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## No fanfare followed Jadhav's 1952 feat

Pradeep Vijayakar | TNN

Mumbai: Grappler Sushil Kumar, who won an Olympic bronze for India at the Beijing Games on Wednesday, had one thing in common with Khashaba Jadhav. Jadhav, a wrestler from Maharashtra, had achieved a similar feat 56 years ago in Helsinki.

Known as 'Pocket Dynamo', Jadhav was fleet-footed which made him different from the wrestlers of his time. Noting this unusual trait, English coach Rees Gardner, who trained him prior to the 1948 London Olympics, fancied his chances and even won a few wagers on him.

Jadhav was an allrounder excelling in athletics, swimming and gymnastics during his youth. Before the 1952 Games, Jadhav alleged that nepotism among officials was responsible for him getting one point less than the winner at the Madras Nationals, which ruled him out of the Olympics. He had to appeal to the Maharaja of Patiala to seek justice. The sports-loving patron got Jadhav an entry into the trials where he floored his opponent and was picked for the Games.

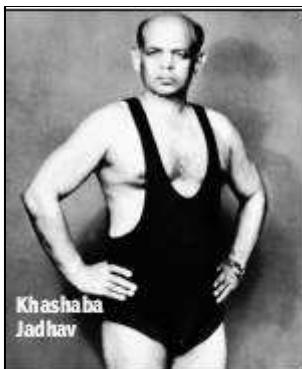
Jadhav then had to run with a begging bowl to raise funds for his trip. The principal of Kolhapur's Rajaram College, Mr Khardekar, even mortgaged his house for Rs 7,000 to raise the funds, while local shopkeepers from his village Goleshwar, in Karad district, presented him with groceries and other items of use.

At Helsinki, Jadhav had to fight seven bouts in all in the 52kg freestyle event. In the first five, he met opponents from Europe and the Gulf countries and took barely five minutes to dispose them off. In the sixth round, he ran into Shonachi Ishi of Japan. Ishi's novelty of the ankle hold surprised Jadhav but when he counter-attacked, Ishi attempted rolling fouls which were penalised giving Jadhav a win.

Jadhav had barely finished his bout when the announcement came for the next bout against a Russian, Manod Bekov. Normally, there is a rest period of half an hour between two bouts, but Jadhav didn't get it. It was unfair to Jadhav, but there was no Indian official present to lodge a protest. So the tired Jadhav once again took to the mat and was beaten. Jadhav was sure that he could have won the silver had he been sufficiently rested.

Official apathy also meant that he was unable to register a protest after being unfairly penalised for a rolling foul which saw him finish sixth at the 1948 London Games, the best-ever position achieved by an Indian till then.

There was also not too much fanfare when Jadhav returned to India after his feats in the 1952 Games. There was only a small felicitation at Mumbai's Shivaji Mandir auditorium in Dadar. There was also a 'cavalcade' of 101 bullock carts from Karad to his village. Instead of being heaped with rewards, Jadhav had to fight for funds. He must have died a broken man when a road accident claimed him.



Khashaba Jadhav