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'I have a very big ego'

Arjuna awardee Rehan Poncha feels that his competitive instinct helps him perform better than the rest

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IN BANGALORE

HE IS an ace-swimmer, India's hope in both C'wealth Games and the Asian Games and Bangalore's only representative of the Arjuna Award. But, while addressing the media at an event organised by Jus Booster Juice to promote healthy living, Rehan Poncha looked every bit a kid who had got his first toy.

"It is very satisfying," he said when asked about the Arjuna Award. "It has been a great 10-12 years of competitive swimming.

"I see this as a reward for my efforts. I am happy for my parents, coach and especially my college, Jain University.

"I think the college has moulded me into who I am. Everything contributed and I dedicate this award to everyone around me."

Given that the Arjuna Award has been marred by controversies, it was only natural that he would be asked whether they affected him. He answered with a definitive: I deserve it.

'I DESERVED IT'

"I think I have achieved the award. I looked into the previous winners' records, and I have surpassed them. I have been working hard for many years now, and I knew sooner or later, I would win it.

Now my focus is on maintaining the standard I have set. I can't stop her. I have a lot more to achieve."

He spoke about his ambition, explaining how his competitive attitude helped him perform better.

"I have a very big ego. I was placed second from last in swimming during my 7th grade and I hated it. I have been competitive ever since. I hate to lose.

"That's why I'm in swimming, because it's a competitive sport. I'm probably the most unsatisfied swimmer. But don't mistake this for arrogance, it's just pride."

Rehan has been training in LA for the last four months in an effort to prepare himself for the CWG. He revealed how the experience has seasoned him well for the future.

TRYING HARD

"I have been training with world-class swimmers there. I'm frequently pushing myself to reach up to their levels.

"It is also helpful because I have raced four times there in three months, whereas if I was here, I would have raced twice in a year maybe.

"I love racing, training is boring. Going to LA was a gamble, but I think it's paying off."

Asked about the CWG corruption scandal, he said his eyes were on the pool and nowhere else. "I've kept myself away from the corruption. From what I hear, the pool is ready, bar a few minor problems. I'm only focusing on the pool."

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**REHAN PONCHA,
INDIAN SWIMMER**

After making himself a "tasty" strawberry smoothie, Rehan spoke more about the CWG.

"It is disappointing for India, it was a chance to shine.

"But we find ourselves in the news for the wrong reasons. The CWG is important for swimming. Hopefully, people realise the greatness of the sport.

"I hope to do well. There is nowhere better to shine than in front of your own country."

