

In person

Making a racket!

She's not just another sportswoman. Squash champion JOSHANA CHINAPPA, who is the first Indian girl to win the British Junior Open Under-19 title, sports a never-say-die attitude

SAVIA RAJAGOPAL

As a sportswoman, how important is it to be independent?

I have grown up in a family where independence was always encouraged. I was allowed to do what I wanted, provided it was in the right parameters of life. My parents fully supported me.

What was the turning point when you decided that you wanted to pursue squash professionally?

I use to play tennis, squash and badminton — all equally well but somehow, I just ended playing more of squash. When I played my first tournament at 10 (Under-14 junior nationals), I decided this was going to be my profession for life.

Did you get a head-start because you started playing professionally from a young age?

Definitely it helped. I started playing the game when I was eight years old. I travelled for tournaments from a very young age. I became experienced due to all the exposure.

How do fellow international players and the international media react to you as a young Indian squash player?

International players treat me with respect, and most of them are my friends. The media knows I am a force to reckon with, if guided in the right direction in terms of my training. However, I haven't had any formal training consistently.

Fitness plays a big role in sports. What is your training regime like?

Squash is a physically demanding sport and if training is not up to the mark, it can lead to a lot of injuries. My fitness trainer is completely responsible for making me fitter and stronger than ever. I do my fitness training in the mornings for more than two hours, which includes weights, running, core stability etc. Then, I play squash for about two hours in the evening.

How important is mental toughness in your sport?

Mental toughness is important in any sport. It gives you that edge over your opponents at crucial stages in the game. It aids you to handle any difficulty that comes with playing a competitive sport.

How do you handle failures – what motivates you to try harder?

I eat lots of chocolates! (Laughs) But seriously speaking, if I fail after a good performance, then I can move on and prepare myself for the next event. But if I've played badly and lost, then I keep thinking about what happened and how I lost my points. At the end I know exactly how I lost the game and I work towards not repeating those mistakes.

What is your association with the Union Health Ministry?

Every year, the Health Ministry chooses a girl from sport or any other field, to be their brand ambassador for the welfare of the 'girl child'. My job is to promote the rights of the girl child and create an awareness regarding female foeticide.

Achieving stance...

To break into the top 30 by this year and winning a medal at the Asian games.

