

Tuesday, August 3rd, 2010



MG Balaji, who is aspiring to compete at the 2016 Olympics, has been supported right through by his parents

Sporting parents are game for horses

More youngsters are taking equestrian seriously, and their families are backing them

Nandini Kumar

In what can be termed as a refreshing trend in the sporting circuit, city parents are waking up to the idea of their children pursuing equestrian as a career. Parents today are willing to give unrelenting support in terms of financial backing and most importantly consent for their child to take up the sport full-time.

Take MG Balaji, a rider who aspires to participate in the 2016 Olympics. The 17-year-old comes from a family of textile industrialists in Salem. Though there are expectations from his folks to take over the family business, he has chosen to pursue equestrian as a career and is heading to Holland

in October.

"Thankfully, my parents are backing my decision of taking up a sport as a career option. They know this is where my passion lies. I have no pressure as such to take up the family business just yet which is usually the case after completing education. They have been very supportive all along," says Balaji.

He was attracted to the sport when he was studying in the fourth standard at a residential school where pursuing a sport is a compulsion. "Initially, I took up the sport because it seemed fun. But gradually I developed a passion for horses and my coach backed me a lot. I even trained at different places in the country. Actually,

I have seen a lot of parents in school who take interest in following their child's sports record much like they track how we are faring in academics," says Balaji, who has won a double gold medal at the South Indian Equestrian Championship.

Nidhi Dev, an international rider from Bangalore, also has a similar story. Her mother Harshini Dev gives unstinted support and is funding her training expenses in Australia ahead of the Commonwealth Games in Delhi.

"She chose equestrian when she was 10. Though there is little support for sportspersons in India, my husband or I didn't want her to stop pursuing the sport since she was so good

at it. Right now, she is training under an Olympic gold medalist in Australia and we are taking care of the funds," Harshini told DNA.

City educationalists believe the mindset of parents is changing when compared to a decade ago. Chenraj Jain, chairman of Jain Group of Institutions where Balaji studies, says: "I think ten years ago, parents were not so forthcoming about their children pursuing sport as a career option despite their kids being good at it. But now things are changing. We see a lot of parents showing interest in their children taking up sport and I have seen parents go to any extent in supporting their child's sporting career."