



BLUFIN FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

From November 2018 to November 2024

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OVERVIEW

This document contains a detailed account of the activities of BluFin Foundation since its inception in November 2018 till November 2024. For more information on the foundation and it's activities, visit

www.blufinfoundation.com



BLUFIN FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

Who are we and what are we trying to do?

VISION OF THE TRUST

BluFin Foundation was founded with a vision to foster and support the under-represented fraternity of athletes in India towards success at the highest levels, and to develop the sporting ecosystem and budding talent from the lowest levels.

The idea behind starting a sports foundation was hatched by Paralympic Swimmer and Arjuna Awardee, Sharath Gayakwad. As an athlete who was supported by great organisations throughout his career, Sharath wanted to start giving back to the sporting ecosystem by identifying and supporting great talent that has largely remained unsupported.

BluFin Foundation aims to identify, foster and support sporting individuals, to provide access to the opportunities offered to the athletes of India, and also nurture the sporting ecosystem.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF SHARATH GAYAKWAD

- ◆ First-ever Indian to qualify for the Paralympic Games and finished 9th in the 2012 London Paralympic Games.
- ◆ He has won 96 medals, 55 domestic and 41 international, making him one of the most accomplished Indian Paralympic athletes.
- ◆ Asian record-holder in his category in two events - 50m Butterfly and 50m Breaststroke.
- ◆ Awarded the prestigious Arjuna Award in 2015 by the President of India.



"I have been lucky enough to have great coaches, mentors and organisations support my career. And I see a huge fraternity of athletes who deserve the same opportunities. Sports should be accessible to all, and the ones who excel must be supported in their journeys."

- Sharath Gayakwad
Co-Founder & Trustee, BluFin Foundation

ACTIVITIES WITH TIMELINE

A detailed account of the activities undertaken yearly with a brief on the impact

2018
to
2019



BLUFIN FOUNDATION GETS REGISTERED

On 13 November 2018, BluFin Foundation gets officially registered as a Trust. Sharath Gayakwad, Mahadevrao Gayakwad, Vyshak Iyengar and Amar B P form the group of Trustees.



ESTABLISHMENT OF PARTNER NETWORK

BluFin Foundation onboards 2 experts into its partner network -

- ◆ Mahesh Kumar - S&C coach, Trainer for a Pro Kabaddi Team and Karnataka Basketball Team
- ◆ Silky Mahajan - Renowned Sports Nutritionist

LAUNCH OF CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN

BluFin Foundation kicks off a crowdfunding campaign during its official launch at the Pooja Aquatic Centre in Bengaluru.

The campaign results in a total fund raise of **INR 1,90,000** to kickstart blufin operations.



2019
to
2020



JULY 2019 - GRASSROOTS PROGRAM KICKS OFF

The idea behind starting a grassroots program was to ensure that sports is inculcated as a culture in the lives of children from a very young age. It also serves as a great opportunity to find talent and start nurturing them at a young age and give them the proper support and direction.

ZEE SWIM ACADEMY BECOMES AN ECOSYSTEM PARTNER

In July 2019, BluFin Foundation Partnered with Zee Swim Academy and started the Grassroots program. 60 children from low socio-economic backgrounds were chosen and given free equipment and began training. With sports becoming an important part of their lives, it also helps them develop other intangibles like confidence development, teamwork and overall attention to fitness.



DECEMBER 2019 - FROM GRASSROOTS TO GLORY : KIDS PROGRESSION THROUGH ADVANCED TRAINING PROGRAM

One of the key goals of the Grassroots program was to identify natural talents and nurture their growth, and that was done during the month of December 2019, where 20 kids from the Grassroots program were identified and moved to the pre-competitive swimming training. The objective for these kids would be to get more focused training on their early development and eventually start swimming in local competitions.

JANUARY 2020 - BLUFIN CO-HOSTS SUCCESSFUL STATE PARA SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIP

In any sport, the need to keep competing at a high level is paramount to measure success and growth. Having known this, after a gap of almost 3 years, BluFin Foundation played an integral role in lobbying and co-organising the Karnataka State Para Swimming Championship.



The competition proved to be a major success as athletes from all over the state were invited to participate. The performances given by them helped set benchmarks for their growth and the timings set by them were officially recognised for future state and national level competitions. This event kickstarted the idea of working with sports bodies to organise tournaments for athletes in an attempt to push them to keep competing at a high level and not lose touch with their growth.

MARCH 2020 - CORONAVIRUS HALTS ALL ACTIVITIES

Due to the Coronavirus outbreak, all public activities were ordered to be stopped and there was a government mandated lockdown.

All activities that BluFin was involved in were directly affected and the progress was halted. Nevertheless, we continued to pursue activities that could bring impact without having any physical operations in place.

2020
to
2021



NOVEMBER 2020 - PUNITH N WINS NATIONAL AWARD

Punith Nandakumar, a para swimmer who has been coached by Sharath Gayakwad and has been associated with the BluFin Foundation gets the National Award 2020 – Best Sportsperson with disability from Honorable President of India. Ekalavya Award 2019 from the Government of Karnataka for his success in Para Swimming.



FEBRUARY 2021 - GRASSROOTS PROGRAM RESTARTS

With the Karnataka government relaxing the restrictions on swimming pools in Bangalore, BluFin Foundation restarted pre-competitive training for the 20 kids who were promoted from the Grassroots program. However, the state then re-imposed restrictions within 2 weeks of the relaxation and the program had to be shut down again.

MARCH 2021 - FUNDING FROM ANTRAPRERNA VENTURES AND ACCEL PARTNERS

We are very proud to announce a fundraising partnership with Antraprerma Ventures, led by Ms. Sangeeta Mahendran. Not only are they supporting BluFin financially, but also by opening doors to obtain financial support from their partners and network as well.



Antraprerma Ventures

Accel

Through the partnership with Antraprerma Ventures, another door opened in the form of a financial grant from Accel Partners, a global VC fund. This was a result of them believing in our vision and mission and wanting to support the sporting fraternity.



AUGUST 2021 - INTERVIEW WITH FARHAN AKTHAR ON FEVER 104 FM

On the eve of the launch of "Toofan", a sports movie starring Farhan Akthar, Fever 104 FM conducted an interview with Sharath Gayakwad and the movie star, where the activities conducted by BluFin Foundation were recognised and appreciated by the Toofan team. Farhan Akthar also spoke highly of Sharath Gayakwad and his achievements throughout his career.

2021
to
2022



AUGUST 2021 - OFFICIAL SIGNING OF 4 PARASWIMMERS

15th August 2021 proved to be a momentous day, not only for the country, but also for the BluFin foundation. A day when 4 para swimmers were officially signed by the Foundation to provide financial, and ecosystem support to progress their careers at the national and international levels. With competitive sports restarting post the pandemic, it became imperative that elite athletes restart their careers and BluFin is proud to stand behind them as they do so. The swimmers are Punith Nandakumar, Gopichand Lingutla, Yojit Nallana, and Prathamesh S Kapade.



ATHLETES PROFILE



PUNITH NANDAKUMAR

PARA-SWIMMING

Age : 24 years

Blufin Program : For the Win

ACHIEVEMENTS

International :

2 Gold 4 Silver 3 Bronze

National :

11 Gold 13 Silver 4 Bronze

AWARDS

State : Ekalavya Award 2019

National : National Award 2020 - best sports person with a disability

2018 Asian Para Games, Indonesia - Finalist (4th Place)

2023 Asian Para Games

Asian Record Holder for 200m butterfly

PARA-SWIMMING

Age : 18 years

Blufin Program : For the Win

ACHIEVEMENTS

International :

2 Gold

National :

9 Gold

2021 Asian Youth Para Games, Bahrain - Top 10 finish

2023 Asian Para Games



GOPICHAND LINGUTLA



YOJIT NALLANA

PARA-SWIMMING

Age : 18 years

Blufin Program : For the Win

ACHIEVEMENTS

International :

 **2 Gold**  **1 Silver**

National :

 **4 Gold**  **2 Silver**

2021 Asian Youth Para Games, Bahrain - Top 10 finish

PARA-SWIMMING

Age : 23 years




Blufin Program : For the Win

ACHIEVEMENTS

International :

 **4 Gold**  **1 Silver**

National :

 **7 Gold**  **5 Silver**  **5 Bronze**

National Record holder in 400m Freestyle



PRATHAMESH SAMBHAJI KAPADE



AUGUST 2021 - MEDICAL ASSESSMENT FOR ATHLETES

A critical aspect of any athlete's development is to ensure physical fitness not just externally, but also internally and it is especially critical in para swimming. Hence, BluFin Foundation conducted full body assessments on all the 4 newly signed paraswimmers.

Along with a full body assessment, a water assessment which involves a lactate acid test was also conducted at the Zee Swim Academy. We were pleased to see the athletes in fine form thanks to the efforts of the nutrition plan and fitness plans provided to them by the coaches and experts.



SEPTEMBER 2021 - HIGH-END GEAR FOR PARA SWIMMERS

One of the most critical aspects of an athlete's preparation is their equipment and gear and we believe it plays a huge part. For our para swimmers who compete at the international level, it is most important to have access to the best equipment in order to prepare for their elite competition.

With this in mind, BluFin provided the latest set of swimming gear and equipment by TYR to the signed swimmers.



DECEMBER 2021 - 2 PARA SWIMMERS PARTICIPATE IN ASIAN YOUTH GAMES

Gopichand L and Yojit N participated in the Asian Youth Para Games conducted in Bahrain and finished in the top 10 and top 15 in their respective categories.

The standout in this event was the fact that both swimmers were able to give their best performance to date. This has definitely been due to continued efforts they have put in along with the support of the coaching staff and the Foundation. For these swimmers, this competition is the start of many more to come as they set their sights on more medals and further development.



JANUARY 2022 – PARTNERSHIP WITH MLCA SPORTS ACADEMY CALIFORNIA USA

BLUFIN FOUNDATION STRIKES PARTNERSHIP WITH MAJOR LEAGUE CRICKET ACADEMY: A STEP TOWARDS EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ATHLETE

The Blufin Foundation partnered with the Major League Cricket Academy (MLCA), a reputed professional cricket academy based in California, USA. The partnership is aimed at providing our athletes with access to the best possible training and resources to help them excel in their chosen sport.

The Blufin Foundation has always been committed to empowering athletes and providing them with the resources they need to reach their full potential. With the help of this partnership, our athletes will have access to the state-of-the-art training practices, sporting philosophies, athlete management skills, competition preparation, and more that MLCA has to offer. The partnership will be implemented by providing our athletes with access to the facilities, resources, and expertise offered by MLCA. This will include training sessions, workshops, and mentoring opportunities, as well as opportunities to participate in competitions and events organized by MLCA. We believe that this partnership will provide our athletes with the opportunity to take their training and performances to the next level, and we are excited to see the results that this collaboration will bring.



MARCH 2022 - FUNDING FROM KALEYRA

Kalyera is a NYSE-listed global CPaaS company. With strong ideals towards supporting sports, Kaleyra believed in the vision of the BluFin Foundation and made a significant contribution of INR 9,00,000 towards the goals of the foundation. BluFin Foundation would like to extend its sincerest gratitude to Kaleyra and hope that the company will be able to provide future support as well.

MARCH 2022 - PARTNERSHIP WITH FAST & UP

Fast & Up is a major company which manufactures and sells nutrition supplements and related products. In March 2022, Fast & Up entered into a partnership with BluFin Foundation to subsidise the products that would be bought and used by BluFin athletes. With this, Fast & Up played a major role in contributing towards the nutritional goals of the athletes.



Nutrition forms a major part of the development process of all individuals, but for athletes, it is even more so since their physical development is key to improvement in their performance. BluFin would like to extend its gratitude to Fast & Up and hope that it continues to be a long lasting and mutually beneficial partnership.

BLUFIN ADDS 3 MORE INTERNATIONAL ATHLETES INTO ITS PORTFOLIO THROUGH CARL ZEISS BACKING

Signing of BWF world rank 72 doubles badminton players Ashith Surya and Vasantha Kumar, and junior international swimming sensation Pavan Dhananjaya. Carl Zeiss came on board as donors to support three international athletes



Seeing beyond

ATHLETES PROFILE



PAVAN DHANANJAYA

SWIMMING

Age : 16 years

Blufin Program : For the Win

ACHIEVEMENTS

International :

 **1 Bronze**

National :

 **9 Gold**

 **1 Silver**

Junior National Aquatic Championships 2021 - 5 gold, Individual championship

BADMINTON


Age : 28 years

Blufin Program : For the Win

ACHIEVEMENTS

International :

 **9 Gold**

 **2 Bronze**

National :

 **2 Bronze**

State Rank : 1

AWARDS

Best BWF International rank: 71

Current BWF Rank Men's doubles: 72



VASANTHA KUMAR



ASHITH SURYA

BADMINTON

Age : 27 years

Blufin Program : For the Win

ACHIEVEMENTS

International :

 **1 Gold**
 **1 Silver**
 **2 Bronze**

Representing Karnataka Badminton association:
All India senior ranking 2020 - Bronze

AWARDS

Best BWF International rank: 71
Current BWF Rank Men's doubles: 72
Mixed doubles: 109

BLUFIN ATHELETES BAG 10 MEDALS AT NATIONAL PARA-SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIP

 <p>PUNITH NANDAKUMAR</p> <p> x 1  x 3</p>	 <p>GOPICHAND LINGUTLA</p> <p> x 1  x 2</p>	 <p>YOJIT NALLANA</p> <p> x 1  x 2</p>
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MARCH 2022 - 10 MEDALS AT THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Gopichand L, Yojit N and Punith N all participated in the National Para-swimming championships in Rajasthan and won a major haul of 10 medals overall. This is a significant milestone in their career development and is also a huge validation to the amazing work being done by them, their coaches and consultants along with the BluFin Foundation.

**2022
to
2023**

PAVAN BAGS 6 MEDALS AT VIENNA INTERNATIONAL SWIM MEET

	 x 4
	 x 1
	 x 1

MAY 2022 - PAVAN DHANANJAY BRINGS GLORY

A rising star in the swimming fraternity, Pavan Dhananjay, was signed on as an athlete of BluFin Foundation and provided the support he needed to take his growth to the next level. In a short span of time, he proved just how good he is by winning a big haul of medals at multiple competitions.



Pavan won 6 medals, including 4 Gold, 1 Silver and 1 Bronze at the Vienna International Swimming Competition. This played a big step in putting him on the map as he gave his best performance till date and achieved a career-best timing.

Pavan also participated in the Karnataka Junior Swimming Championship where he won 7 medals, including 4 Gold, 1 Silver and 2 Bronze. It gives great satisfaction to see young

athletes perform above expectations and we hope to see this continue. In September 2022, Pavan also participated in the FINA World Junior Open Water Championship in Seychelles.

AUGUST 2022 - RE-STARTING GRASSROOTS PROGRAM

A new start to the Grassroots program happened in August 2022, as 25 more kids from low socio economic backgrounds were identified and brought in. As the country recovered from the pandemic and the healthcare situation became fully normal, kids were brought back into the pools. The 17 kids promoted to the pre-competitive phase were also part of this re-start and are on track to take part in local competitions later in the year.



NOVEMBER 2022 - GLORY AT THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

All 4 BluFin Para swimmers participated in the National Championships held at Guwahati this year and performed exceedingly well, bringing home 12 medals in total.

This has been a huge inspiration to the BluFin foundation to further the work being done and to focus on achievements at a higher level.

The next steps that will be taken for these athletes will be to prepare for the Asian Games 2023 to be held in China.

NOVEMBER 2022 - GRASSROOTS KIDS PARTICIPATE IN THE ZEE SWIM ACADEMY GRAND PRIX 2022

It was an exciting day for the BluFin Foundation as 8 of our kids from the 'Grassroots' program took part in the Zee Swim Academy grand Prix and finished with fantastic timings. This gives us great hope to take them towards the state championships in the coming months and years.



'Grassroots' program was started in partnership with Zee Swim Academy and Shishu Mandir to provide free training to kids from poor socio-economic backgrounds and enable career opportunities in Sports.

December 2022 - Gopichand swims at the Cairo Open International Para Swimming Championships

Gopichand got international classification done at Cairo International Open Swimming Championship 2022 Class S7, SB7, SM7

This makes him eligible to get his timings listed in the world rankings and also makes him eligible to qualify for major championships like Paralympics, World Championship, Asian Para Games and Commonwealth Games in the future



2023
to
2024



APRIL 2023 - GOPICHAND LINGULTA GIFTED WHEELCHAIR IN COLLABORATION OF NEOMOTION WITH ROUNDTABLE AND PAYPAL

One of our talented paraswimmers, Gopichand, has been awarded the Neobolt Wheelchair Scooter by Neomotion. This has been done alongside a collaboration with Roundtable and Paypal.

This initiative has been very important for our athletes as it addresses a critical need in our society for the use of more accessible transportation and mobility, something we are incredibly grateful for.

EMBRACING EQUALITY TOGETHER



WELCOMING TOWARDS EQUAL FOUNDATION TO THE BLUFIN FAMILY

APRIL 2023 - EXCITING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BLUFIN AND TOWARDS EQUAL FOUNDATION

A great day for Blufin, as a partnership is formed with the Towards Equal Foundation, in support of our grassroots and para sports work. Together, both foundations aim to promote the inclusivity in sports and hope to create wider opportunities for the diverse athletes in our foundations to thrive and achieve remarkable events.

MAY 2023 - VICTORY FOR PUNITH NANDAKUMAR AT WORLD PARA SWIMMING SINGAPORE

Punith Nandakumar recently participated in WPS World Series in Singapore and was able to achieve the season's best times. His incredible performance in the 400m freestyle also saw him finish in top 4 in his class, in the whole of Asia. All these achievements have allowed him to further qualify for APG 2023



SEPTEMBER 2023 - PARTICIPATION IN ASIAN PARA GAMES

The Blufin Foundation celebrates a milestone in 2023, with two para-swimmers, Punith Nandakumar and Gopi, representing India at the Asian Para Games 2023. Both athletes are part of an elite group of 14 para-swimmers training at the national camp. Adding to the achievement, co-founder Sharath Torpedo serves as the assistant coach for Team India, marking a proud moment for the foundation.

OCTOBER 2023 - EXCITING TIMES DUE TO CHAMPIONS' ARRIVAL IN CHINA

Team India geared up for the 4th Para Games, which proved to be a proud moment, as 2 of the 14 athletes were our own Blufin athletes. As well as that, Blufin's cofounder helped aid and coach the team, showing the support the foundation has for all the athletes.

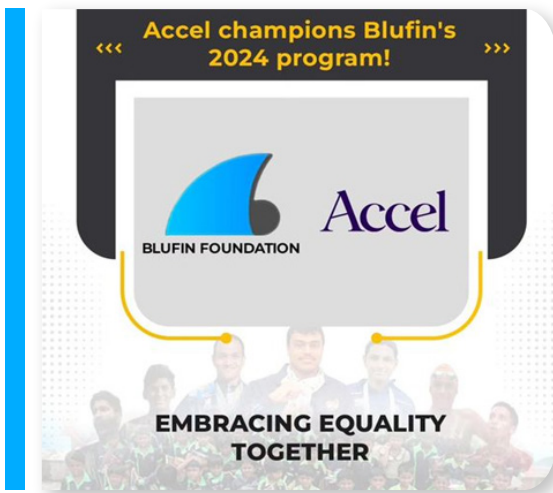


2024 to 2025



FEBRUARY 2024 - GRASSROOTS PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AT SPORTS MEET

30 young swimmers from Blufin's grassroots program showcased outstanding performance at the 2nd Jasper Sports Meet. The girls secured a silver medal in the 4x50m freestyle relay and a bronze in the 25m kickboard race. This marks only their third competition, making these achievements even more remarkable. The foundation is proud of their progress and looks forward to more successes as they continue their swimming journey.

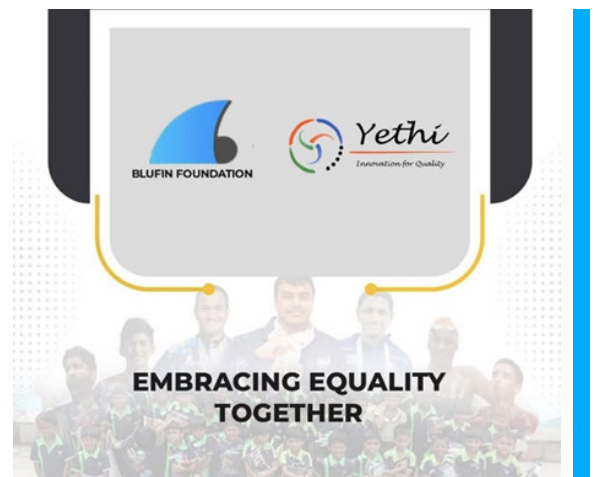


FEBRUARY 2024 - ACCEL SUPPORTS BLUFIN FOR THE 2024 PROGRAM

Support bolsters Blufin Foundation as Accel, venture capital firm, will champion the 2024 program. The advance stems from the shared belief that we share with Accel: the importance of individual development and sporting achievements that we want our grassroots athletes to achieve. The support will aid the kids and have a momentous impact on their lives, helping them become more accomplished people, as well as athletes.

MAY 2024 - SUPPORT FROM FIRM YETHI CONSULTING

Blufin foundation has started receiving support from Yethi Consulting in accordance with our 2024 programs. This partnership will be the next step in accelerating efforts and making profound impacts on the lives of many children.





JUNE 2024 - SHARATH GAYAKWAD DELIVERS STORY AT YETHI CONSULTING'S OFFICE

Our co-founder Sharath Gayakwad shared his inspiring journey at Yethi Consulting's office, captivating the audience with his inspirational story of overcoming challenges and achieving international success in Para-swimming. Gayakwad also provided updates on Blufin's impact over the past six years, highlighting the growing commitment to para-sports and grass-roots.

JUNE 2024 - NEW SWIMMING ASIAN RECORD ACHIEVED BY PUNITH NANDAKUMAR

Victory was achieved at the Para Swimming World Series in Berlin. Our champion para-swimmer, Punith Nandakumar etched his name into history by setting a New Asian Record in the 200m butterfly event in the S8 category



NOVEMBER 2024 - SUCCESS FOR OUR ATHLETES AT KARNATAKA STATE PARA SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIP

Punith Nandakumar achieved an outstanding feat by winning three gold medals, while Gopichand Lingutla secured two golds and a silver at the Karnataka State Para Swimming Championship 2024-2025. The event, sponsored by Blufin, brought together over 80 para-swimmers from across the state, showcasing their incredible skill and passion for swimming. Additionally, Blufin sponsored a team of national classifiers to support the classification process for visually and physically impaired athletes, helping them gain eligibility for national competitions.



NOVEMBER 2024 - 6 YEARS OF BLUFIN

Gratitude fills the heart of everyone who works at Blufin, as we pass the 6 year mark and celebrate all the work the exceptional athletes and the rest of the Blufin have accomplished and the work that will continue to be achieved in the future.





November 2024 - Six Medals Won at National Championships

Blufin athletes Punith Nandakumar and Gopichand Lingutla excelled at the 24th National Para Swimming Championships in Goa. Punith won two golds and one silver, while Gopichand earned three silver medals, demonstrating the remarkable determination and grit they had during the competition. Blufin also proudly sponsored the Karnataka team kit, supporting these athletes and their inspiring journeys.

NOVEMBER 2024 - GRASSROOTS PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AT THE EUROSCHOOL COMPETITION

23 kids from our grassroots program took part in the EuroSchool Invictus Competition. The young athletes brought home 5 medals: 1 silver, 1 bronze and another 3 bronze in relay events, marking a proud moment in our program, showing the resilient progress made with the kids through learning how to swim and winning medals in the span of a few years.



EXPERTS



Dr. Srinand Srinivas

Team Doctor, KXIP - IPL
Olympic Committee Licensed
Sports Medicine Specialist



Mahesh Kumar

Strength and Conditioning
Coach
Pro-kabaddi and Karnataka
basketball team trainer



Anirudh Kulkarni

Legal Advisor
Advocate, Karnataka High
Court



Anirudh Dutt

Founder & CEO, Let's be the
change, one of the biggest
NGOs in sustainability & solid
waste management



Silky Mahajan

Renowned Sports Nutrition
Expert Medicine Specialist



Cheryl Braggs

Communications and content
specialist



SHARATH GAYAKWAD
Trustee

International Para swimmer,
Arjuna awardee



VYSHAK IYENGAR
Trustee

Strategy Consultant



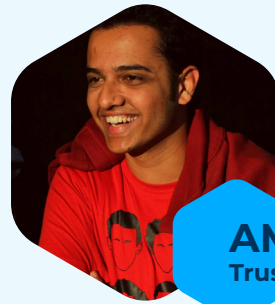
ASHWIN SURESH
Growth

Product Growth, Big Tech



BHUVAN NAGARAJ
Tech

Engineering Lead, Scaleup



AMAR PRABHU
Trustee

Strategy Consultant



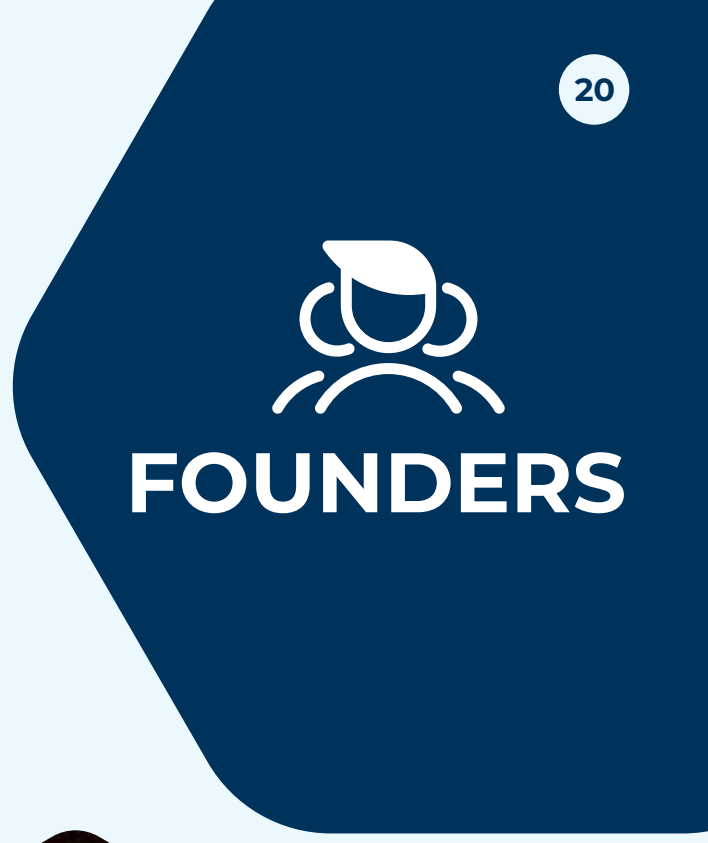
PAVAN KUMAR
Marketing

Sales Lead, Scaleup



NIDHISH KUDWALLI
Programs

Swim coach & National softball player



BangaloreMirror

Tue Feb 14, 2023 MUMBAI MIRROR | PUNE MIRROR

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HOME / BANGALORE / OTHER / PUSH TO BUILD A DREAM ON

Push to build a dream on

Bangalore Mirror Bureau / Updated: Mar 12, 2022, 12:50 IST



By Melvin Mathew

'Para-athletes do not receive recognition as able-bodied counterparts'

Para-athletes across the country, especially the under-recognised, have another chance to shine now. A city-based NGO is on a quest to spot the next top para-athlete and provide training.

Apart from having to overcome disabilities, para-athletes do not receive the kind of recognition as their able-bodied counterparts. In most cases, despite national-level achievements, they still need employment to meet financial needs.

The programme focusing on the development of para-athletes is spearheaded by paralympic swimmer and coach Sharath Gayakwad.



SOCIALSTORY

SOCIAL IMPACT >

BluFin Foundation led by Paralympian Sharath Gayakwad aims to nurture and develop an inclusive sporting ecosystem

This Bengaluru-based organisation wants to bring sports to the underprivileged and the differently-abled through a number of programmes.

Rekha Balakrishnan • 1724 Stories



Friday August 30, 2024, 6 min Read

When Vyshak Iyengar was pursuing his undergraduate course in engineering, he, along with a group of friends, volunteered with Be The Change, a sustainability-focused NGO in Bengaluru.

There he met Paralympic swimmer Sharath Gayakwad, also a volunteer, and they became friends. In 2017, they teamed up, along with Iyengar's friends, to start BluFin Foundation to bring sports to the underprivileged and the differently-abled through a number of programmes.



SPORTS-CUT
Mar 25 - Mar 31, 2022

OUR BANGALORE | 7

A HELPING HAND TO REACH SPORTING GLORY

With an aim to provide wings to athletes from the weaker sections of society and the vision to uplift the status of para athletes, BluFin Foundation looks to provide not only a national, but also an international platform, for promising sportspeople

Dirig JV

This entails an inspiring story of seven like-minded folks passionate about sports who are supporting athletes from economically weaker sections at the national and international level. To know more about BluFin, we spoke to one of its founders, Vyshak Iyengar. And this is what he had to say:

What is BluFin? And what do you do?

BluFin is a Bangalore-based sports foundation founded in 2019. Our focus is on building sports at the grassroots and uplifting para sports.

We have two programs - "Grassroots" and "For the Win". In the grassroots program we are training 17 kids from economically weaker sections in partnership with Shishu Mandir. We started with 60 kids who had never seen a swimming pool in their life and now we have trained 17 kids to level 2 who can swim in a full Olympic-sized pool freely. The other 53 kids plus 17 new kids will continue to level 1 - the first agenda is for kids to enjoy waters. After that it's about them learning a life skill and also identifying talented kids for training. We went to the 17 kids in level 2 to participate in state championships next year.

"For the Win" is focused on elite athletes at the international level. During the pandemic, we saw a lot of athletes, especially para athletes, lose sponsorships. We started this program to start supporting these athletes. We are now backing four international para swimmers, two international badminton players and are currently in the process of signing a young international swimmer. We take care of end-to-end requirements ranging from financial backing to coaching for these athletes based on their requirement.

Who all are a part of this? Please introduce your founding team to our readers

BluFin Foundation has seven co-founders and is led by Sharath Gayakwad. Apart from me,



6 Asian games medal. Forbes 30 U 30 Asia.

- CO-FOUNDERS:**
- SHARATH GAYAKWAD**
Managing Trustee
 - VYSHAK IYENGAR**
Trustee - Leads Strategy, Partnerships, and growth at BluFin. Also a management consultant at a leading global consulting firm
 - ANAR PRASAD**
Trustee - Leads finance, legal and operations at BluFin. Full time into enterprise sales at an AI startup
 - BRUNAV NAGRAJ**
Leads Technology for BluFin. He is full-time full stack developer at an AI startup
 - INDRANIL KUNJIL**
Leads programs at BluFin. Nidhi is a national level soft ball player and a swim coach
 - ANAR KUMAR**
Leads Marketing at BluFin. He is into enterprise sales at an AI startup
 - ASHWIN KUMAR**
Leads Data and Analytics at BluFin. He is based out of the US and works as a data analyst at a silicon valley based startup

How did you all come up with this idea? Was there any particular triggering incident?

All of us met regularly at LBFC events and that is where we met Sharath. During our 1st year of engineering, we got the opportunity to spend an evening with Sharath and listen to his incredible story. He got into swimming by accident and it changed his whole life. It was so inspiring to listen to - one small incident led him to an unbelievable career where he was Asia's #1 and one of the most successful para swimmers India has ever produced. We wanted to work with him in any capacity. This is probably when the intent to do something with him really originated. Slowly, all seven like-minded people started joining and discussing sports.

How are you managing the expenses now?

BluFin is an 80G and 12A certified organization and we are very fortunate to have great CSR partners such as Anantapurna Ventures, Accel Partners India and Kalyani. They have been an amazing support to our pursuit to enable our athletes.



Are there any other challenges you are facing? What's your next plan?

A major problem that we are facing is the challenge to scale up and support more athletes. We know a lot of incredibly talented and successful athletes who need support in their journey but we are unable to support all of them due to our funding constraints. We need to raise more funds to support more athletes.

Do you want to share a couple of success stories of your athletes with us?

This is why we are now making a slow but exciting transition from sponsorship-led to an ecosystem-led model where we are building non-commercial partnerships. We are building partnerships with nutrition, gear, physio, psychologists all the way in legal. This way we can support a lot many athletes through our ecosystem while we continue to sponsor other athletes. We believe that this would be a great enabler in our journey to scale.

The first thing that comes to our mind is BluFin's journey itself. We started our as a very small non-profit focused only on grassroots. The pandemic pushed us into the elite athletes' pool and we are extremely happy in the way our team responded in scaling this program over the last 18 months. 2. Few of our athletes, before we signed, were already training in their hometowns. While what they did was good enough for nationals, it was insufficient for international competitions. We are now able to get them relocated to Bangalore, closer to our training facility and personally coached by Sharath. They go back home only for exams and then come back for training in Bangalore. With time, we should be able to afford and support world class facilities for all of our athletes and open the ecosystem to many other deserving athletes. Facing times ahead for BluFin.



THE LOGICAL INDIAN

All section



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INCLUSIVITY

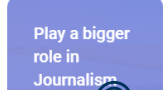
Advocating Accessibility! This Foundation Works Towards Taking Sports To The Grassroots

Writer: Akanksha Saxena (Digital Journalist)
Karnataka, 26 Nov 2021 7:10 PM | Updated 26 Nov 2021 7:27 PM
Editor: Snehadri Sarkar | Creatives: Akanksha Saxena

Six childhood friends hailing from Bengaluru came up with 'BluFin Foundation' to make sports, especially swimming, more accessible. They also train underprivileged children for free providing them will equal opportunities.

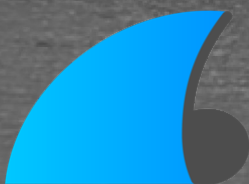
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In recent times, accessibility has become the need of the hour. There is an increasing demand for inclusive facilities in every sector, catering to every kind of person. Many people have dedicated themselves to working towards this goal and making the world a better place to live.



During the course of these 6 years, there is significant learning that has come about for the team at BluFin and that is also to actively look for opportunities in other sports. The next focus areas will be on para TT, athletics and badminton, while continuing to grow the support for the existing programs.

BluFin Foundation would also like to provide sincere gratitude to other partners such as Cartoon Mango, who helped develop the website; Mr. Anirudh Kulkarni, who has been the legal counsel; and Mr. Sunil Jain who has been a strategy consultant and also the finance and accounting head. Sincere thanks to Mr. Anirudh Dutt, Founder of Let's Be The Change, who has been integral in guiding the foundation in the right direction.



BLUFIN FOUNDATION

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