

Championing a champion's cause

Three friends of Dr Khayti Vakharia, the national pole vault champion, have put up posters, launched a website and initiated a campaign on FB to raise funds to enable her to train in the US. Early this month, the trio ran a marathon to fund her dream

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At the end of a lengthy study on the subject of wellbeing, Dr Richard Tunney, a psychologist at the University of Nottingham, declared, "It is important to remember just how greatly friends can contribute to your general wellbeing and happiness." Aristotle drew the same conclusion about two millennia ago when he said, "The happy man needs friends." It is true of successful athletes too.

Dr Khayti Vakharia, national pole vault champion, counts three very "thoughtful" young men among her friends. The vaulting champ is at the crossroads; she was recently invited by the World Athletics Center in Arizona, USA, to train alongside world champion athletes such as Australia's Steve Hooker, the 2008 Olympic pole vault champion. It's a chance of a lifetime, but the costs are beyond her — Rs 34 lakh. The 24-year-old has her sights set on the 2016 Olympic Games and hopes to use the Asian Games to get to Rio de Janeiro. But for that she needs better coaching.

Khayti believes a training stint in Arizona would prep her immensely, but she must first find the funds. Enter Dr Avinash Kumar, Dr Gangadhar Bhuti and Varun Kumar. The three are doing all they can to help Khayti achieve her dream. While Avinash and Gangadhar are Khayti's classmates from Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute (BMCRI), Khayti has known Varun, a music student, for the last five years.

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DR KHAYTI VAKHARIA ON THE EFFORTS OF HER FRIENDS



Dr Khayti needs Rs 34 lakh to train at the World Athletics Center in Arizona

The trio has posted handbills in public spaces such as Victoria and Vani Vilas Hospital, constructed a website and has opened a dedicated page on Facebook to rope in donors. On January 5, the trio participated in the Dawn to Dusk marathon in Chennai to draw attention to Khayti's need.

"A marathon run is one of the things that came instantly to our mind when we began thinking of ways to do our bit for our friend," says Avinash, 24, who is currently doing his rural stint in Adrigere village in Tumkur. "There are no marathons

happening in Bangalore, so Varun suggested we participate in the Chennai run."

It demanded plenty of sacrifice. Avinash, for example, says he sweated it out for two weeks to be fit to run the marathon, but the greater sacrifice came from Gangadhar. While Varun and Avinash are sports-inclined, Gangadhar isn't. So he ran the 10km run "just to join us in our endeavour".

"When Avinash and Varun came up with this idea, I immediately jumped at it," said Gangadhar, 24. "I'm not into sport and I've certainly never run



(From left) Varun Kumar, Avinash and Gangadhar participated in the Dawn to Dusk marathon in Chennai on January 5 to draw attention to Khayti's need

a marathon before. But this one was for a cause. I hope it works," said Gangadhar, who is currently preparing for his post-graduate medical exams.

The three sported tee-shirts that screamed 'Running for a Champ'. It succeeded in eliciting queries and drawing attention to the pole vault champion's need. Over the last week since they began their funds campaign, the trio has raised about Rs 50,000.

HIGHEST MARK BY AN INDIAN

The Vakharias moved to the city a few decades ago. The daughter of Sharad Vakharia, a Gujarati businessman, and Varsha, Khayti always had a passion for sport. She was first drawn to gymnastics, but took up pole vaulting in 2009. She won gold at the National Athletics Championships in 2012 and 2013 and finished the highest ranked Indian at the 2013 Asian Athletics Championships in Pune. By vaulting 3.9 metres, she has the highest mark by an Indian in an international meet.

Khayti has managed the rare feat of excelling both in sport and academics. She was an outstanding student and completed her MBBS from BMCRI in 2012. She gave up pole vault to concentrate on her studies, but she was drawn back to the sport. She now trains at the Sports Authority of India, Bangalore. Khayti's performance was noticed by the World Athletics Center, which then made her the offer.

Khayti has managed to raise Rs 15

lakh in the form of pledges from a few institutions like the Jain International Trading Organisation and individuals, but there is still a long way to go. With friends like Avinash, Varun and Gangadhar, Khayti hopes she can make it. The three are in awe of their champion friend and the way she has gone about balancing sports and academics.

"Certain people cross our paths to teach us something valuable. The lessons of passions, dreams, perseverance and hard work were things I didn't bother about previously. That was until I came across Khayti six years ago. This is the reason we are here trying to support everything she has been and wants to be," said Avinash.

Their website (runningforachamp.weebly.com) offers links for people to make donations. The trio is currently working on a platform of online crowd funding where people pledge money for every kilometre they complete in a marathon. "Donations of as little of Rs 100 coming from 1,000 people can turn into a significant Rs 1 lakh," said Avinash.

Khayti is elated about the efforts her friends are making to help her fulfil her dream. "What my friends are doing for me is very thoughtful," she said. "I haven't heard of such efforts and I appreciate their sincere support in helping me realise my dream. I hope it works," Khayti said.

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VTU wows with quick results

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Vishvesvaraya Technological University — notorious for taking months to announce exam results — has sprung a surprise. It has declared the results of first year (first semester) engineering courses in four days flat.

VTU registrar (evaluation) Dr H G Shekarappa told BANGALORE MIRROR, "The exams concluded on January 10 and we announced results for Gulbarga and Belgaum regions on January 14. For Bangalore and Mysore regions, results will be out on January 17."

STUDENTS SURPRISED

News of VTU's new-found efficiency spread like wildfire on social networking sites. Vybhav S, a first year student, posted on a social networking site, "I could not believe my ears

when I was told that results were declared in four days. I have known this university for long as my brother studied in it and used to always complain of delayed results. Now, I am complaining of quick results."

Another first year student Vaishnavi Kumar said, "Suddenly, our university has become efficient and we are still unable to come to terms with it. I was told that Bangalore region results would be announced on January 23. Now I am told that results will be declared on January 17."

DIGITAL EVALUATION IS THE KEY

Shekarappa attributed the quick results to the digital valuation introduced in the varsity. He said, "With digital evaluation, we can evaluate 60,000 answer scripts per day. Around 75,000 students study in first year in VTU."

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