

Mann Deshi   
**CHAMPIONS**

**IT NEVER GETS  
E A S I E R  
YOU JUST GET  
B E T T E R**



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# Mann Deshi CHAMPIONS

Mann Deshi Champions is an initiative of the Mann Deshi Foundation that supports rural children excel at sports. Since 2011, the Mann Deshi Champions programme has trained over 1000 athletes. 32 of these athletes have gone on to excel at state and national level championships.

Children in rural areas, although always active, are rarely given adequate sports training. Ironically, they gain many of their athletic abilities by herding sheep and buffaloes, cutting sugarcane or working at construction sites. Unfortunately they and their families remain entirely unaware of their sporting potential.

The Mann Deshi Champions programme identifies prospective outstanding athletes and nurtures and supports their overall physical, mental and social development. It offers excellent sports facilities and empowers and trains these young girls and boys to compete at the state and national level.

## Facilities offered by the Mann Deshi Champions Programme

400 meter running track as well as a volleyball, field hockey, soccer and handball ground

Equipment for all major sports

Dedicated trained coach

Sports shoes and kits

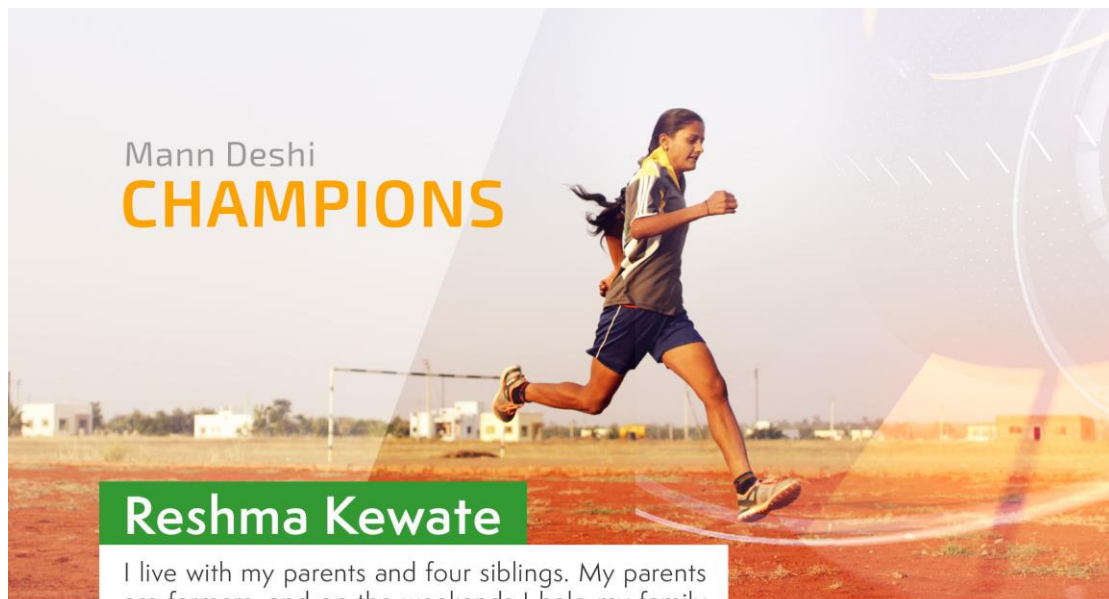
Nutritiously balanced breakfast

Annual medical camp

Winter camps with specialized trainers from the city (Mumbai and Pune)

Leadership development opportunities through social-motor skills and personality development

Our young champions have overcome tremendous obstacles to be able to pursue their potential and dreams of becoming athletes for our state and country. Here are some of their stories.



## Mann Deshi CHAMPIONS

### Reshma Kewate

I live with my parents and four siblings. My parents are farmers, and on the weekends I help my family harvest corn and sugarcane in our field.

Every day when I came home from school, my sisters and I have to take care of our many buffaloes. We have to take them to graze in the grasslands that are four kilometers from our house. It is very challenging to run behind the buffaloes while they are grazing and make sure that they don't stray onto other people's farms.

I am in 12th standard in Mhaswad village. In 2010 I heard about the Mann Deshi Champions ground. Since it was close to the grasslands where I take our buffaloes, I immediately signed up. I participated in football and track and field events. Our coach, Mr. Lokhande, realized that because of my running after buffaloes, I had developed very strong legs, and he suggested that I participate in long distance running events.

After going through Mann Deshi Champion's rigorous training schedule and improving my nutrition, I started to take part in 5 kilometers, 10 kilometers and half marathon races. I have won several marathons. I have also been selected at the national and all India level. Today the entire district knows of me - the animal chaser who became a marathon winner! My dream is to represent India in long distance running events at the Olympics.

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**Kajal Atpadkar**

My day starts at sunrise by attending to my younger brother and then accompanying my parents to different people's farms after school to cut sugarcane till sunset. I was born on the sugarcane field and my parents are sugarcane cutters. I became extremely strong because I had to keep jumping up and down in the sugarcane field to protect myself from snakes while cutting sugarcane. Every year, I miss about three to four months of school as my family travels from one sugarcane plantation to another.

When I heard about the Mann Deshi sports programme and heard that it also provides a healthy breakfast, I wanted to join. Actually, I had no idea about sports but I was sure I wanted that breakfast!

**“Actually, I had no idea about sports but I was sure I wanted that breakfast!”**

After practicing running and field hockey at the Mann Deshi's Champions ground, I was selected to enroll in the National School of Sports for field hockey. Today I play on the Maharashtra state-level under sixteen field hockey team. My aim is to be a professional field hockey player and support my family financially.





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### Sarita Bhise

My name is Sarita Bhise. I studied in a government school in Dhuldev village, which is 5 kilometers away from my village. Every day, I walked or ran this distance to reach my school on time. All my teachers knew of my strength and they encouraged me to participate in sports. At the same time, I started training at the Mann Deshi Champions programme and participated in state level Kabaddi and Kho Kho matches. Soon I started focusing on competing in 400 and 800-meter events. I ended up winning several races. I also participated in a 3-month Mann Deshi Champions training camp. Our schedule was very rigorous and we practiced for four hours a day with our coaches. Every day we were given fruits, eggs, dry fruits, and sweet porridge for breakfast to nourish and prepare our bodies for such an intense routine.

My family owns sheep and we regularly travel back and forth to the Latur area in the search of grasslands. Once, when my family was in some financial trouble, I had to drop out of school for a year to help with the herd. My job was to herd the sheep and I often ran around the herd, along boulders and through farms, to keep the sheep together and safe.

I was selected by the Mann Deshi Champions programme to attend the Balewadi National School of Sports. I remember that selection race very well because I did not have shoes for it and I had to run bare feet in the hot sun. At Balewadi, I joined the field hockey team of the National School of Sports and played at the national level eleven times! I am their goalkeeper. My dream is to be a part of the Indian hockey team and make my country proud.

“ I remember that selection race very well because I did not have shoes for it and I had to run bare feet in the hot sun. ”



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### **Vaishnavi Sawant**

It's been five years since I started coming to the Mann Deshi Champions ground. My father is a farmer from Pulkoti village, which is 3 kilometers from the running track. I am very fortunate that my parents have supported my dream of becoming an international level athlete. In June 2016 I participated in the Mann Deshi Champions Health, Nutrition and Coaching camp in Mumbai. Since then I have been applying all the running techniques I learnt from the Mumbai coaches and strictly following the nutrition schedule suggested by the nutritionist there.

Every day I practice at the Mann Deshi Champions ground. I run various distances – from 5 kilometers to the half marathon. I have won gold medals in several hill marathon competitions as well as short distance running events. At the moment, to improve our strength we are running uphill along the Bhojling mountain range.

“ **Every day I practice at Mann Deshi Champions ground. I run various distances - from 5 km to half marathon.** ”

