



P-ISSN: 2394-1685  
E-ISSN: 2394-1693  
Impact Factor (ISRA): 5.38  
IJPESH 2017; 4(6): 11-14  
© 2017 IJPESH  
www.kheljournal.com  
Received: 04-09-2017  
Accepted: 05-10-2017

**Neetu Dutta**  
Assistant Teacher, JLDB  
Vidyalaya, West Bengal, India

**Dr. Nita Bandyopadhyay**  
Assistant Professor, Department  
of Physical Education Kalyani  
University, West Bengal, India

## A study on underlying factors of the success of pullela Gopichand in badminton

**Neetu Dutta and Dr. Nita Bandyopadhyay**

### Abstract

An athlete reaches its summit of performance, is always glorious; but to achieve such success the athlete has to come across many odds and hardship. Pullela Gopichand a shuttler of India gradually and consistently reached such an extent where he became the supreme Badminton champion of the globe. This is thought to be perhaps due to his genetic endowment as most of his family members were inclined to Badminton. Despite his birth in Chirala village away from Hyderabad City, his involvement with Badminton initiated at the age of three years. He became gradually involved in a more organized form in the city of Hyderabad where he happened to be admitted under the guidance of SAI Hostel and dedicated coaches. The series of success started from U – 14 yrs. competition and his performance elevated linearly by leaps and bounds towards National Championship under the guidance of Mr. S. M. Arif and Prakash Padukone. Financial crisis could not hinder his progress because of sacrifice of the members of his family. He achieved Junior National Championship and Senior National Championship for consecutive five years. After severe knee injury pullela Gopichand was out of the court, but his tremendous grittiness brought him back to the court. In International Competition he won French Open, Scottish Open and All England Championship in 2001 and became Arjuna, Padmashree and Rajib Khel Ratna and Padmabhushan.

**Keywords:** Performance, Badminton, Pullela Gopichand

### Introduction

The fame of a Nation depends on the works or performance of its members with remarkable distinction. In the history of our Nation there were a number of such personalities who raised the glory of our Nation by their outstanding seats/contribution to the society and world as a whole. In this way had earned distinctive place in global map in the course of time/history. There is no exception in the field of sports too.

Sports and games in modern world has become a tremendous social force and has become an integral part of a culture. It has also become a socio-political tool for better understanding and fraternity among the global nation.

A number of case studies on eminent Physical Educationist and Sports personalities have already been conducted in India. The case Study on Ashok Dhyanchand (2017) <sup>[5]</sup>, the “Hockey wizard”, Dr. M.P. Ganesh (2003) <sup>[7]</sup>, Zafar Iqbal (Khan, 2013) <sup>[4]</sup>, Sunil Gavaskar (Krishnan, 1989), P.T. Usha (Radhakrishnan, 1987) and a number of sports personalities have been conducted to reveal the episode of their prolonged struggle, devotion, constraints, dedication and sacrifice of the athletes and their kins and friends.

### Purpose of the study

To reveal the information regarding the hurdles, taboos and success of a Legendary International Badminton Player Pullela Gopichand. To bring Gopichand’s contribution to light and to motivate the young and promising players by revealing the facts behind Gopichand’s success.

### Methodology

Sports icon Mr. Pullela Gopichand, who has been awarded the third highest civil honor in India - ‘Padma Bhushan’ for his commendable contribution to the society as a whole was chosen for the present study. Above all, he has conquered the highest thrones of India in the

### Correspondence

**Neetu Dutta**  
Assistant Teacher, JLDB  
Vidyalaya, West Bengal, India

field of sports - "Arjuna "for outstanding Performance and "Dronacharya" for effective/potential Coaching in Badminton. Moreover, the subject of this study is also a possessor of "Rajib Khel Ratna" award for sports.

Setting aside his coaching ability, this study was confined to Gopichand's outstanding performance in International Badminton only.

## Sources of data

### 1. Primary source

I) Interview with Pullela Gopichand

### 2. Secondary Sources

- I) Interview with Gopichand's Parents\
- II) Interview with Ex- Indian Coach Mr. S. M. Arif.
- III) Literature resource ;
  - Star Sports
  - The Hindu
  - BAI documents
  - Book
  - Magazines

## Tools used

### Construction of the Questionnaire

After going through different relevant studies, literature survey, a list of 17 cardinal points comprising 68 questions was prepared keeping in view of the objective of the study. The questions were self-scrutinized prior to sending it to the selected Jury of eminent experts of India in Physical Education with high degree of knowledge and experience in the relevant area of study.

The list of factors was meticulously assessed by the Jury of experts. After minor modifications, nine out of 17 components were finally approved by the Jury along with the relevant list of questions set against each factor for personal interview with Gopichand to obtain data through primary source for this study.

The list of factors (Final phase) is as follows:

1. Family background.
2. Role of parents and wife.
3. Educational background of Gopichand.
4. Childhood background.
5. The period of emergence of interest in sports and Badminton
6. Choice of pedagogic role.
7. The nature of constrains in the course of badminton.
8. The achievements in sports as a participant.
9. Pedagogic achievements.

The holistic approach of the study encompasses the various facets of his life that had immense influence upon his course of development as Badminton Champion.

### Preparation for interview

1. Formal contact with interviewee
2. Obtaining formal consent of the interviewee
3. Fixing date, venue and time
4. Arranging audio- visual system
5. Conducting the interview as per set Questions for concerned persons

### Interview with Legendary shuttler Pullela Gopichand

The responses of the stipulated set of questions were asked by the researcher as per scheduled programme at 10-00am in N. P. Gopichand Badminton Academy. The researcher asked the

questions as per approved list by the Jury of experts. The interview was narrated from Gopichand's statements for the convenience of presentation.

## Family Background

Pullela Gopichand was born on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1973 at Chilar, Hyderabad, Telengana (the then Andhra Pradesh) in a low middle class family. His father Pullela Subhas Chandra and mother Subbavamma. His elder brother's name is Rajashekar originally came off a rural middle class family. Their principal financial resource was the service of his father, who was a bank employee in 1983, after transfer of his father to Hyderabad during his age of 10 years, Gopichand too left Ongole, their native village. Gopichand mentioned about the sports background of his parents. His aunt was a regular Badminton player. He informed that his father was a good Kabaddi player and participated in Interschool Kabaddi tournament. Despite Gopichand's initial interest was in Cricket but due to his elder brother's (Raja) persistent encouragement, he decided to choose Badminton.

## Childhood Background

The natural bent of mind as stated by Pullela Gopichand, was initially Cricket, which was his first love. Later, because of Badminton was played by his family members, specially his elder brother, father and aunt; he gradually became inclined towards Badminton. Since parents and elder brother were keen to put him into Badminton because of his general sports aptitude, Gopichand had never been confronted with any such adversity in taking part in Badminton from his family members. Although some relatives kept on criticising Gopi for playing Badminton, they too became his fan when Gopichand consistently kept on winning at various levels.

## Role of Parents

Gopichand became very much sensitive and emotional during interview while mentioning the sacrifice and dedication of his parents and other family members with utter hardship. His parents tried to elevate his performance in Badminton within the country and abroad. It was not so easy to take Gopichand to the training spot daily or in regular manner, but his father left no stone on turned to see his son proceeding towards improvement by all desirable qualities. The financial stringent sometimes became a hindrance, but that could not dismount him from the desirable goal set by them.

## Educational Background

As informed by Gopichand, he started his primary education at Ongale, his native village. He joined St. Anthony School in Hyderabad in 6<sup>th</sup> standard as he could not qualify for 7<sup>th</sup> standard in St. Pauls school in Hyderabad.

Later he took admission in St. Paul's School, Hyderabad. At the age of six. He continued his study in the same school upto +2 level. There he started representing his institute in various level of competitions. He was graduated in Public Administration from A. B. College of Hyderabad, Telangana, India. His gradual engrossment toward competitive Badminton ultimately compelled him to give up his higher studies. The initial dream of his parents and elder brother to make him an engineer, could not be materialized.

## The Period of Emergence of Interest in Sports and Badminton

Virtually Gopichand started Badminton at the age of three and almost up to the age of nine at the outdoor court. At the age of

five years old Gopichand used to play Badminton behind apartment in Chennai. As Gopichand stated that he had grown up in such an environment where at least three of his family members used to take part in Badminton in regular manner while stay at Ongale. At the age of 11 his father used to play Badminton at outdoor court of the District Collector's Bungalow. Gopichand also used to accompany his father during that period.

Later, incidentally wherever his family shifted to a new place, that was close to stadium or ground. All these things created a conducive environment for creating the opportunity for playing Badminton. His natural affinity to Badminton was genetically endowed. Having been a Kabaddi player, his father Subhaschandra was fond of Badminton, his aunty was a regular participant and mother Suvvaravamma's younger sister MS. Manchala, was a star Badminton player, represented Andhra Pradesh in 1973. Gopichand's brother Rajashekar and Sister Hima Bindu was a regular Badminton player which provided him an environment of Badminton. Thus, as Gopichand stated that he belonged to a "Badminton Family". The proneness towards the game of Badminton was rather an inheritance.

#### **Family Patronage and other constraints**

Since Gopichand came off a lower middle class family and they were three brothers and sisters, it became gradually difficult to pull on the expenditure or cost of living in a city like Hyderabad. The sons and daughter were always ready to sacrifice and co-operate their parents to maintain austerity and they never pressed their parents for any such expenditure that may create any financial problem. Since both parents were sports lovers, they wanted their children to keep on playing Badminton.

Gopichand had a good start, but the series of knee injuries in the mid of 1990s threatened to end his sports career especially, a severe knee injury, he sustained, in 1994. During this period many people and some media were shocked and apprehended that Gopichand may not be back in the court. After a successful surgery performed by Dr. Ashok Rajgopal to mend his knee, he found himself with a constant pain and could not even walk properly for several months. But his determination and mental toughness brought him to back to his own sports, which he loved so much "Right through his journey to Delhi, Gopichand's main concern was how long he would be from the game" (Sharma, 2011)<sup>[6]</sup>.

To practice Yoga and working hard to restore his required ability Gopi very patiently with all perseverance kept on following Dr. Rajgopal's advices. That was a great come back, which was started by winning National Badminton Championship title in 1996. According to Gopichand this might be the highest adversity he had ever confronted with before appearing in National and International Championship. Gopichand expressed his humble indebtedness to Dr. Rajgopal who unprecedentedly rehabilitated Gopichand, rather 'from a point of no return'. Gopichand added the initial hindrance were the financial stringent, shifting of residence and high aspiration of the family members. At later stage the facilities, infrastructure also became some limitations for attaining the highest goal in Badminton. The question of continuous study virtually became secondary as he found no time at his disposal after practicing Badminton.

#### **Sports achievement at a glance**

Pullela Gopichand won the junior national championship at age 18 yrs. As he began to enjoy success as a player, he

realized the importance of receiving professional training. He moved to Bangalore (Bengaluru) to join the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy.

After a severe knee injury he made a remarkable comeback to win his first National Badminton Championship title in 1996 and till 2000. In 1996 he also won a Gold medal in the SAARC Badminton tournament and defended the crown next year.

He played professionally in Germany from 1997 to 1999, and represented India in three Thomas Cup tournaments. His good form helped him win two gold medals and one silver medal at the Indian national games, held at Imphal, in 1998. The same year he won a silver medal in the team event and a bronze medal in men's singles at the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

His streak of successes continued over the ensuing years and he won the Toulouze open championship in France and the Scottish open championship in Scotland in 1999. The same year also saw him emerge victorious at the Asian satellite tournament held at Hyderabad.

He reached the peak of his career in 2001 when he won the prestigious All England Open Badminton Championships at Birmingham. He beat then world No.1 Peter Gade in the semi finals and proceeded to defeat China's Chen Hong 15-12 and 15-6 in the final match to lift the trophy. In doing so, he became the second Indian to achieve the feat after his mentor Prakash Padukone, who won in 1980.

#### **Subbaravamma's view on Pullela Gopichand (Gopichand's mother)**

It was so pleasant to have small interview with Pullela Gopichand's mother Mrs. Subbaravamma, who is a great inspiration for Gopichand's success. After Legendary Prakash Padukone was a shining Indian star of Badminton in the early eighties. After a decade the only big moment came when her son won All England Championship in 2001. She stated that a turning point came in 2008 when Gopichand open his Academy with the support of an Industrialist on the condition that Gopichand produce an Olympic Medalist (already produced two). She said that his first notable pupil was Saina Nehwal. She also added that her granddaughter GAYATRI who is playing U-13 yrs. and won the National Championship in her age category and grandson VISHNU is under training in Gopichand's Academy who is 10 yrs. old.

#### **Gopichand's Coach Mr. Arif's view**

Mr. S. M. Arif, SAI coach, stated that, while Gopichand joined under him as a disciple at the age of 12-13 yrs. age, shortly after they shifted from the Ongale village to Hyderabad city was initially not so focused, because he was a slow learner, According to him Gopichand was not a 'born talent' and a slow learner. But his grit with tenacity to toil at high intensity was exceptional. Mr. Arif, the Indian Coach conceived that Gopichand's unique load bearing capacity was his only capital for

His nature of undertaking work out was different from other co-players. As a result his improvement of performance was always linear. His self-confidence and tenacity was exemplary.eg. He was always positive in his attitude.

#### **Conclusions**

1. Gopichand born in such a family environment which was conducive for playing Badminton.
2. Whole-hearted support from the parents and other members of the family pushed Gopichand forward.
3. The principal actors that resulted Gopichand's success

was his grittiness and high level of self-confidence.

4. His mother was the principal motivator in all the time.
5. His come back from severe knee–injury was possible due to his mother and Dr. Rajgopal.
6. Gopichand never considered that who is playing with him in the forthcoming match and hence, was never anxious.
7. He had an enormous capacity to bear overload and hardship.
8. Gopichand used to work unprecedentedly hard to defeat his previous winner.
9. Financial crunch could not deviate him from his goal.

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