



MS. SHREYANKA PATIL

Cricketer

Taken by the Editorial Board

YT: Your journey to success has been marked by numerous milestones, each more impressive than the last. Can you take us through the early stages of your career, discussing the initial challenges you faced, the key decisions you made which prepared you for the successes you have achieved today?

SP: Looking back, I was fortunate to have a very supportive environment. My brother played cricket, and my father ran a cricket academy, so the sport was always a part of my life. My parents trusted me to travel independently for practice, which gave me both confidence and freedom to focus on my game. The only real challenge I can recall was the long hours spent commuting on Bengaluru's busy roads to and from practice. It was exhausting at times, but my love for cricket outweighed the fatigue, and I never saw it as a major hurdle. I started playing at the age of nine, so there were not many big decisions to make initially. However, as I grew older, especially in my late teens, I had to seriously commit to the sport, and that is when my journey truly took shape.

YT: Successful careers often hinge on crucial turning points—decisions or moments that dramatically alter the course of one's professional journey. Do you recall a specific turning point in your career that had a profound impact on your trajectory?

SP: The turning point was meeting my coach, Arjun Dev. In my first session at his academy, he noticed something in my bowling that excited him. After the session, he approached me with some questions, and that interaction changed everything. He took me into his batch and had an open discussion about my goals. He asked me to trust him for five years to help me become the player I aspired to be. It was a big decision, especially since many girls my age were already playing at the national level. But committing to his guidance shaped my journey and unlocked my potential. His belief in me made all the difference.

YT: The landscape of your industry has undoubtedly changed since you began your career. How have these changes impacted your approach to your

work and how they have influenced your strategy and outlook?

SP: When I started playing cricket at nine, and even up until I was 18 or 19, the highest level for women was the national team. Back then, opportunities were limited, and showcasing talent was a challenge. However, over the last five years, women's cricket has transformed dramatically, which is incredibly exciting!

We now have franchise leagues like the Women's Big Bash League (WBBL) in Australia, and similar leagues are thriving in England, the West Indies, and, of course, India with the Women's Premier League (WPL). These leagues have opened up so many opportunities beyond just playing for the national team. While representing the country remains the ultimate goal, these tournaments give players a platform to gain experience, showcase skills, and contribute to the sport's growth globally.

For me, every opportunity—whether with my state team, WPL franchise, national team, or overseas leagues—is a chance to make an impact. I have learned to value each one and give it my best because these moments define both individual players and the future of women's cricket.

YT: You were conferred with the 'Sports Performance of the Year' award by a national sports body in 2024. How does it feel to be acknowledged on such a prestigious platform, and what does this recognition mean for your future aspirations within Indian women's cricket?

SP: Winning the 'Sports Performance of the Year' was an incredible honour and a truly special moment in my journey. Being recognized on such a prestigious platform for something I am so passionate about is deeply gratifying.

While I enjoy the recognition, my priority has always been to stay focused on my game and give my best every time I step onto the field. Achievements like this serve as motivation—they push me to keep working hard and doing what I

love. It is a reminder of how much the sport means to me and inspires me to aim higher in every match and season.

YT: Recently, you became the first Indian cricketer to feature in the Women's Caribbean Premier League (WCPL). How does it feel to represent India on an international stage, and what lessons have you brought back to improve your game in domestic circuits?

SP: As I mentioned before, playing in these overseas leagues is a great experience, to share a dressing room and literally spend three weeks with some of the greats of the modern game was amazing! I was at the WCPL before I had made my India debut, so to have represented India at the WCPL was a big responsibility and I thrive when I am given the big responsibilities. Ending the WCPL as the highest wicket-taker was incredible, it felt like I had done justice to the first Indian cricketer tag. This experience made me a more confident player, I felt I was better prepared for the upcoming season.

YT: As a young female cricketer in India, you are part of a growing movement that is shifting perceptions about women's participation in sports. How do you see yourself contributing to this larger conversation on women's empowerment through cricket?

SP: I feel incredibly excited and privileged to be part of a movement that is transforming how people perceive women in sports. There are several ways I hope to contribute to this change.

First, by performing well on the field, I want to inspire young girls to dream big and pursue sports with confidence. I believe with the right preparation and determination, nothing is impossible, and I want my journey to reflect that. Second, visibility is crucial. By playing in leagues and representing my country, I hope to bring more attention to women's cricket, showcasing the talent and potential it holds.

Lastly, having a role model can make a big difference. For me, that person was Virat Kohli—his dedication and journey have had a profound impact on my career. I aspire to be that kind of inspiration for others. If my career inspires even a few young girls to take up cricket, I would consider it a success. Beyond that, I hope to use my platform to advocate for better opportunities and resources for female athletes, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment in cricket and beyond.

YT: As a cricketer who has grown up in the evolving landscape of Indian women's cricket, how do you perceive the current state of the sport in India, and what changes or improvements would you like to see in the coming years?

SP: The progress in women's cricket over the past few years has been remarkable. We are seeing more women climb the ranks and become stars in the sport. A great example is my dear friend Asha Sobhana. The opportunities she received, even later in her career, completely transformed her life. Having experienced a similar journey myself, their success feels deeply personal and is a source of immense pride for me.

Women's cricket is undoubtedly moving in the right direction. We are playing as much as the men

now, we have our own leagues, and stadiums are filling up for our matches—a testament to the growing interest and support. The media and fans have played a crucial role in this transformation, and I hope this momentum continues.

Ultimately, my hope is that this progress inspires broader change, allowing women across all sports to receive the opportunities and recognition they truly deserve. Positive signs are everywhere, and it is exciting to be part of this journey.

YT: As a role model for many students at St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, what advice would you give to students who aspire to be cricketers and sports enthusiasts on pursuing excellence in sports?

SP: In simple words, be a daredevil! No obstacle is too big to overcome. Dream big, be brave, trust your instincts, and do what you believe is right. For me, it has always been about facing challenges head-on and striving to make a mark.

Whether it is on the field or off it, the key is to stay determined and focused. Believe in yourself, put in the hard work, and never let fear hold you back. Sports can be demanding, but the rewards of following your passion are worth every effort.