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Midfielder Vignesh reaches for the stars

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Vignesh Dakshinamurty (third from right) with fellow players at Shanmugam's academy

BENGALURU There was a skip and a hop in Vignesh Dakshinamurty's step. No, it wasn't a new dance move, but only the latest juggling skill he learnt from the recently concluded national U-19 camp. He was the only player from the city.

Things have indeed changed. From a time when there were nine people from the state in the national team (during the 1950 Olympics), it's now come to a point where it's mandatory to celebrate the only person representing the state at the national level. But the 17-year-old midfielder shows promise.

The Jain College student previously trained with Ozone Academy for three years and now plays regularly for a team in The Amateur League. From the backyards of Srirampura, Vignesh dreams big and hopes to play in the best leagues of the country. Before that, however, he is planning to try out for the Liverpool academy next week. "During the camp, I was competing against people at least two years older than me. But now, I need to forget the odds against me and concentrate on my skills alone. I will get there some day," said Vignesh.

Vignesh was sent from the camp to train under Indian team manager Shanmugham Venkatesh and follow a specific diet which would make him physically stronger. "He's indeed part of the next camp," said his coach Venkatesh. "His skills are unlike any of his age. It's no wonder that he was in the camp for so long. But being only 17, there are physical aspects that he needs to address. The national U19 coach Lee Johnson has asked him to get tougher and develop into a stronger midfielder before he goes to the next camp."

The next camp is likely to be held in December. Vignesh could soon be seen donning national colours in the first tournament of 2016. For now, he's a star in the making.

U-19 TEAM TAKES ON BFC

The Indian national U-19 team will lock horns with senior team of Bengaluru FC in the city on Saturday at 10 am. National team coach Stephen Constantine will also land in the city on Friday to observe the game and possibly work out plans for the senior team's matches against Nepal (in a friendly) and Iran (in the preliminary qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup), scheduled for August 31 and September 8.