

In Conversation Lakshay Rawat Budding Para Swimmer

Name: Lakshay Rawat

Age: 14 years

Date of Birth: 20.08.2011

Place of Birth: New Delhi

Educational Institutes Attended:

Mahashay Chuni Lal Saraswati Bal Mandir, Hari Nagar

Educational Qualification:

Pursuing Class 10th

From Mahashay Chuni Lal Saraswati Bal Mandir, Hari Nagar

Currently Working as: Student,

Athlete [Para – Swimmer]

Introduction to Swimming:

Started training in year 2022

First Coach:

Mr. Ramesh and Mr. Swatantra [SAI GAF]

Your current coach:

Mr. Ranbir Sharma [SAI]

Your favorite Indian swimmer (if any & why):

My favorite Indian swimmer is Murlikant Petkar. He is a true inspiration because of his extraordinary determination, resilience, and courage in overcoming adversity. Despite sustaining severe injuries while serving the nation, he went on to create history by becoming India's first Paralympic gold medalist.

His journey reflects the power of perseverance, dedication, mental strength, and self-belief. He proved that no obstacle is too great when a person remains focused on their goals. His achievements continue to inspire athletes across generations, especially para athletes, to believe in themselves and strive for excellence.

Your favorite International swimmer (if any & why):

My favorite international swimmer is Michael Phelps. I admire him for his versatility, consistency, and dedication across multiple swimming events. He is a major source of inspiration for me because of his extraordinary achievements, unmatched work ethic, mental toughness, and record-breaking success at the Olympic Games, especially during the 2008 Olympics.

His commitment to excellence and his ability to perform under pressure at the highest level motivate me to continuously improve myself and pursue my own goals in swimming with discipline, focus, and determination.

Your main swimming event :-

50m Freestyle

100m Freestyle

100m Breast Stroke

200m Individual Medley



Turning Point in Life:

In 2021, I suffered a major accident that resulted in two hip-joint surgeries within a span of six months. During my recovery process, my doctor recommended swimming therapy as part of rehabilitation, and my father introduced me to swimming by teaching me the basics in the water. Within just three days, I discovered a deep passion for the sport and decided to pursue swimming professionally.

I participated in my first swimming competition within 27 days of starting training and delivered a strong performance, which gave me the confidence and motivation to continue my journey in competitive swimming. Through dedication, discipline, and perseverance, I later earned the opportunity to train at Talkatora Stadium and was selected for coaching support under the Glenmark Aquatic Foundation.

A major turning point in my para swimming journey was receiving guidance and support from Mr. Ranbir Sharma, who introduced me to para swimming and continuously motivated me to believe in my abilities. His mentorship, technical guidance, and strong support played a vital role in my development as a para swimmer and helped me reach the national podium at the Para National Championships.

Most Cherished moment is life:

One of the most memorable moments of my swimming journey was winning 2 Gold Medals and 1 Silver Medal, along with setting a National Record, at my first Para National Swimming Championship held in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, in March 2023.

This achievement was possible under the guidance of Mr. Ranbir Sharma, whose support, training, and motivation played a major role in my success. That competition became a turning point in my career, giving me confidence, recognition, and the motivation to aim for higher achievements in para swimming.

Major Swimming Achievements :-

Holds multiple National Records in Para Swimming events under the S10 Sub-Junior category.

Achieved 3rd All India Ranking in the S10 category after competing at the sub-junior level.

Won 2 Gold Medals and 1 Silver Medal at the first Para National Swimming Championship (2023–24).

Secured 3 Gold Medals at the Para National Swimming Championship (2024–25).

Won 3 Gold Medals at the Para National Swimming Championship (2025–26).

These achievements reflect consistent dedication, discipline, and continuous progress in competitive para swimming at the national level.

Awarded / Major Award/ Recognition in the year: N/A

I give credit of my success to: -

I give credit for my success to my entire family and my coaches, whose constant support, guidance, motivation, and belief in me have played a major role throughout my journey. Their encouragement during both difficult and successful moments has helped me stay focused, confident, and dedicated toward achieving my goals in swimming.

What are the challenges involved in coaching elite swimmers?

Coaching elite swimmers involves several challenges, as it requires maintaining a balance between high-performance training, injury prevention, and proper recovery. At the elite level, athletes train with intense physical and mental demands, so coaches must carefully monitor workload, technique, recovery, and overall performance.

Another major challenge is managing mental pressure, motivation, and competition stress, especially before important national and international events. Every swimmer responds differently to training and pressure, which makes personalized training plans and effective communication extremely important.

Coaches also need to focus on technical development, race strategy, nutrition, recovery, and long-term athlete development while ensuring that swimmers remain motivated and mentally strong throughout the season. In para and deaf swimming, additional patience, adaptability, and specialized coaching approaches are often required to meet the individual needs of each athlete and help them perform at their highest potential.

What is your advice to elite swimmers:-

My advice to elite swimmers is to remain disciplined, trust the training process, and stay resilient through every challenge. Success in swimming, as in any sport, is not achieved overnight; it is built through consistent effort, dedication, perseverance, and an unwavering belief in oneself.

Athletes should embrace a mindset of continuous learning, strive for constant improvement, and never be afraid to push beyond their perceived limits. Every challenge, setback, and disappointment offers a valuable opportunity for growth and self-development. The journey to excellence is rarely easy, but those who remain focused, maintain a positive attitude, and stay committed to their goals are the ones who ultimately succeed.

Most importantly, remember that true champions are not defined solely by their victories, but by their ability to overcome adversity, rise stronger after setbacks, and continue pursuing greatness with passion and determination. Believe in your abilities, trust your journey, and never stop striving to become the best version of yourself.

What are the challenges you faced, if any, in training the differently abled swimmers?

Training differently abled swimmers requires adapting coaching methods to meet each athlete's unique physical abilities and needs. One of the key challenges is developing individualized training programs while ensuring safety, confidence, and effective skill development. However, with patience, proper communication, and a supportive environment, these challenges can be transformed into opportunities to help athletes achieve their full potential.

However, with determination, proper coaching, family support, patience, and mutual understanding between the athlete and coach, these challenges can be successfully overcome, allowing swimmers to perform at their highest potential.

How can Indian Swimming Progress:

Indian swimmers are highly motivated and possess immense potential; however, their progress is often hindered by inadequate infrastructure and insufficient institutional support.

To elevate Indian swimming, there must be transparent governance, strict monitoring, and effective enforcement of sports policies. Greater investment is needed in world-class facilities, specialized coaching, and dedicated training programs for para swimmers. Motivation and athlete-development programs should also be strengthened to encourage long-term participation and excellence. Additionally, financial assistance for equipment, training, and competition expenses must be provided with strict oversight to ensure that benefits and award money reach athletes directly and fairly.

It is also important to educate and professionally train coaches so they can better understand the needs of athletes with disabilities. Upgrading sports infrastructure, improving awareness, and developing a positive and inclusive mindset among coaches will help create equal opportunities for every athlete to succeed.

What all has changed for good in Indian swimming since you started swimming?

Since I started swimming, Indian swimming especially para swimming has seen many positive changes and encouraging growth. Today, there is greater awareness, recognition, and respect for para athletes, along with increased opportunities to compete at national and international levels.

Access to specialized coaching, classification systems, scientific training methods, and athlete support programs has also improved over the years. More swimmers are now receiving professional guidance, better exposure, and opportunities to participate in high-level competitions.

Most importantly, para swimmers today receive greater visibility, encouragement, and support from coaches, organizations, and society, which helps athletes pursue the sport with more confidence, motivation, and ambition. Although there is still room for improvement, these positive developments are helping Indian swimming move steadily toward higher international standards.

How are you contributing currently to Indian Swimming?

I try to contribute to Indian swimming in every possible way through my performances, dedication, discipline, and achievements in the sport. By winning gold medals and competing at a high level, I hope to inspire and encourage people with disabilities to take up swimming and believe in their abilities.

Through my journey, I want to prove that physical challenges should never stop anyone from pursuing their dreams. I aim to motivate para athletes and differently-abled youth to work hard, stay confident, and proudly represent India at national and international competitions.

I also believe that every achievement by a para athlete helps increase awareness and recognition for para sports in India. By continuously improving myself and striving for excellence, I hope to contribute to the growth of Indian para swimming and inspire the next generation of athletes to dream big and never give up.

How do you see yourself five years from now?

If I continue to receive quality training, proper support, and guidance, I see myself representing India at the highest levels of international para swimming within the next five years. My goal is to consistently improve my performance, achieve major international success, and proudly contribute toward India's growth in para sports.

I strongly believe that with the right environment, scientific training, and experienced coaching, I can achieve even greater milestones and work toward winning a Paralympic medal for India. It is my dream to contribute to the vision of our Hon'ble Prime Minister and Sports Minister, who continue to encourage Indian athletes to achieve excellence at the global level.

A major source of inspiration and support in my journey has been my coach, Mr. Ranbir Sharma, who guided and motivated me throughout my para swimming career. He is recognized for coaching visually impaired swimmer Himanshu Nandal, who achieved Paralympic qualification under his guidance. Training under such experienced and dedicated coaches gives athletes like me the confidence to dream bigger and perform at a much higher level.

Beyond my personal achievements, I also hope to inspire other para athletes and contribute to the development and recognition of para swimming in India.

Message:

My message to every athlete is to dream big, work hard, and never allow circumstances to define your limits. Push yourself beyond what you think is possible, stay mentally strong during difficult times, and fuel your journey with discipline, proper nutrition, and consistent effort.

Life will always bring challenges, failures, and moments of doubt, but every setback carries a lesson that helps you grow stronger and wiser. Champions are not the ones who never fail; they are the ones who rise every time they fall and continue moving forward with courage and determination.

Believe in yourself even when the path seems difficult. Stay focused on your goals, trust the process, and always work on quality rather than quantity. Success does not come overnight it is built through patience, perseverance, discipline, and self-belief.

With dedication, resilience, and an unwavering spirit, no obstacle is too great and no dream is beyond reach. Keep moving forward, because your greatest achievement may be just one more effort away.

MEENAKSHI PAHUJA

