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Whether it is throwing a few pitches or dunking the ball through the net, it is no secret that city students excel at sports. It is not just about pursuing their hobby or passion, but as they put it, 'sports are an integral part of their life'. We spoke to a few students and asked them how it is to be a sportsperson in Bengaluru and how they manage to strike a balance between their studies and their sport...

BENGALURU IS A SPORTING HAVEN

Students say that Bengaluru is a land of opportunities when it comes to sports, mainly because of the facilities available and the number of competitions that are organised. "Different sports associations organise competitions regularly and we get to participate on a regular basis. Since I play throw ball, I know that the Throw Ball Association is very active and the members go to different colleges, select good players and organise camps and tournaments," says Chandana Ravi, a student of Mount Carmel College.

Similarly, Pavithra N, a baseball player and a student of Jyoti Nivas College says that the association she is connected with is very active. "The Karnataka Baseball Association is very supportive. Whether it is equipment or anything else that we need, they get it on time. We have also been provided with a huge ground to practise at JP Nagar," she says.

For those who pursue outdoor sports like golf, Bengaluru is the perfect place to be, thanks to the weather. "I wouldn't have it anywhere else. There are multiple golf courses where we can play. Bengaluru doesn't have extreme weather conditions and golf is a sport that needs a good outdoor setting. With this city's weather, you can play golf throughout the year," says Prakruthi Sastry, a 15-year-old national-level golf player and a student of Vidya Niketan School.

SPORTS IS THE MANTRA FOR FITNESS AND GOOD GRADES

How do they manage to strike a balance between sports and studies? "To be honest, just sitting in class and looking at the board does not work out. My practice sessions do not coincide with studies. Only if I play, can I do well in academics. After playing, if I write my exams, my mind works faster," says Pavithra.

Arun Jose, a student from Kristu Jayanti College, says taekwondo helps him concentrate better. "Taekwondo is a

'BENGALURU ALLOWS US TO PURSUE OUR SPORTING DREAMS'



PAVITHRA N

COLLEGE:
Jyoti Nivas
College
SPORT:
Baseball

CHANDANA RAVI

COLLEGE:
Mount Carmel
College
SPORT:
Throw Ball

TARUN MAMMEN

SCHOOL:
Bangalore
International
School
SPORT:
Squash

PRAKRUTHI SASTRY

SCHOOL:
Vidya Niketan
School
SPORT:
Golf

ARUN JOSE

COLLEGE:
Kristu Jayanti
College
SPORT:
Taekwondo

POOJA PADMANABHAN

COLLEGE:
Jyoti Nivas
College
SPORT:
Basketball

SCHOOLS ARE BRINGING A LOT OF CONCESSIONS IN TERMS OF TIME AND HAVE BECOME FLEXIBLE. WE ARE SOMETIMES ALLOWED TO GO A LITTLE LATE AND CAN EVEN MISS A FEW CLASSES

— PRAKRUTHI SASTRY, golf player

JUST SITTING IN CLASS AND LOOKING AT THE BOARD DOES NOT WORK OUT. MY PRACTICE SESSIONS DO NOT COINCIDE WITH STUDIES. ONLY IF I PLAY, CAN I DO WELL IN ACADEMICS

— PAVITHRA N, baseball player

disciplined form of martial arts," he says, adding that his practice timings too do not coincide with his classes, which allows him to focus on both the things.

GOOD FACILITIES BUT NOT A SMOOTH RIDE

Though there are multiple facilities and tournaments organised throughout the year, students say there are many challenges they face, including lack of awareness, which sometimes makes it difficult for them to pursue their sport.

"Taekwondo is a form of martial arts that is extremely popular across the world. But in Bengaluru it is still catching up. People sometimes think karate and taekwondo are the same without realising that these two are completely different forms of martial arts," says Arun, adding, "There aren't many facilities for people to practice — they have to either go to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) or other private institutions."

Lack of awareness and expensive facilities too are a hindrance, say students. "Many people haven't heard of squash. We need to popularise it, so that more people take it up and the level of the sport increases, not just in Bengaluru, but in other parts of the country as well. One just has to want to play and be serious about it. There are many facilities available in Bengaluru but most of them are associated with clubs. So, unless you are a member, you cannot avail the facilities. We need to make the facilities affordable and accessible to all," says Tarun Mammen, a student of Bangalore International School, who plays squash at the national level.

When it comes to the selection process, there are quite a few disparities. "Sometimes, even if an individual is a good player, they are not selected because they are short. That way they miss out on the opportunity to play," says Pooja Padmanabhan, a basketball player and a student of Jyoti Nivas College.

SCHOOLS, COLLEGES ARE EXTREMELY SUPPORTIVE

While there are several challenges for students when it comes to sports, the bright side, they say, is that their parents and the educational institutions are supportive of their passion. "My school has been very encouraging. A lot of schools and colleges are promoting golf. Since this is a time consuming sport, you need at least 5-6 hours of practice and you cannot do that with a regular academic schedule. So, schools are bringing a lot of concessions in terms of time and have become flexible. We are sometimes allowed to go a little late and can even miss a few classes," says Prakruthi. Pooja agrees and adds, "College is the place where you are exposed to such opportunities and a lot of colleges and schools now promote different kinds of sports," she says.

"My school allows me to come late in the morning and miss assembly, so that I can attend training. They allow me to pursue squash, provided I catch up on school work and my grades don't drop. My teachers are approachable and I can go to them during breaks and they definitely help. In addition to that, my family has been extremely supportive and has given me the best of facilities," Tarun sums up.

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