

Suruchi & Kamaljeet get it right in mixed team event

Bullseye, it's finally a gold

Nagoya: From "extremely sad" to "over the moon" in less than 48 hours, Suruchi Inder Singh and Kamaljeet completed a remarkable turnaround at the Asian Games, carrying the hurt of two disappointing outings before delivering India's first shooting gold of the Games here on Friday.

Suruchi and Kamaljeet fired their way to the gold medal in the 10m air pistol mixed team event. They shot a total of 484.6 in the final, in which the top four pairs qualify for the medal round. They were followed by South Korea's Suhyeon Hong and Gaeun Choo (478.0) in second place. The Koreans were 6.6 behind Kamaljeet and Suruchi, which showed the Indian pair's dominance in the final.

This was after both had stumbled in individual events. Suruchi had endured a disastrous women's 10m air pistol qualification on Wednesday, missing out on both the individual and team medals after shooting 20 points below her average.

Kamaljeet's heartbreak came a day later when he shot 580 in the men's qualification, finished ninth and missed the final by a solitary point.

Then came Friday, and a clean slate.

"It was not our day and we missed the team and individual medals in women's 10m air pistol. But today was our day, India's day," Suruchi said.

For Suruchi, the 20-year-old from Jhajjar, the reset began with one simple decision: forget what had happened.

"I rested the full day after the match on Wednesday when we could not win the women's team and individual medals. I simply erased that result from my memory," she said. "My maths went



Kamaljeet and Suruchi Singh celebrate their gold medal finish on the podium in Nagoya on Friday. (PTI)

bad. I was extremely sad. I was only thinking, 'where did I go wrong?' I wasn't expecting such poor scores."

Kamaljeet's story is similar. "I was very sad. I was depressed as I felt that I would have to leave my maiden Asian Games without a medal," he said.

Then came the call that changed everything.

"Sir (coach Samresh Jung) told me there was a change in the 10m mixed team event and that I was being brought in in place of Kedarling (Uchaganve). I was overjoyed by the godsend message. I had got one more chance to bag the elusive Asian Games medal."

Being fellow Haryanvis also helped. Suruchi is from Jhajjar and Kamaljeet from neighbouring Rewari, giving the two an immediate famili-

arity as they prepared to step onto the firing line together.

Once there, they were bang on target this time.

Rifle silver

The Indian trio of Aish-

wary Pratap Singh Tomar, Rudrankksh Patil and Niraj Kumar claimed the men's 50m rifle 3 positions team silver after logging 1762.

China won the team gold with 1766, while Korea (1751) bagged bronze.

Tomar (589) and Niraj (588) also made the individual final of the 3P event in third and fourth places, respectively. Rudrankksh could not make it as only two shooters from a country can enter individual finals.

The finals, however, didn't go the Indians' way as Aishwary finished fifth with 327.6, while Niraj ended at the bottom of the list in eighth place.

A malfunctioning match button on his firing station disrupted Aishwary's concentration at a crucial stage in the final, costing the Indian valuable points in prone and derailing his bid for an individual medal.

A match button in the 50m rifle 3-position event is an electronic control at the firing point that the shooter uses to signal the range system when switching from sighter shots to official scoring shots in a particular position.

With inputs from PTI



(From left) Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Niraj Kumar and Rudrankksh Patil pose with their silver medals on Friday. (PTI)