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Champions in the making

CUE SPORTS

Students of Jain International Residential School aim to emulate their hero Pankaj Advani and win national and international titles



Vinod Karimatt

Students of the Jain International Residential School, who have taken to cue sports in all seriousness, pose at the table at the KSBA on Sunday.



BILLIARDS and snooker are becoming more prominent among the youth, especially in Bangalore. Pankaj Advani's chain of victories through the recent years motivated students of Jain Residential School to take the game more seriously than before.

As such, the Jain Group of Institutions, decided to have a billiards table and conduct coaching camps for young aspirants. Former player T. Srinivas was appointed as the coach at the JIRS, Kanakapura Road, and a number of boys came along and took the 'cue'.

Right now, a total of 11 talented boys are under his care. They are also taking part in the junior billiards and snooker tournaments at the KSBA. In a chat with the Express, some of them put forth their views on the game, their aspirations and interests.

"Although I always knew that I had to get into my family's business, after watching Pankaj win the National and World championships in Bangalore, I knew that I wanted to achieve something in billiards first," says Rohan Nihalani, a class XII student.

The players say that the facilities given by the school stimulated their interest in the game

All of them have taken part in the annual state level tournament held at the KSBA and their game was very impressive. "Four of the players are very promising and I'm sure that within two years all of them will be champion material," said Srinivas. "They have the talent but opportunity is lacking. I plan to extend the single annual state level tournament and give occasions for the players to compete at the state level and push them to the national level. Unless they compete, we will never know their true rate of progress. They will also be ready mentally when they take part in more and more competitions. That is the only way forward. But I am happy that these boys are totally committed and want to achieve something as they go along," Srinivas added. The players said that the facilities given

by the school stimulated their interest in the game. "When I first tried playing at school, I enjoyed so much that I just continued without thinking more about it, and this is where it has led me," said Sharan Chhajjer, one among the team. It is not only school that supports their students' aspirations in the sport, even their families are very encouraging.

"My family is so enthusiastic that they too want to learn billiards with me," was what Raghavendra Itagampalli expressed.

The young champions recognise that the game is not "just a fun thing" and, contrary to the common assumptions, billiards too is as absorbing as any other sport and continually seek to improve it.

"I don't see whom I'm playing with; I just play my game, then analyse the way I play," he added.

Such passion will certainly lead them to feats at the national as well as international levels. Maybe, their deeds will inspire many others as Pankaj's inspired them. Got the cue?

Chethana DV and Yamuna N

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