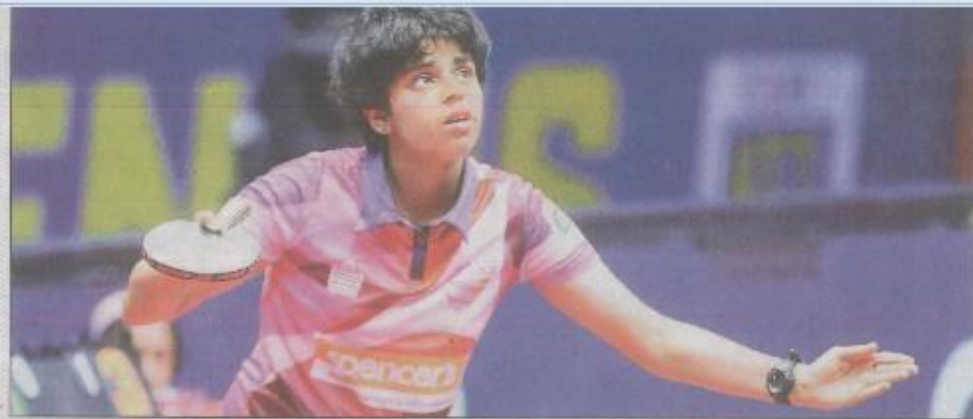




THE TIMES OF INDIA


Archana on cloud nine

Strikes Superb Balance Between Studies and TT, Attends College For One Day But Secures 582/600 In PUC Exams

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Bengaluru: Ten gold, six silver and seven bronze medals. And a whopping 97% in the second PUC arts examinations with a centum in psychology. That is table tennis player Archana Kamath's score this year.

The 17-year-old stood out yet again as a shining example of an athlete who has struck the right balance between studies and sport just like she did two years back when she was ranked ninth in SSLC, scoring an impressive 617/625 (88.72%) as a student of Poorna Prajna Education Centre in Sadashivanagar.

This year, Archana got 582/600, effectively the ninth rank in Karnataka but what came as a bigger surprise is that she attended college for just a day,

TRUE ALL-ROUNDER

busy as she was with national and international tournaments for the better part of the academic year. Outstanding commitment to sport, considering that many budding sportspersons in Karnataka feel second PU exams are a better gateway to a bright future than sports.

Archana's performance in 2017-18 will put her achievements in perspective: She played 21 tournaments (7 national and 14 international) from April 2017 to March 2018, bagging a total of 23 medals, both team and individual.

She emerged national champion among juniors (U-18) and youth (U-21) in Durgapur in January this year. The double crown followed a stellar show in the national zonal ranking tournaments in preceding months.

As an icing on the cake came the three gold medals at the 2017 South

97 percent marks secured by Archana Kamath at 582/600. Two years ago, she was ranked ninth in SSLC with 98.72%

1 Attended college for just a day

23 medals won in 2017-18 in 21 tournaments

8 Archana began preparing just eight days before the examinations, soon after she returned from a hectic European tour

17 is her world ranking among juniors. She is the number-one ranked player in the country among juniors and third in the youth section

2 National Titles this season — junior (U-18) & youth (U-21)

Asian championships in May 2017 and the junior individual silver at the ITTF Serbian meet five months later. She is ranked No. 1 among U-18 girls in the country, No. 3 in U-21 and No. 10 among women. Globally, Archana is ranked No. 17 (U-18) and No. 57 (U-21).

Backed well by the Sri Bhagawan Mahaveer Jain College (JC Road), which gave her carte blanche, Archana made the most of the time she got during national training camps to study. "It was near impossible for her to study during tournaments. Whatever little time she got she utilised well," her father Girish Kamath, a noted eye specialist in the city, told TOI on Monday.

Textbooks were her constant companions as was her mother Anuradha, who helped the 17-year-old maintain her composure and poise during camps and national tournaments. "Archana would

focus on studies in the morning and have a good game of table tennis in the evening. She used to say she felt rejuvenated while playing the game because she had done something positive by studying earlier in the day," Kamath said.

It was only in February that Archana got around eight days to prepare for the examinations. "Once she returned on February 20 from a three-week tour of Europe, which included the Youth Olympic qualifier and Czech Junior Open at Hodonin, she began preparing for the exams. She was not tense on exam days although she hardly had any time to study. Neither was she worried about the marks. She trained and practised as usual. That is the advantage of playing sport. It helps one to completely focus on the task at hand," Kamath said.

Anuradha, who too is an ophthalmologist, downplayed her role in Archana's performance. "I was with her, no doubt, but the credit goes to Archana for her achievement," she said.

Thanking Jain College, Kamath said: "Their director of sports UV Sankar has been a big source of encouragement. All the teachers in the college were supportive, enquiring about her well-being, gently reminding about her potential, whether Archana requires any academic help or special coaching, wishing her personally before exams. All this left Archana in a positive frame of mind about the college and studies."

When asked about the centum in psychology — Archana is one among 18 students to achieve the mark — Kamath said: "Her favourite is economics. She scored 97/100 and intends to pursue her graduation in economics."

Marks secured (out of 100): English 95, Sanskrit 98, History 97, Economics 97, Sociology 96, Psychology 100.