



Media Release

Strong Strides Forward: Reliance Foundation Odisha High Performance Center Athletes to Build on Federation Cup Gains

Mumbai, March 30, 2021: The 24th National Federation Cup in Patiala earlier this month has provided the coaching staff at the Reliance Foundation Odisha Athletics High Performance Center (HPC) in Bhubaneswar further confidence that the meticulously crafted programme for athletes under their wing is on the right track. Two athletes from the HPC – Amlan Borgohain in the 100m and Dilip Naik in the 800m and 1500m – participated at the competition, and both returned with Personal Best (PB) timings.

22-year old Borgohain, one of the youngest participants in the competition, recorded two PBs – 10.59 seconds in the heats and then 10.44 seconds in the semifinal. These efforts topped his earlier PB of 10.68 seconds, achieved at the qualifying competition for the World University Games at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, in the week prior to the Federation Cup. Borgohain is currently ranked third in India and second among athletes eligible for the World University Games that are scheduled for August 2021, and Head Coach James Hillier is convinced he will be chosen for the 100m as well as the 4 x 100m relay when the national selectors name the squad in April.

“Our original race-plan for this season, based on the annual plan we made for Amlan at the start of the year, was to open his season in June,” explains Hillier. “However, we decided to expose Amlan to compete at the Federation Cup at the last-minute due to the fact that the data we were getting from training suggested that he was in better shape and in better physical condition than we thought he would be in when he started training for this season back in January. So, after just 10 weeks of preparation and no specific race preparation, Amlan competed and recording two personal bests was very pleasing for him and the whole performance team.”

Borgohain has been one of the standout successes of the HPC, established collaboratively by the Odisha Government and Reliance Foundation, with the aim to improve the standard of athletics across the state and the country and produce home-grown athletes who can achieve national and international success. With proactive

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support from the state government since operations began in 2019, athletes from the HPC haven't just won medals at various competitions, but taken rapid strides forward in their progression. Borgohain, for instance, has gone from a complete unknown to one of India's best sprinters in the course of the last year, running an incredible five metres faster in the 100m in this period.

“We are indebted to the Odisha Government who have supported this project right from its inception and have helped us create one of the best training facilities in India here at our base here in Bhubaneswar. Amlan has truly benefited from the expert coaching, sports science and medical support that he has access to at the HPC,” says Hillier.

“Bhubaneswar is clearly emerging as the best place in the country to train for athletics and Amlan is able to flourish here,” he added. “In a race where small margins can win and lose medals, a 5% improvement in a year is almost unheard of. And what's exciting for us is that the 100m is very much his second event as he is a better 200m runner. So, we look forward to see what times he can run over 200m later in the year.”



Amlan Borgohain

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“Before I came to the HPC, I had no clear idea of how to train properly,” admits Borgohain. “Now, every aspect from nutrition to strength training to technique is handled by domain experts and it is explained clearly to us athletes. I have learnt that when the mind accepts the training methods, the body follows. Earlier, I would feel a sense of fear before competitions but now I feel excited, especially as I know I am very well prepared because of the work we have done with the coaches and support staff before the competitions.”



Dilip Naik, participation in 800m race, Sr. Federation Cup

Local boy Dilip Naik, who hails from the Nayagarh district in Odisha, is another athlete whose journey is being planned with precision. Naik, who is still only 19, used the experience of running with older athletes at the Federation Cup to his advantage by running a personal best of 1:54.65 in the heat to finish sixth. In Hillier’s assessment, based on the training data he has received, Naik is capable of running significantly faster.

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“It often takes time to be able to express this in races,” Hillier explains. “We just have to be patient and keep improving him physically, mentally and tactically. We are confident that a medal at the Junior Nationals in November is still a realistic target.”

Powered by the learnings from the Federation Cup as well as the Junior Nationals in Guwahati in February, where athletes from the HPC returned with three medals, Hillier and his team will now return to the training regimen ahead of the next competition, planned for June.

While not setting himself medal-specific targets, Borgohain is focused entirely on consistently improving his timings to be in contention for a place in the Indian team for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. With the HPC operating with the shared vision of the state government and the coaching staff to leave no stone unturned towards emerging as the country’s leading athletics training facility, talents such as Amlan Borgohain and Dilip Naik are in safe hands to achieve their full potential.

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