

Saina Nehwal: A Revolutionist on the Rise

My entire life, I have had one mindset: I have to be the *best* at whatever I do. Believing that has made me feel *horrible* if I make a mistake, and don't come out with a "medal". I have felt like I have so much to prove, being an Indian girl. I have tried to understand that winning isn't everything, and if there is anyone who has helped me with that, it is Saina Nehwal.

Saina sacrificed much of a regular childhood to train to reach her dream of being a national-level badminton player. It was a big dream, a dream that seemed out of reach to many. But, as she started to defeat resilient opponents, she gained confidence in her abilities, as well as popularity. Whether she knew it or not, she was gradually becoming a role model for every girl in India, and even more the world.

People viewed her as a winner; an invincible woman who could never fall. However, during the London 2012 Summer Olympics, Saina won a *bronze* medal. Even though this was a *huge* accomplishment, to the rest of the world, Saina didn't get the gold. She wasn't first. She was not the leading badminton player everyone had hoped her to be. While it's probably true Saina felt disappointment that she didn't get the gold, her pride definitely outweighed the feeling, for she was the first Indian badminton player to *ever* hold an Olympic medal. It wasn't her medal that mattered to me, however. It was her fortitude.

All throughout her athletic journey, it had always been her prowess and her daring to try. Saina had taught me that girls, Indian girls, were capable of anything. They could do everything that anyone could do, if not better. She had taught me that a medal was only, and would always be, a token of my efforts. But, my dignity, my sportsmanship, would stay with me forever. Saina

symbolized that it didn't matter what the world thought of her; what mattered was that she was proud of herself.

She not only showed me, but the entire world, that centuries onward, there will always be women, there will always be people, who will win the gold. But, there will only be very few who will "win the bronze", and *still* set ablaze an everlasting legacy.

Her story isn't finished, and neither is mine. It's up to me, and *only* me, to carve my own path, and that's exactly what I'm going to do. In the end, it's me who has to live my life, me who has to face the consequences. I should never be afraid to do the unprecedented, because no matter what happens, *I know I don't have to be everything.*