

## 'Indian boxers will excel in London'

Indian boxer Vijender Singh speaks on an array of subjects, ranging from his preparations for the London 2012 Olympic Games to the doping menace.

### By Subhasish Dutta

With the countdown for the Games well and truly underway, pugilist Vijender Singh, a medal prospect for India at London, has been training hard at the National Institute of Sports in Patiala.



**ESPNSTAR.com** caught up with the former world number one as he was recovering after an intense practice session.

### Excerpts:

**Subhasish Dutta:** How are your preparations for the London 2012 Olympic Games? Are you taking any extra steps in terms of mental training before the event?

**Vijender Singh:** I am currently based at the National Institute of Sports (NIS), Patiala, training hard for the Asian Championships to be held in Astana, Kazakhstan, in April. Mental conditioning does form a very big part in my training programme. It helps me to improve my focus during the bout.

**SD:** Will you change your tactics for the Games?

**VS:** Not as such. I will go there with an aggressive approach as our opponents will be the same as the last Olympics. I am confident of getting a good result.

**SD:** What changes have you made in your approach after your first-round exit from the 2011 World Championship in Baku?

**VS:** I have made some changes to my mental approach through meditation. It has helped me reduce my anger and focus my energy in a positive direction.

**SD:** What is your mind-set before heading off to Astana, as it is the last chance for you to qualify for the Games? Has the loss in Baku re-ignited your desire for success?

**VS:** Oh yes, definitely. The loss in Baku was disappointing. But I am not thinking too much about that. This is part and parcel of life. I don't have any negative thoughts about it. I am confident of qualifying in Kazakhstan. It has been a lucky hunting ground for me.

I hope to maintain my form. This time I will go out there with full throttle. I will make amends at Astana, for sure!

**SD:** Do you think the future of Indian boxing is healthy state or it is still lacking in necessary infrastructure?

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**VS:** The future of Indian boxing is very healthy. Institutes like the NIS, Patiala, are the best in the business. But if you look at the ground level, it is more or less the same. The Sports Authority of India centre in Bhiwani is in a deprived state. The building is over 100 years old and lacks necessary infrastructure for training.

The Government should take necessary steps towards improving it as Bhiwani has produced some of the best boxers in India.

**SD:** What has changed in the boxing scenario since your success at the 2008 Beijing Olympics?

**VS:** The scenario has changed a lot since then. Our boxers are performing consistently. It gave boxing the exposure and recognition it deserved. More youngsters are now taking the sport seriously in terms of making it a career. The barrier was broken in Beijing.

**SD:** Do you think we have a realistic chance of a boxing gold in London? Who according to you are the other medal prospects?

**VS:** Yes, we do have a very bright chance of winning gold and a silver in boxing. The current line-up is the best Indian team for the Olympics. All the players are at par with the best in the world and they are also performing well.

Four Indian boxers have already qualified for the Games.

In my opinion, Jai Bhagwan, Manoj and Suronjoy Singh are the other medal prospects, apart from me (laughs).

**SD:** How do you think the recent doping ban on some of India's top athletes has affected the others' morale? Do you think they deserved the ban?

**VS:** It will certainly have an effect on India's chances in athletics at the Games. Those athletes fetched lot of glory to the country and to see their names in doping scandals does hurt a lot.

I always support the athletes. I know how hard they work to get a medal. Big athletes will never dope intentionally. It only happens by mistake.

**SD:** Have the boxing coaches started taking extra precautions regarding doping?

**VS:** Yes, absolutely. Boxing coaches here have started taking extra measures to ensure that we don't get into doping. I would like to thank the authorities of NIS for maintaining such a great environment for us. All talk of doping scandals going on in Patiala is rubbish.

**SD:** Do you think the Indian authorities need to be more watchful in order to prevent any further damage? How do you rate the importance of education towards stopping doping?

**VS:** In India, the authorities should take necessary action from the junior and sub-junior level itself because at that stage, young pugilists are prone to getting involved in doping. They have special boards to manage the menace abroad. They provide adequate knowledge to empower their athletes.

Here, we don't have anything like that. The whole system needs to be watchful in terms of making the athletes more aware of illegal medicines. I think there is a serious lack of awareness amongst the Indian athletes.

I sincerely believe that education brings awareness and a sense of responsibility. Good education is very important in a sportsperson's life.