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## Mamma's girl

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AVINASH NAIR



The Hindu Champion speak Amoolya Kamal wants to coach the Under 13 level players  
Photo: Bhagya Prakash K.

## **Amoolya Kamal, who made a mark at the recent SAF games, takes her cues from her goalkeeper mother**

Parents are eager to see their children succeed. Amoolya Kamal, the only member of the Indian football team from Karnataka, which won the gold medal at the South Asian Federation (SAF) Games in Dhaka, has done her parents proud.

Amoolya, proved to be a very important player in her first international outing at Dhaka. “I came in for the captain O Bembem Devi, who was not in the best of form. I played an attacking role in the midfield.” She was also instrumental in initiating a series of goals in the 7-0 drubbing of Bangladesh and played a vital part in the 3-1 win over Nepal in the final.

The 26 year-old took to football as a toddler and remains extremely passionate about the game. “My inspiration is my mother; Chitra Gangadharan, who donned the India colours as goalkeeper.” Her father, Kamal, was a State-level footballer. Chitra played for Karnataka, even after Amoolya was born but soon switched roles to become a NIS trained coach. “I used to take her to the nationals when she was just a year and a half old,” says Chitra. “I won a silver in the Asian Cup at Calicut in 1980. My daughter has achieved what I have always dreamt about, winning gold for the country,” says Chitra. Amoolya learnt the nuances of the game from her mother. The absence of a State team for girls in football saw Amoolya starting off as a volleyball player. “I captained the Karnataka mini volleyball team in the Hyderabad nationals. We won the bronze medal at the event.” However, football was her true calling and she made it to the senior State team for the nationals in 1998. She scored three or four goals in her first appearance in a major tournament.

An appendix operation in 1999 forced repeated absences. In 2001, Amoolya was called for the India camp for the Asian Under 19 tournament in Goa, but remained a stand-by. She was also noticed for her exemplary show at the Chennai senior nationals in 2003, that won her a call to the national camp. Unfortunately, the camp never got going.

After the 2007 Rourkela nationals, Amoolya gained selection to the camp for the Asia Cup qualifiers, but again did not figure in the Indian team that won against Iran in Delhi. These setbacks did not deter Amoolya, who continued her good showing at the national level. At the Haldia and Neyveli nationals, she churned out sterling performances. “After the preliminary camp at Goa, the list was pruned down to 40. Twenty-five players were added to the list for the second camp for the SAF Games. I managed to make the team this time and was thrilled.”

The SAF Games competition, was tough with teams such as Nepal, Sri Lanka and hosts Bangladesh proving to be tough contenders

“We underwent training in camps for nearly six months. That helped us immensely physically and mentally. We were confident of putting up a good show.” Now pursuing an MBA, Amoolya intends to be associated with football. “I plan to apply for my ‘C’ license through the State Association (KSFA). I would like to be associated with the under 13’s and teach them the finer aspects of the game.” concludes Amoolya.

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