

Last year has been spectacular in terms of participation and success. Neeraj lived up to his billing after winning gold at the World Championships and the Asian Games. There was equal delight in the success of Avinash Sable, Parul Chaudhary, Praveen Chithravel, Tejaswin Shankar, Ancy Sojan and Murali Sreeshankar, who are only getting better with every competition. It was thrilling and satisfying in equal measure when we realised that the IIS team accounted for 17 of the 29 medals that India picked up in athletics at the Asian Games.

It has made us hungry for more of these world class performances and the recognition it brings to our country. Through the Gameskraft Foundation Athletics Centre of Excellence programme, we believe in the holistic development of these athletes. We've closely worked with the team at IIS to ensure that we tend to their every need - from cutting-edge infrastructure to accessing world class training programmes, besides the right nutrition, sports science and mental health support for their overall well being.

The intent is to groom them to take on the best in the world and through their success, inspire the next generation to follow in their footsteps. Our focus is on broadening our reach while ensuring that the entire programme is sustainable.

Since that initial visit, I've returned to IIS multiple times, often to experience the atmosphere of excellence. While the athletes always impress me with their skills, what also stands out is the dedication of the management team, coaches, support staff, and the sports science department. They've been working tirelessly behind the scenes to put in place a system that has helped the athletes flourish. So, each time we celebrate the medals that our stars bring back, it's worth appreciating the efforts of this phenomenal team working in the shadows that makes it all possible.



THE SPORTS SCIENCE ECOSYSTEM

AND HOW WE ARE GROWING IT



LED BY DR. SAMUEL PULLINGER, THE TEAM AT IIS HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN BETTERING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF PERFORMANCE

It's been a little over two years since Dr. Samuel Pullinger took charge as the Head of Sports Science at IIS. Behind that big smile is a workaholic, one who spends long hours at the High Performance Centre alongside his team to bring out the best in our athletes in training and during competition. We can tell you that his only distraction is his gorgeous pup, Tara, but that's for another time!

At the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) in Mumbai, he spoke about sports science in the context of training load, testing and performance, and was part of a panel discussion on the changing dynamics in Indian strength and conditioning and sports science fields. It was where his teammate, Abhinav Manathanath, delivered a lecture on evidence-based strategies



and framework for Anterior Cruciate Ligament rehabilitation in combat sports.

The 14th ICCE Global Coach Conference took Samuel to Singapore, where he spoke about sleep patterns and the importance to athlete performance and recovery. He was also a part of the 1st ever BRICS Council of Exercise and Sports Science in India hosted by Manav Rachna International Institute of Research & Studies in Faridabad. He delivered a couple of lectures - the first was on his experience in nutrition and sleep, while the second addressed the best practices related to nutrition and doping through a panel discussion.

The team at our High Performance Centre has been constantly assimilating and analysing data and conducting evidence-based research to arrive at a few conclusions. Last year, we published a few papers in collaboration with experts from different fields around the world and are in the process of publishing another four this year.

We have done some work with the University of Birmingham in and around talent identification in young athletes. There is also an active collaboration with Liverpool John Moores University related to sleep in Indian athletes, where we have analysed their sleeping patterns, sleep quality and reasons why individuals are sleep deprived and hence may not be performing at their optimum level.

There was also a study conducted on blood profiling and blood markers in elite Indian athletes with colleagues from Aspire Academy in Doha, Qatar. We traced vitamin deficiencies, conducted iron profiling and analysed testosterone levels to get a better understanding of whether these are associated with injury rates in our athletes. There will be a follow-up study based on the data that

we have gathered in our Athlete Database Management System. The intent is to help better our understanding of performance and share this knowledge with other practitioners to bring about those little changes that can cut precious seconds or help gain significant ground.



DR. SAMUEL PULLINGER

HEAD OF SPORTS SCIENCE, IIS.



This is something that we are really driving forward based on the understanding of our athletes at IIS, knowing that there's a lot of different somatotypes, diets and individuals who are genetically different around the country. The idea is to gather as much data as possible and analyse it, so that we can provide better support for our athletes.

CREATING LIVELIHOODS

AT IIS, WE LOOK TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF OUR ATHLETES, WHETHER IN SPORT OR OUTSIDE OF IT

A lot of factors need to align in the making of a champion, most in our control, a few otherwise. There's a thin line between making the cut to be among the best and missing that boat altogether. And as unfortunate as the prospect of the latter is, this is the harsh reality of competitive sport today. Start by tracking the progress of a few junior champions across disciplines and you'll have your answer.

So, we decided to put a plan in place to empower our athletes with the skillset of their choice, whether related to sport or otherwise. The idea was to ensure that they continue learning, both on the field and off it. And create livelihoods for them along the way.

Last year, our judoka, Kamdon Boi, a former silver medallist at the Khelo India Youth Games, got his strength and conditioning certification from the Australian Strength and Conditioning Association (ASCA). These days on the sidelines of training, he also spends time understanding the world of strength and conditioning while working alongside our trainers.

Two other athletes, boxer Dikshant Dahiya, a former international medallist and former Junior National Medallist, and wrestler Archana Chaudhary also pursued their ASCA certification last year.

IIS boxer Gaurav Solanki, who won gold at the Commonwealth Games in 2018, finished a Postgraduate Diploma in Sports Management and Technology from the International Academy of Sports Science and Technology (AISTS) in Mumbai. Former national athletics champion, Kanimozhi Chandrasekar, also graduated from AISTS last year.



Our judo programme currently employs former judoka, R Chanu, as an assistant to head coach Mamuka Kizilashvili. But what truly warms our hearts is the return of Tababi Devi. She was one of India's brightest talents at one point, bagging a silver at the Youth Olympic Games and gold at the Asia Oceania Cadet and Junior Championships. She joined our programme in 2017, but embraced motherhood three years later.

The next time we met her, she was leading a life far from away from the mat, immersed in domestic duties and tending to her toddler, Jack. But we realised that she longed to get back to the sport.

We reached out and offered her a coaching position at one of the academies that we support in Manipur. There was hesitation at first, so we made a little trip to her home and spoke to the family.

We were happy to see a budding judoka in Jack, but were even more delighted when everything fell in place and she donned the Judogi once again. Recently, Tababi was part of the Coaching staff of the Manipur Judo team that underwent a month-long training camp at IIS.

These stories make us as happy as podium finishes. It's all a part of what we do at IIS to spread the joy.



