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Young Abhimanyu champ at sailing

by S S Sireekumar

Bengaluru: Sailing is not everyone's cup of tea. But for Abhimanyu Panwar, it certainly is and quite a heady cup. This final-year journalism student from Jain University has already won four national-level gold medals and an international bronze in sailing.

He was 12 when he got the first taste of sailing. "My father is serving in the Indian Coast Guard, so when we shifted to Chennai from Cochin in 2005, we stayed next to the sailing club. But the irony is I never went there," he says.

One day, he met the Commodore of the sailing club at a party, and he asked Abhimanyu to go sailing. "First, I thought it was swimming but when I went to the club, I saw these wonderful boats and fell in love with them." After that, he started going regularly to the club and then for various championships, winning them.

"To me, popularity of a sport is secondary. I actually never thought that I would be taking up the sport professionally. Before I started sailing, I had played football, squash, badminton, cricket, tennis, table tennis and more at the regional level, and I was quite good in many of them," he says. "However, what I



loved most about sailing was the sense of freedom, responsibility and independence that came with it. It made me stick out of the crowd."

Abhimanyu sails the laser dinghy, an Olympic class of boat ideal for his physique. "I selected that because only one person can sail it (individual class). I like making my own mistakes and don't want to blame others. But I also looked at my physique and my boat handling skills which suited laser class of boat. You need to be a bit tall and strong to sail this boat," he explains.

Sailing requires great multitasking skills. "Each second, a sailor has to think about three to four elements on an average and if you are really good, you can see about five to six elements. Elements like wind speed, wind oscillation,

tide, current, sail trimming, sail setting, boat handling, body movements and opponents' moves. It makes the sport a lot more interesting and it is like playing chess at sea," he says.

Challenges spur him on and his determination and skill was rewarded during the Laser Under-21 Championship, 2015, in India, where he won and became the only civilian in the top 10 in the general men's open.

"For a civilian, it becomes very difficult because we have to take care of all the expenses. Time management becomes a major problem too," says Abhimanyu.

From the nationals, Abhimanyu went on to participate in the Laser Under 21 World Championships in Medemblik, Netherlands.