

## **Pullela Gopichand**

Pullela Gopichand was born on November 16, 1973 to Pullela Subash Chandra Bose and Pullela Subbaravamma at Nagandla, Prakasam district, Andhra Pradesh. He has two siblings, an elder brother and a younger sister. He completed his high school from St. Paul High School and graduated from AV College, Hyderabad.

Like most Indian kids, Gopichand was initially drawn towards cricket. It was Gopi's brother Pullela Rajshekhar, a good badminton player himself, who introduced him to badminton and the rest, as they say, is history.

By the age of 13 he started to make a mark in the sport, when he started winning inter-school tournaments. He won five national championships between 1996 and 2000 and was in imperious form.

- National Championships 1996
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During this period he also won two gold medals at the National Games of 1998. His international career was kick started in 1991 when he was chosen to represent the Indian team against Malaysia.

He made big strides at the highest level after winning two gold medals at the SAARC Badminton Championship. He went on to win medals at the Commonwealth Games in 1998 and won a variety of other tournaments like Toulouse Open, Scottish Open and the Asian Satellite Open. The crowning glory came in 2001 when he became the second Indian after Prakash Padukone to win the prestigious All England Championships.

### **INTERNATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Winner of Scottish Open
- Winner of the Toulouse Open
- Runner up at French Open
- Winner at the Austrian Open
- Won the All England Singles title in 2001
- Runner up in German Open
- Winner in the German Masters
- Won the Asian Satellite Tournament (Twice)
- Winner of the SAARC Games in the year 1996 & 1997 held in India and Colombo
- Bronze medalist in the Common Wealth Games held in Malaysia in 1998
- Silver medalist in the Team Events in the Common Wealth Games in Malaysia.
- Represented India in the Olympic games held in Sydney in 2000
- Reached quarter finals in the Asian Games
- Reached semi-finals in the Malaysian Open, Indonesia Open, Asian Championships, Japan Open and IPOH masters.
- Ranked in Top 10 during 2000 – 2002 March

- Best World ranking No.4.
- Represented India in the World Championship since 1991 till 2001
- Represented India in the Thomas Cup.
- Won the preliminary rounds in the Thomas Cup in 2000 held in India and reached for the Thomas Cup finals

### **NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Won the Senior nationals 1997 to 2001 ( 5 years )
- Won several major ranking Tournaments in Lucknow, Hyderabad, Surat, Jamshedpur, Jallandar and Mumbai for Six Years in Continuation.

During the course of his win, he went on to defeat many of the top seeds and debunked that mental notion of inferiority amongst Indians that they could not go past their Chinese counterparts.

Many top honours followed as he was bestowed with the

- Arjuna Award Winner in the year 2000
- Rajeev Gandhi Khelratna Award in the year 2001
- Sports stars Sports person of the year – 2001
- Birla Sports person of the year – 2001
- International Player of the year – 2001
- Padma Shree Award in the year – 2005
- Dronacharya Award in the year – 2009
- RashtriyaKhelProtsahanPuruskar in the year 2013 for Establishment and Management of Sports Academies of Excellence
- Padma Bhushan Award in the year 2014

In the year 2002 Gopi married a fellow state player, former Olympian and the then national Singles and Doubles champion PVVLakshmi, whom he had known for some time. The Golden Couple are blessed with a Daughter Pullela Gayatri Gopichand and a son Pullela Sai Vishnu.

### **Gopi's Coaching Days**

Gopichand took the charge as the Chief National Coach for Badminton Association of India in 2004. While Gopi inspired a generation of players to take up badminton during his playing days, as a coach, he has nurtured that generation into top class players.

The famous All England Championship win came at a cost as Gopi was blighted by Injuries. That is when he decided to take up coaching, open a world class training facility and impart his experience to young players.

Among the many awards he received after 2001, one was a piece of land the government awarded to him in a prime area in Hyderabad. Gopi decided to use this land for the academy and set about acquiring the required funding and sponsors for it. However, this was not an easy task. The project got delayed and finally Gopi had to mortgage his own house to complete the training academy. The academy was finally up and running in 2008.

In six years, the academy has come up by leaps and bounds. It is now recognized by the Badminton World Federation as a centre of excellence. The academy is an all encompassing

facility which covers all the facilities a player requires. Facilities include a gymnasium, swimming pool, yoga hall, ice bath and steam rooms and cafeteria and so on. There are also world class fitness trainers, masseurs and dieticians.

The creme de la creme of Indian badminton now regularly train at Gopi's academy under his tutelage. The list includes Saina Nehwal, P.V Sindhu, P. Kashyap, K Srikanth and RMV Guru Sai Dutt. Apart from the top players there are many young and upcoming players in the academy as well.

Gopi systematically divides his time among his players for their individual training. His day starts at 4:15 am and extends to 7:00 pm. He allots a certain time of the day to all the players, individually for the senior players and as batches for the younger ones and goes about it diligently. As most of the top coaches are, he is a hard task master on the court and a good friend off it.

He has taught his players to always keep emotions away from the game. Every major tournament will surely be followed by happiness and euphoria, but within no time Gopi and the players themselves are already planning and plotting for their next goals.

Gopi says that he yearns to see more and more tournaments where finals are contested by two of his players. It happened recently with Nehwal taking on Sindhu in the Indian Grand Prix Final.

Under his guidance Indian Badminton Players have won many gold, silver and bronze medals at Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, Thomas and Uber Cup, Super Series, Gold Grand Prix and other international events.

### **Planning for the Future**

The continued success of Saina Nehwal, P.V Sindhu, K. Srikanth and P. Kashyap is a reward for the hard work put in by the players and Gopi. It's very pleasing for everyone concerned as well as the whole of India, but Gopi knows that he cannot rest on his laurels. He wants his academy to continuously churn out good players one after another.

But the biggest challenge Gopi faces is to find the next Gopi!

### **Current Responsibilities**

- 1) Working as Sr. Manager (LUBES) in Indian Oil Corporation.
- 2) Chief National Coach, Badminton Association of India
- 3) Secretary, Badminton Association of Telangana
- 4) President, Ranga Reddy District Badminton Association
- 5) On Board – Go Sports Foundations
- 6) Governing Council Member – SAI
- 7) Executive Council Member – SAI
- 8) Member of TOP Scheme for Olympic Performance
- 9) Ambassador of Magic Bus Foundation
- 10) Ambassador for 5/11
- 11) Former Jury member of RTI Awards
- 12) Former Jury member of Sahara India Sports Award

## **Speaking Engagements**

Topics: - Motivation, Leaderships etc.

- 1) Athlete Conclave – Bangalore
- 2) Sports Consult
- 3) JP Morgon Financial Services
- 4) Amdocs - Leadership
- 5) Googles India Pvt Ltd
- 6) Tenvic
- 7) Pitch Perfect Consulting
- 8) Lenovo
- 9) Microsoft
- 10) Indian School of Business
- 11) Black Hat Talent Solutions & Consulting

After finishing playing career with a desire to help nurture future badminton players from our country Mr. Pullela Gopichand started coaching in April'2004.

Pullela Gopichand started with a young group of players in Hyderabad and today he is proud to say that many of the players from the batch are in the top level of world. Saina Nehwal, Bronze Medalist Olympic Games 2012, was 14 years then and today she is a one of the best players in the world. P.V Sindhu, Jr. Asian Champion, was 8 years old then and today at 19 is the second best player in the country after Saina. P. Kashyap is the first Indian to reach the Quarterfinals at Olympic Games 2012 and has world rank of 06. K. Srikanth, currently World No 08, won China Open Premier Super Series 2014. All these players are from our academy.

All the 5 senior national titles and the junior titles for the year have been won by the academy. The academy today can boast of the presence of 6 of the 8 singles quarter finalists at the Senior Nationals. Sourabh Verma and Sai Praneeth, the winner and runner up at the nationals, are from the academy. Youth Commonwealth winner Sindhu and runner up Sameer are from the academy. Sindhu also won the Asian junior champion and Sameer won a bronze medal at same event. A.S.S Siril Verma won Gold Medal in U-15 and Bronze Medal in U-17 Boys Singles, Krishna Prasad / Satwik Sai Raj won Bronze medal in U-17, Satwik Sai Raj won Bronze Medal in U-17 Mixed Doubles event at Asian Youth U-15 & U-17 Badminton Championships 2014. We are also the winners in the under 13 boys and girls at the national level.

All this has been possible due to the continuous efforts of Gopichand and also the excellent infrastructure available at the academy. We at the academy have 8 badminton courts, rooms and accommodation to accommodate 50 players and coaches, gym, running track, swimming pool , recovery (ice bath and steam room) , cafeteria, yoga and aerobic studio etc. The land for the academy which is in Gachi bowli was given by the state govt and the infrastructure was raised through donations, personal contributions and Loans. We spent approximately 10 crores to build the existing academy.

The coaching camps for the Commonwealth Games 2010 and the Olympics 2012 have been held at the academy with the help of the SAI. Today due to the rise in the number of players coming up (all of the players are below 22 about 12 of them in the top 100 of the world) in all age groups, there is an immediate need to build more courts and accommodation.

The foundation through the Academy has been instrumental in conducting world class Badminton events like the India open Grand Prix 2009 and the BWF World Badminton Championships 2009. The academy courts were used as practice venue for these championships. All the Top World Class Players like Lee Chong Wee, Lin Dan, Taufiq Hiyadat, Peter Gade, Wang Xin, Shixian Wang, Tine Baun and many other players have visited our academy during practice for World Championships.

The foundation sponsored and the academy hosted the Krishna Kaitan Memorial all India championships in 2008. 1200 junior players from all across the country have participated in the event. The academy today has over 100 players in the coaching program. Players from countries like Canada, France, Czech, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka have been undergoing training at the academy.

The Academy has been officially nominated as “ASIA TRAINING CENTER” by the prestigious Badminton Asia Confederation. These allow the players, coaches and officials across Asia to be trained on the latest advancements, techniques and developments in Badminton.

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