

Olympics, Bronze Medal 2000

Weightlifter Karnam Malleswari wrote a new chapter in Indian sport as she became the first Indian woman to stand on an Olympic victor's podium.

Her bronze in the 69 kg category was the first medal for India at the Sydney Games. Six years ago, she had become the first Indian woman to win a world title in any sport.

In what was a stunning performance in the wake of recent reports of her form going down, Malleswari fought like a champion. The fact that she only recently moved up in her weight category had even led to many saying she was overweight and in no condition to compete.



After winning the Medal

In the end it seems it all worked out as the 69 kg category had one of the weakest Chinese competitors. With the Bulgarian duo, Milena Trendafilova and Daniela Kerkelova also failing, the stage was set for Malleswari to find her place in the sun.

She competed aggressively and took a lead in snatch, her forte, and that proved to be the telling factor in the end.

While many of the lifters started at a modest 100 kg, she entered the competition at 105.0 kg and went up to 110.0 kg over the next two attempts. With just two others, China's Lin Weining and Hungary's Erzsebut Markus, making it to 110 or above, Malleswari was in the hunt at this stage.

In the closing stages, there was a feeling that Malleswari could well have attempted a slightly lower weight and improved the colour of the medal. The weightlifting squad had seemed downcast after the failure of Sanamacha Chanu, who had been touted as a medal prospect by all. But in the end it turned out to be Malleswari.

In snatch, Malleswari entered the contest at 105.0 kg, went up to 107.5 and then to 110.0 kg in her three attempts. Weining started at 107.5 kg and then cleared 110.0 kg, but failed at 112.5 kg. Markus succeeded with 112.5 kg for a new world record.



In the clean and jerk, Markus and Malleswari started at a modest 125.0 kg. Meanwhile, the two Bulgarians, Milena Trendafilova and Daniela Kerkelova, succeeded at 127.5 kg in their first attempt. It was clear that they were trying to make up for their poor lifts in snatch. Trendafilova had managed only 100 in snatch, while Kerkelova managed only 97.5 kg.



In Action

It was now clear that the battle for medals was between the Chinese, the Hungarian and the Indian. Malleswari and Markus went up to 130.0 kg and both succeeded in leaving one lift each. Weining, meanwhile, cleared 132.5 kg on her first try to move ahead on bodyweight. Markus was lying second and Malleswari third.

It was here that the Indian camp's tactics seemed inexplicable. Malleswari went in for 137.5 kg. Had she entered earlier at 135.0 and succeeded she may well have been in the running for a silver or even a gold.

As it happened, Weining failed at 137.5 kg and then at 145.0 kg and totaled 242.5 kg (with 110 and 132.5 kg), while Markus also had 242.5 kg. Markus lost the gold on bodyweight - she weighed 68.52 kg as compared to 66.74 of the Chinese.