

Preparing for life at sea: How the CSP is boosting one girl's dream of joining the Navy

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Much of what Pro Sport Development (PSD) does on the Community Sports Program (CSP) is focused on using sporting activities as a means to an end – for instance looking to instil certain sporting and life skills within the children, as well as designing games that boost their cognitive abilities. However, as the curriculum is based around exercise, a major benefit is that the children get active and physically fit. And this has been the attraction of the program for 13-year-old Swetashree Sethi, a female student from Vivekananda Siksha Kendra school in Patrapada slum in Bhubaneswar.

Swetashree dreams of joining the Indian Navy when she becomes old enough to apply, but she knows she will need to put in many training hours every week to develop the physical capacity to pass the Navy



Swetashree answers questions during a CSP session recap

entrance exams and thrive in the service. And this is where the CSP has been the biggest benefit for Swetashree. In speaking with PSD, Swetashree said, *“These sessions have helped me in my future plans because they have helped me to get physically fit. I enjoy playing team activities with my friends and I enjoy that the sessions have allowed me to improve both physically and mentally.”*



Swetashree playing during a CSP session at VSK (PP)

The sessions are just the beginning for Swetashree, as she acknowledges that she needs to start doing “regular 2 hours of physical exercise” to prepare for life in the navy, but the weekly CSP sessions have provided the springboard for this endeavour. In addition to helping her get physically fit, Swetashree also acknowledges other benefits from the sessions.

She said: *“From these sessions I have learned how to work with friends as a team. I have become more active, more confident and my memory power has improved”.*



Swetashree runs out an opponent in the Diamond Cricket Tournament

“I feel good now because while these games were all very new for me, by playing them I have been able to improve my confidence and get active and physically fit.”

This increased confidence, as well as her athletic ability, was on display at the recent CSP Diamond Cricket Tournament. Although her team was knocked out before the final, Swetashree volunteered to field at the pivotal 1st base position and was an active and vocal participant throughout the event. She is pictured (*left*) running out an opponent during the event.

Vivekananda Siksha Kendra school teacher Mamata Rath has known Swetashree for 8 years but says there has been a clear change in her since the CSP sessions started in 2017.

“Before the Community Sports Program began, her confidence was very low, but now there has been a clear improvement in her confidence, and she is also concentrating more in class now,” she said. *“She answers more questions in class and also behaves better.”*

PSD coach Bhaktamohan Swain says that Swetashree always has a good attitude during the CSP sessions and is particularly good at encouraging her fellow classmates during the games, showing strong leadership capabilities.

“I have seen a lot of changes in Swetashree,” adds Bhaktamohan Swain. *“When we first started the sessions she was not comfortable playing with boys, had low confidence and was very shy and did not like giving answers to questions during recap questions. But now she has shown a big improvement in all of these things. She says that she wants to join the Navy and I think she can do that if she continues to do regular physical work and keep up with her studies.”*



Swetashree (second from right) celebrates her team’s victory during a CSP session