

Amoolya is like any other player to me, says mom Chitra



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WEST BANK: A mother curbing her child's playing time for studies is run of the mill. But when it is otherwise, it is novel and certainly for a noble cause!

India Women's Senior National Team player Amoolya Kamal is the eldest daughter of National Goalkeeping Coach Chitra Gangadharan -- a fact, one seldom comes across.

One recalls Lionel Messi being under the tutelage of Jorge Messi in Grandoli FC, a children's team in Argentina. But that was for a short period. Chitra has been the mother cum coach of Amoolya for quite a while now in the National Team.

"I have always been a non-mother," Chitra admits smiling. "I have encouraged Amoolya to spend more time on the field with me than with her books. She was always studious so there was no problem. But I don't remember scolding her even once for playing and not studying," adds the former India Captain.

It was back in the year 2007 when the duo came together for National Duty during a home-away series against Iran.

"We won at home in Delhi and lost in Iran. It was the first time me and Amu, O Sorry, Amoolya, were together in the National Camp," recalls Chitra.

Asked the reason for correcting herself on her daughter's nickname, Chitra replied: "Not on the field. The nickname and the relationship is for home. Here I am part of the Technical Team, and she is an Indian National Team Player."

She continues as Amoolya joins her at the lawn outside the Team Hotel. "I'll give you an example of how strictly I separate my professional life with personal. When Amoolya got a call

for the Camp in Pune last April, till the previous night when I started packing she had no clue I was also a part of the Camp. She told me that she got a call-up. I said: Whenever you get a chance to play, even if that is for five minutes try and prove your mettle."

"I did not dare to ask Maa whether she was going or not. I took a guess that she was but never asked her. She is very particular about these things and expects me to not cross the line as well," quips Amoolya, tongue-in-cheek.

"While on National duty or in a Preparatory Camp, I hardly go to her Hotel room. I am not allowed to call her 'Maa' and talk family matters," adds the attacking Midfielder.

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) Women's Team in Bangalore is another place where the mother-daughter duo ply their trade together, in the same capacity as in the National Team. The AFC Women's Asian Cup (Qualifiers) is the third time that the both of them are together in the National Camp. The 2011 Pre-Olympic Qualifiers was the second time after 2007.

"There were also times when she was in the Team and I was not a part of the Technical Team. Like for the 2010 SAFF Championships I was not there. It has also been the other way round."

"Amoolya has grown up in a football family. My husband, Kamal Dayakar, is the President of Bangalore United Football Club where I am the Head Coach. He is very enthusiastic about Football and supports us immensely," adds the Goalkeeper Coach.

"On the field, she is just like any other player to me. You play in the Starting XI only when you have earned it. When I am part of the Indian Team, Country's interest comes first. I take it as a coincidence that we are on the same boat," Chitra signs off.

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