

For Satwik-Chirag, Olympic loss is a good excuse to improve; but after rest, recharge & regrouping

There is inspiration everywhere in sport to bounce back from rock bottom. Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty were expected to play the Olympic finals this Sunday, but returned with not even a shot at the podium. The disappointment is all too raw, and the kindest thing afforded to them will be to not think about the future for some time. To allow the hurt to subside, soak up the stray verbal stabs from assorted sudden-experts, and then to eventually let the pain of missing out stew, and check if it's worth letting it bubble into inspiration.

Their Tokyo failure set them up for three years of incredible improvement. It might not have been good enough to win an Olympic medal, but there was remarkable consistency in chasing excellence. Satwik-Chirag achieved what very few other Olympic legends can claim to have - they kept badminton fans hooked to the sport for the period in between two Games. Getting millions to watch the sport even without the big occasion on the circuit, has been the highlight of the Tokyo-to-Paris turnaround.

In the next cycle, they can eschew the mad treadmill of the Tour and focus on the



big medal, not repeating the mistake of choosing the circuit over legacy Olympic medals.

Mathias BoeParis: India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty with coach Mathias Boe after their men's doubles quarter-final badminton match against Malaysia's Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik at the 2024 Summer Olympics, in Paris, France, Thursday, Aug. 1, 2024. Indian duo lost the match. (PTI Photo/Ravi Choudhary)

Their Paris failure is bound to leave a sense of incompleteness, and possibly a stab at another Games, even if LA is way too far to even think ahead. Satwik will be 28, Chirag 31. But in a sport and event where India never had any history, Satwik-Chirag made a good run in pursuit of a medal, though their quarters loss

at any rate, as Malaysians exploited a very old weakness. When starved off their attack, 3 teams out of 4 can bring Indian defense under pressure.

A proper postmortem will tell you Indians should've seen this coming in the three Tour finals they lost. Against the Chinese especially, as well as the Danes at last year's World Championships. Fitness concerns might've pulled them back from an all-out attack, but ultimately it was Aaron Chia's guiles and Malaysian deep tactical sense, that poked at their medal chances. The scope of improvement is immense, and it will keep drawing boards busy in coming years till they nail a World title.

Knowing their skill-set was incomplete can be a humbling realisation. But once more, they needn't look further than Sindhu to put their heads down and chip away at the inadequacies.

Paris Olympics Badminton Doubles draw satwik chiragIndia's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty play against Indonesia's Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Rian Ardianto during their men's doubles badminton group stage match at the 2024

Summer Olympics, Tuesday, July 30, 2024, in Paris, France. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)

Perhaps the biggest inspiration can be ruffed from defending champs, Taiwanese Wang Chi-Lin and Lee Yang, both 28 now, and making their second Olympics final. They were nowhere on the circuit, barely chasing rankings or tournament victories post Tokyo. They nursed injuries, stayed under the radar till qualification period fetched up, and ran up a good campaign just when needed.

With Mathias Boe stepping away, Satwik and Chirag will need to recalibrate their goals, refresh their ambition, find newer avenues and chew fresher brains of experts to mount a fresh challenge going ahead. Not winning keeps the hunger alive - there's still a World title to be won, and the Chinese and Malaysians to be beaten consistently, should they choose to stick around. But all that can wait, and wait till the injuries are mended.

There are bigger coaches out there internationally, with wider expanses of knowledge, as India tries to make a combined ascent at the medal next cycle in all three categories - men's

doubles, women's doubles and mixed doubles. Being the sole hopes in doubles, can dump pressure on them and hyper-focussing on just one player or pairing, can prove counterproductive. If India have to do well at doubles, it will need a multi-pronged focus on several pairs and sparring to get better. It will need full-time coaches dedicated to the whole squad.

Above everything else, Satwik-Chirag will need to believe they can still win the World Championships despite this setback. For they are easily India's finest badminton talents whose matches are worth investing time in to watch on television or streams. Medals or no medal.

On Happy Friendship Day, Satwik-Chirag can just be glad that their bond survived two heart breaking Olympic failures. They know they aren't a bad pairing at all. They know they have each other's backs. Paris didn't give them medals, but it could be the beginning of a beautiful new old friendship, this one between the only two people in this story who have to live down a loss at the Olympics. Their biggest inspiration is how they themselves have bounced back before.

Paris Olympics: French pole vaulter misses out on medal after his crotch hits the bar



French pole vaulter Anthony Ammirati has become an unlikely internet sensation after a video of his painful crotch mishap during a pole vault attempt went viral. He missed out on earning a medal at his home Olympics when his crotch got caught on the crossbar.

During his third attempt Saturday, the 21-year-old was trying to clear a height of 5.70 meters, and he had a bizarre failed attempt when his crotch caught the bar and he fell to the ground. After watching the replay even the broadcasters seemed uncertain on how to describe the incident.

After four attempts, Ammirati finished with a combined score of 5.60 and in 12th position, not enough to advance to the final. The pole vault was Ammirati's only event at these Games. Ammirati won the U20 World Championships in Colombia two years ago.

"It's a big disappointment. I'm a bit gutted," he said, via the French Athletic Federation.

"The conditions were good. It's the first time I've started a competition without any stress. As I was a total outsider, I only had one goal: to play with the crowd. I was almost there."

Ammirati has taken the incident in a good sport. He said: "I'm just glad I can make people smile and laugh."

French sports academy Envol posted a tribute to the young competitor on Instagram after the event.

"We are proud of you @anthony_ammirati despite the last two weeks of being physically disturbed you managed to show up, even though we are frustrated like you for that 5m70 bar. We wish you an unforgettable Olympic experience."

Kobe Bryant's locker sells for \$2.9 million, while Lakers unveil his statue



The locker used by Kobe Bryant for most of his storied NBA career sold for an impressive \$2.9 million at a Sotheby's auction on Friday. The locker, which Bryant used while playing for the Los Angeles Lakers at the Staples Center, nearly doubled its estimated value of \$1.5 million.

According to Sotheby's, a maintenance worker saved the locker from being discarded during the Staples Center's 2018 renovations. The locker was later acquired by an American collector.

Brahm Wachter, Sotheby's head of modern collectibles, remarked,

taken courtside at Lakers games.

Kobe Bryant statueThe Lakers plan to unveil a third statue during the 2024-25 season. (AP photo)

It celebrates Bryant's pride in being a 'Girl Dad'.

The statue's unveiling was purposely timed on August 2, aligning with Kobe's jersey numbers 8 and 24, and Gianna's number 2. This date mirrors the previous unveiling of Bryant's first statue, which commemorates his 81-point game in 2006.

Vanessa Bryant, speaking at the unveiling, reflected on her family's commitment to women's sports and equality. She emphasized Gianna's potential and the barriers she faced due to gender. "In honor of Kobe and Gigi, I ask you this: give young girls your time. Give them your support. Tell them they can do anything any man can do and tell them they can exceed that," Vanessa Bryant urged.

The Lakers plan to unveil a third statue during the 2024-25 season, making Kobe the first Laker to receive multiple statues.

Erling Haaland Hat Trick Powers Manchester City Over Chelsea 4-2



Erling Haaland's hat trick, including two goals in the first five minutes, led Manchester City over Chelsea 4-2 on Saturday in an English club football friendly at Columbus, Ohio. Reigning Premier League champion City scored goals 54 seconds apart in the first half and 71 seconds apart in the second half to dominate the fixture, part of a US pre-season tour for both clubs.

Haaland wore the captain's armband and showed a crowd of 71,280 why he is considered among the world's best players.

The 24-year-old Norwegian striker scored on a penalty kick in the fourth minute and, after a Moises Caicedo give away in the Chelsea half, smashed a right-footed shot into the right corner for a 2-0 City lead in the fifth minute -- only 17 seconds after the restart.

Oscar Bobb boosted the lead to three in the 55th minute, taking the ball down the right wing and cutting inside to fire a left-footed shot past a defender and just inside the near post.

Haaland then completed his hat trick in the 56th minute after City forced a turnover in Chelsea territory.

Haaland took a pass at the top of the box between two defenders and flicked in a left-footed shot for a 4-0 City edge only 25 seconds after the restart.

Raheem Sterling answered for Chelsea in the 59th minute and Noni Madueke added a final goal in the 89th but it was too little and too late.

The game was a preview of the start to the 2024-25 Premier League campaign for both clubs. Manchester City will open the season against Chelsea on August 18.

Liverpool beats Man Utd

In another pre-season US showdown of English giants, Liverpool blanked Manchester United 3-0 before 77,559 spectators at Columbia, South Carolina.

Fabio Carvalho, a 21-year-old Portuguese striker, opened the scoring for Liverpool in the 10th minute.

Julien Alfred wins women's 100m to claim Saint Lucia's 1st medal ever at Olympics: Who is history-making sprinter?



Julien Alfred stunned pre-race favourite Sha'Carri Richardson in the women's 100m race at the Paris Olympics to become the fastest woman in the world and give Saint Lucia its first Olympic medal in the history of the Games.

In a race held after a heavy downpour at the Stade de France, Julien Alfred finished in 10.72 seconds for gold while Richardson claimed silver with 10.87 secs.

Here are four things you need to know about Julien Alfred:

Julien Alfred is Saint Lucia's first medalist

St Lucia, an eastern Caribbean island, is a nation of around 1,80,000 people. And Julien Alfred is the island's first Olympic medal winner in history. Of any colour!

"Growing up, I've always said I wanted to be one of Saint Lucia's first Olympic medalists... first gold medalist at the Olympic Games," said Julien Alfred, who is from Castries, Saint Lucia's capital and largest city.

Julien Alfred was spotted by school librarian and shaped in USA

Julien Alfred was initially spotted by the school librarian. Once her talent was ascertained, she moved to



Jamaica as a teenager to train, then attended the University of Texas, where she became a multiple-time NCAA champion.

Julien Alfred was shaped by the American collegiate system, the NCAA, where she ran for the Texas Longhorns from 2018 to 2023. In that span, she was an 11-time USTFCCCA All-America selection. After collecting her final NCAA championships, Julien Alfred was named the 2022-23 Big 12 female athlete of the year.

Julien Alfred walked away from the sport due to father's demise

Julien Alfred walked away from the sport after losing her father when she was around 12. It was her then coach who convinced her to return to the sport.

"He (her father) believed I could be an Olympian. That I can be here," Julien Alfred said after her gold medal. "To come out with the win, happy I was able to do it. I want to attribute it to (my father)... He'd be so boastful of his daughter being an Olympian."

The Usain Bolt connection

Julien Alfred revealed that to get ready for the 100m final, she had spent the morning of Friday watching footage of Jamaican sensation Usain Bolt.

"I just watched how he just executed," Alfred said. "After winning the race, she also celebrated like Usain Bolt would."

"You don't ever see me get to celebrate like that ever," Alfred said.

"Tried To Act Sportsmanlike": Imane Khelif's Opponent After Olympics Quarter-Final Loss



In a bout that attracted global attention, Hungary's Luca Anna Hamori (66kg) braved intimidating gender row boxer Iman Khelif for three competitive rounds at the Paris Olympics and walked out feeling proud of herself as "not fighting was not an option" for her, here Saturday. The Algerian, embroiled in a major gender controversy in the French capital, left the ring in tears after she guaranteed herself at least bronze by entering the women's 66kg semifinals.

Her previous opponent, Italian boxer Angela Carini had pulled out of her bout against Khelif on Thursday just after 46 seconds, unable to take heavy punches from the Algerian, who was banned from the 2023 World Championship in New Delhi for failing the gender eligibility test.

The dramatic turn of events had created a huge furore in

Paris Olympics' most viral athletes: Turkish 'hitman', 'Superman' gymnast, shooter with 'main character energy'

The first week of the Paris Olympics has seen the internet discover plenty of athletes that it has taken a liking to: from a South Korean shooter who exudes "main character energy" to an American gymnast who reminded everyone of someone who lives a Clark Kent-Superman double life.

And then of course there was the Turkish pistol shooter who has earned nicknames ranging from the "Olympics' 007" to a hitman.

But away from their two minutes of viral fame-attracting images, each of these athletes have a story. We introduce you to the people behind the viral memes of the Paris Olympics:

Turkish pistol shooter Yusuf Dikec and Seval Ilayda Tarhan won the silver medal in mixed team 10-meter air pistol shooting event. Yes, the same event where Manu Bhaker and Sarabjot Singh won a bronze.

Why is Yusuf Dikec famous?

It was not the silver medal that made Dikec a viral sensation. He became famous for shooting with minimal gear on him: he had neither a visor, nor blinders, lens or ear defenders (even though he wore very tiny ear plugs) that



many pistol shooters routinely sport.

In one of the most-shared images on the internet from the week gone by, Dikec can be seen shooting while rocking a white T-shirt and prescription spectacles.

Turkish shooter Yusuf Dikec, right, looks on as Turkey's coach talks to Dikec's teammate Seval Ilayda Tarhan during a time-out break at the 10m air pistol mixed team final, in Chateauroux, France, at the 2024 Summer Olympics, Tuesday, July 30, 2024. The Turkish team won the silver medal.

Turkish shooter Yusuf Dikec, right, looks on as Turkey's coach talks to Dikec's teammate Seval Ilayda Tarhan during a time-out break at the 10m air pistol mixed team final, in Chateauroux, France, at the 2024 Summer Olympics, Tuesday, July 30, 2024. The Turkish team won the silver medal. (AP Photo)

He looks unusually relaxed despite the pressure of the Olympic stage. Both his eyes are open. And one of his hands is casually in his pocket. Ironically, on the official website of the Paris Olympics, Dikec's bio page states that his philosophy is: "Success doesn't come with your hands in your pockets."

Shooters wear visors to reduce the glare of the lights and blinders (which looks like a patch) over one eye to get a better focus for the eye which is looking down the sights. Since these are both non-mandatory items, Dikec chose to not use them.

The 51-year-old Turkish pistol shooter is competing in

his fifth straight Olympics. His first appearance at an Olympic Games was at Beijing 2008. Over the years, he has racked up seven European championship titles.

He had one of his best years on the shooting circuit a decade back, when he claimed two world championship titles in the 25m standard pistol and 25m centre fire pistol events besides a silver in 10m air pistol.

A lot of the memes about Dikec have called him a hitman or an undercover Turkish agent.

Dikec does have an armed forces connection. He took up shooting as a sport in 2001: after he started working as a non-commissioned officer for the Gendarmerie General Command (which is a general armed, law enforcement organization in Turkey).

After winning silver, Dikec gave an interview to Turkish channel TGRT Haber, where he opened up about his unconventional shooting technique.

"My shooting technique is one of the rare shooting techniques in the world. I shoot with both eyes open. Even the referees are surprised by this," he said.

French pole vaulter denied Olympics medal following incident involving his crotch, commentators struggle to find words



Two French athletes at the 2024 Paris Olympics became internet sensations on Saturday, albeit for contrasting reasons. For Leon Marchand, it was after he claimed his fourth swimming gold medal, as he matched the legendary Michael Phelps' Beijing 2008 feat, and for 21-year-old pole vaulter Anthony Ammirati, it was following an incident involving his crotch that eventually denied him a medal.

The track and field events at the Paris Olympics started earlier this week with the pole vault qualification event being scheduled on Saturday. Ammirati successfully cleared 5.40 meters and 5.60 meters, both in his first attempt. However, he failed to clear 5.70 metres, owing to which he finished 12th in the qualifiers and this failed to make the finals.

During his third attempt to clear 5.70 metres, he failed bizarrely after his crotch hit the bar and it knocked down the pole, causing him to fail in his final try. The scene left commentators struggling to find words. For seconds, there was an awkward silence on-air before one of the commentators said that it wasn't due to lack of height but due to a bizarre collision on his way down. The incident, however, quickly sparked memes and jokes all over social media.

Despite his exit from the Paris Olympics, where the pole vault was his only event, Ammirati, the U20 World Championships in Colombia two years ago, took the incident in good sport.

He said, via the French Athletic Federation: "I'm just glad I can make people smile and laugh. And who knows, maybe this will be the start of something amazing!"