

‘Boxing is not a joke’

Vikas Krishan impressed one and all with his remarkable performance and positive body language at the World Championship in Baku, Azerbaijan. The bronze medal winner has now set his sights on the London Olympics next year. “I want to show that Indians are not poor in boxing,” he says in a chat with Y. B. Sarangi.



Ticket to London Olympics... Vikas Krishan with the bronze medal he won in the World Championship in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Championship in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Vikas Krishan, the second Indian ever to win a World Championship medal after his idol Vijender Singh, is the prototype of the next generation of Indian athletes who are supremely confident and striving for success.

After his 2010 Asian Games (lightweight) gold medal in Guangzhou, where he made his international debut at the senior level, Vikas, 19, managed himself well and overcame several obstacles to not only qualify for the London Olympics, but also claim a welterweight bronze in the World Championship in Baku, Azerbaijan.

With his eyes now set on the Olympics, the former World youth gold medal winner wants to prove that Indians too can do well in a power-packed sport like boxing. Vikas, who caught everyone's attention in Baku with his impressive performance and positive body language, showed what happens when brain and brawn join forces in the ring.

In a chat with Sportstar, the youngster from the Indian boxing nursery, Bhiwani in Haryana, talked about his ambitions and his sport.

Question: When you started boxing did you ever think that you will win a medal in a World Championship some day?

Answer: No, I never thought so. It shows that good practice can give good results. The going has been excellent for me. I have achieved all this at a young age. I cannot think of a better career.

Your next target is Olympics. How have you planned to go about it?

I will discuss this with my coaches. Whatever mistakes (about my boxing) they have noticed, I will rectify them. I have to do more training for the Olympics. The whole world will see how Indian boxers fare there.

You said you have to work on certain areas of your game. What are they?

I have to change my defence. Normally I keep my shell guard up and no matter how hard you hit, it does not make any difference to me. Now, with the change in scoring system, boxers hitting the guard repeatedly get some points. Besides, I have to increase my weight for more strength. So far, I have won because of my technique, now I have to improve my strength.

Being a southpaw, I find other southpaw boxers a little difficult to handle. I have lost a few bouts to such boxers at the international level. I have requested my coach to make available some good southpaw boxers for me to train with.

How did you make adjustments while moving up from the junior level to the senior level?

I have been doing the same kind of training. With age one's capacity increases. I may be young in age, but as a boxer I have become more mature in the last two years.

Many boxers find it difficult to adjust and settle down after switching to a higher weight category. Recently you went up by two weights (from lightweight to welterweight). How did you make the adjustment?

I told my coach (G. S. Sandhu) that since I am growing up, I cannot control my weight. He was concerned about me, but I said if I am good I can qualify (for the Olympics) in the higher weight category too. I knew if I worked harder, I could become better. I changed to welterweight just two-and-a-half months before the World Championship, and succeeded.

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On a high...Vikas Krishan waves to the spectators after beating Uzbekistan's Hurshid Tojibaev in a semifinal bout of the men's 60kg category in the Asian Games in Gunagzhou, China. He went on to win the gold.

You are considered an intelligent boxer. How does intelligence help in your preparation and during the bouts?

I remain physically fit through my practice and remain mentally fit by playing chess and making plans. Every night I think for 10 minutes about how I have spent the day. I was mentally prepared (for the big challenge). Boxers (from around the world) did not know about me as they had not seen me. So, I thought this is the time to beat them. I preserved my energy and peaked once last year and won the Asian Games gold. This year also, I peaked at the right time with the right kind of planning.

You were criticised for being a boxer who kept his shell guard up and made bouts uninteresting. After the change in the scoring system, how did you change your style to become a more attacking boxer?

One has to work as per the requirements of the changing system. I did not change my style much. My style is defence-and-counter (punch). Now, I defend less and counter punch more.

How do you become so competitive in the ring?

I cannot be motivated if I am doing it only for myself. I know if I achieve something, I will make the country proud. That's what propels me. Being under the National flag is something special.

Do you get scared because of the reputation of your rival?

Yes. If you do not get scared, you cannot save yourself. I always stick to my natural game and leave the rest to God. At the same time, I know that no boxer likes side steps and close guards. I have been successful in my strategy so far.

Why do you raise your hand after landing a punch?

I do it deliberately so that even if any of the judges has any doubt about my punch he will give the point in my favour. Also, sometimes I celebrate a good punch in order to impress the judges and demoralise my opponent.

Many talented sportspersons fail after achieving instant success. How careful are you about this aspect?

Sky is the limit (for me). If I win a gold medal at the Olympics, I will be sad to think that people have achieved even more, like someone who has won five gold medals. Only when I beat him by winning six (gold medals) I will be happy. I want to show that Indians are not poor in boxing.

Will you ever take part in professional boxing?

Yes. There is more fame in professional boxing. Amateur boxing cannot give this. Professional boxing is different. There is nothing like it.

What is your ultimate target in boxing?

There is no ultimate target for me. Targets keep changing. Once you win a World Championship title, you aspire for the Olympics, then for professional boxing... it goes on.

Why do you take boxing so seriously?

Because it can make me famous. I may not be the most handsome man or the most smartly dressed person. But when I wear the head guard and gloves, I consider myself to be the smartest of all. I feel relaxed and think that nobody is better than me in the ring. Boxing, for me, is not a joke. It is my work.

Tell me about how your coaches have shaped your career?

I spent around one-and-a-half years with Jagdish Singh in Bhiwani, and another three-and-a-half years with Rajendra More in the Army Sports Institute (Pune). I have spent some time with Jagdeep Hooda. Then I have worked with G. S. Sandhu at the National camp for around a year. Nobody's contribution is less. Jagdish Singh knows how to motivate his wards, nobody understands boxing better than More and Hooda is good at training. Sandhu is a good administrator.

How does your family react to your success?

My father always gives me confidence and motivates me. He says I will win no matter who my opponent is. However, my mother tells me to be a little cautious, but she wants me to win at any cost.

What do you want to achieve in life apart from being a renowned boxer?

I am doing my final year in B.A. I want to do MBA. I want to become a knowledgeable person.

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