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## City lad guns for London Games

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**Bangalore:** Promising talent Rakesh Manpat is fast emerging as one of the top rifle shooters in the country. Earlier this month, the Thyagaraj Nagar lad broke into the senior ranks and competed in the ISSF World Cup held in Beijing.

"It was a great experience as it was my first trip with the senior national team. I got to meet a number of world champions and world record holders including Hungarian Peter Sidi and Slovenian Raymond Debevec, world record holder in 3-position and seven-time Olympian," the 18-year-old told *TOI*.

Manpat, who impressed the selectors and rifle coach Stanislaus Lapidus in the national camp, was selected to compete for the Minimum Qualifying Score (MQS) in Beijing and the first year BBA student ended up with a score of 589 (99, 99, 99, 99, 97, 96). The other Indian in MQS Imran Hasan Khan ended with a total of 587.

"It was a good learning trip as I was always with Gagan Narang, who won the bronze in 10m air rifle. My roommate was Joydeep Karmakar, who has good technical knowledge," said Manpat, who is supported by Olympic Gold Quest and Jain University, which has not only waived his tuition fees but also gives him a scholarship.

Encouraging Manpat in Beijing was India's former rifle coach Lazlo Scuzak, who was there as coach of the Iran team. "He was impressed with my shooting and came to congratulate me after the event," Manpat said.

But the youngster is not missing Scuzak much as he is equally impressed with the

skills of Kazakh Lapidus who replaced Scuzak. "He (Lapidus) has got very good knowledge of 50m events and has encouraged me to concentrate of 3-position. I want to qualify for three position in the London Olympics," he said.

Into his last season as junior shooter, Manpat will represent India in the International junior shooting competition beginning Suhl, Germany next month.

"I'll leave for Pune shortly to resume my training



**GOING GREAT GUNS:** Rakesh Manpat (left) with sket world record-holder Kimberly Rhodes of the US in Beijing

with Lapidus and early next month I have to leave for Germany," he said.

Manpat, who got into shooting through his stint as a junior division cadet in the National Cadet Corps (NCC) and trained at the Karnataka State Rifle Association (KSRA) range at the Sports Authority of India (SAI), is determined to do well in the World junior championships to be held in Munich in July. "I will compete in all three events in the world juniors," he said.

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