



MONALISA BARUA MEHTA

A Tryst With Table Tennis

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Monalisa Barua Mehta, recipient of the prestigious Arjuna Award, is one of the most famous Assamese athletes in the field of table tennis. She was born to late Gopal Barua and Mrs. Arati Barua in Nagaon. Nicknamed as Mithoo, Monalisa completed her schooling from St. Mary's School, Guwahati. After completing her schooling from St. Mary's School, she completed her graduation from Cotton College, Guwahati, with Honours in English.

Monalisa got introduced to table tennis by her aunt who was also a table tennis player in her early years. Monalisa started formal training in table tennis at the age of 11. She rigidly followed her daily training schedule and that was one of the key reasons for her success. Along with sports, she paid equal attention to her studies as well. During her college days, she used to carry her textbooks along with her while taking part in competitions and used to switch over to her books whenever she could manage some free time. This small thing shows her desire to manage her time in the best possible way for ensuring excellence both in sports and in studies.

Initially Monalisa started playing in the junior level as member of the Assam State Junior team. She won almost all the zonal championships for the junior. She underwent rigorous training under the hawk eye of her coach Nihal Singh Thakur. Encouragement from her parents also helped her in her endeavour. She won her first major championship in 1976 when she won her National Sub Junior championship. During that year she also became the runners up in National Junior championship at Allahabad. Monalisa received many accolades in her illustrious sporting career. Three years later she became National Junior Champion in the year 1979. She repeated her performance in the National Junior Championship in 1980 and became Junior Champion again. The pinnacle of her successful career was the National Championship in 1985 at Bhopal. She was the first table tennis player in India to have won National Championship in all the three categories i.e. Sub Junior, Junior and Senior. Monalisa represented India in two world Championships in the years 1985 and 1987. She also represented India in the sixth Asian Championship, two Asian Games, two Commonwealth Games, two US Opens and three Asia cup competitions. She captained India in several international championships. After her retirement from active sports, she is now involved as a coach with the Indian Junior Table Tennis Team. As the coach of Indian Junior Team, she accompanied the Junior Team to many international meets like World Pro Circuit at Vancouver, Canada in 2004, International Pro Circuit Championship at Taiyuan, China in 2006, 4th World Junior Table Tennis Championship at Cairo in 2006, World Junior Invitation Tournament at Las Vegas etc.

Monalisa got married to 8 times National Table Tennis champion and Arjuna Award winner Kamlesh Mehta in the year 1989. They are happily married and settled in Mumbai. They have got two children Sunita and Sneha. Monalisa works for public sector undertaking Oil India Limited in Mumbai. □□