



UNDETERRED BY HIS HANDICAP, CLUB-FOOTED CITY STUDENT WANTS MORE MEDALS; AIMS TO BOOK A TICKET TO RIO OLYMPICS

Swimming against tide, paralympian aims for Olympics glory

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Bangalore: This 18-year-old has one problem - he is physically challenged, and two dreams - to become a chartered accountant, and to bring India glory as a paralympic swimmer.

Despite his disability, he was born club-footed due to a condition called spina bifida, a birth defect that involves incomplete development of the spinal cord or its coverings), Niranjan Mukundan is well on his way to realise his two dreams.

The student of Bhagavan Mahaveer Jain College in Jayanagar won Bronze medal in 200-metre free style event in 25th International Swimming Championship held in Berlin for Paralympics in 2012. In other events of the tournament, he

finished in the top 8.

He excelled further in the national paralympics championship in Chennai, winning three gold medals, two silver and a bronze. He missed being crowned the champion of the championship, by a mere 2 points. Presently, Niranjan is preparing for the British international championships for paralympic athletes beginning April 25 in London and the German swimming championships for paralympians in Germany on May 26.

"My aim is to qualify for either of the world championships and get a ticket to 2016 Olympics at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil," he asserts.

Niranjan is also the sole paralympian to be member of the Karnataka water polo team.



Niranjan Mukundan in Bangalore —A Veeramani

Five major and nine minor surgeries that he has undergone since he was a mere one-year-old, has not deterred the bubbly teenager in any

way. Not the fact that he had 32 steel rods inserted into his legs to provide him with balance while walking.

The passion that Niranjn brings

POOL OF GLORY

- Won a bronze in 200-metre freestyle event in the 25th German swimming championship in Berlin for paralympians
- Bagged three gold medals, two silver and a bronze in the national paralympics championship at Chennai.
- Only paralympic player to take part in the Karnataka water polo team

to bear his swimming manifests his academic career too. He pursues his BCom degree with the objective of becoming a CA with the same inten-

sity as he is pursuing paralympic glory.

His physical disability does not deter him from spending as much as seven hours in the swimming pool and two hours in gym every day. He credits coach John Christopher and sports director for Jain University, Shankar, for his achievements.

Even as a baby, Niranjn was encouraged by his parents, Mukundan and RM Lakshmi, to enter the pool, on the advice of doctors.

John, the coach at the pool, identified the kid's talent and decided to coach him. That was ten years ago. The decade of hard work, may be paying off soon, as Niranjn is raging to go, and bring laurels to his country. ashoka.kemparaju@dnaindia.net