

Padma Bhushan Pullela Gopichand

Telugu Person of the Year

He actually wanted to wield a cricket bat. His brother, wisely, nudged him to hold a shuttle racket, instead. His passion for his chosen sport powered him to success after success. Each time he scaled a higher peak, he brought more glory to the country.

A badminton player of international eminence, Padma Bhushan Pullela Gopichand is a coach par excellence.

45 year-old Gopichand was born to Subbaravamma and Subhash Chandra on November 16, 1973 in Nagandla of Prakasham district. He completed his undergraduate education at A.V. College in Hyderabad.

All along Gopichand kept honing his skills as a badminton player and at 17, was made the captain of Indian Combined Universities Badminton team.

In the early phase of his career, he was coached by S.M. Arif and later, joined the Prakash Padukone Academy run by the badminton legend. His transition to the pinnacle of fame was built on his dedication and commitment to the sport. Gopichand rewrote record books in quick time and was crowned the national champion for 5 successive years from 1996. He created history in 2001 when he won the All England Open Championship, two decades after a fellow-Indian, and his perfectionist-guru Prakash Padukone, had won the championship. The ease and elan with which Gopichand became the champion made him a fitting role model for aspiring players.

However, the journey did not end there for this badminton legend. He decided to shape the careers of other aspiring sportspersons by mentoring them. It was with this aim that the Gopichand Badminton Academy was established in 2008. Badminton players from the academy brought honour to the country bagging two Olympic medals in 2012 and 2016, earning lavish praise for his self-effacing contribution. His proteges, Saina Nehwal, P.V. Sindhu, Kidambi Srikanth, and Kashyap among others, set the badminton world alight with their record-breaking accomplishments.

Padma Bhushan Pullela Gopichand is also a recipient of Arjuna, Dronacharya and Rajiv Khel Ratna awards, among several other honours. A phenomenal sportsman and pride of Telugus, a peerless coach, and above all, a great human being, Sakshi Media Group feels privileged to honour Pullela Gopichand with Sakshi Excellence 2017 Telugu Person of the Year award.