



7. Dattu Baban Bhokanal

Date of Birth: 5th April 1991

Sport: Rowing (Men's single sculls)

Hometown: Talegaon, Maharashtra

Training Base: Army Rowing Node, Pune



Born in the drought-prone village of Talegaon, Maharashtra, it was destiny that brought Dattu and rowing together. His father was a farmer and a well-digger and young Dattu helped him break stones and lift huge boulders. His tough childhood gave him natural physical strength and endurance as well as

mental toughness. After the death of his father, Dattu went on to enrol into the army and, owing to his tall and broad build, was recommended for their sporting division and rowing.

Dattu had a phobia of water and didn't know swimming. However, he found a natural liking for the sport and proved his mettle by winning gold medals in the inter-battalion and National rowing competitions in 2014. He represented India at the 2014 Asian Games in Korea, finishing 5th, and won a silver medal at the 2015 Asian Rowing Championships in China. Dattu also won a Gold in the qualifying event for Rio, becoming the only Indian rower to qualify for the quadrennial event.

However, tragedy struck when Dattu's mother had an accident and went into a coma before Rio. Competing under severe emotional stress, Dattu gave a brilliant performance by covering 2000m in 7 minutes; only 6 seconds behind the 3rd finisher! He ranked 13th overall - breaking a record for the best ever finish by an Indian at the Olympics. Dattu achieved this with only 4 years of exposure to the sport and only 6 months of focused training for the Olympics! Putting his mother's later unfortunate demise behind him, he is currently training 4 hours daily in his training base at Pune, working his way towards a medal at the 2018 Asian Games and 2020 Olympics!

Achievements

- 13th Position (2000m) - Rio Olympic Games, 2016
- Silver medal (2000m) - Asian Rowing Championship, 2015
- 5th Position (2000m) - Asian Games, 2014
- Gold medal (500m and 2000m) - Open National Rowing Championship, 2014