

# CHOLA'S GOT T★ALENT

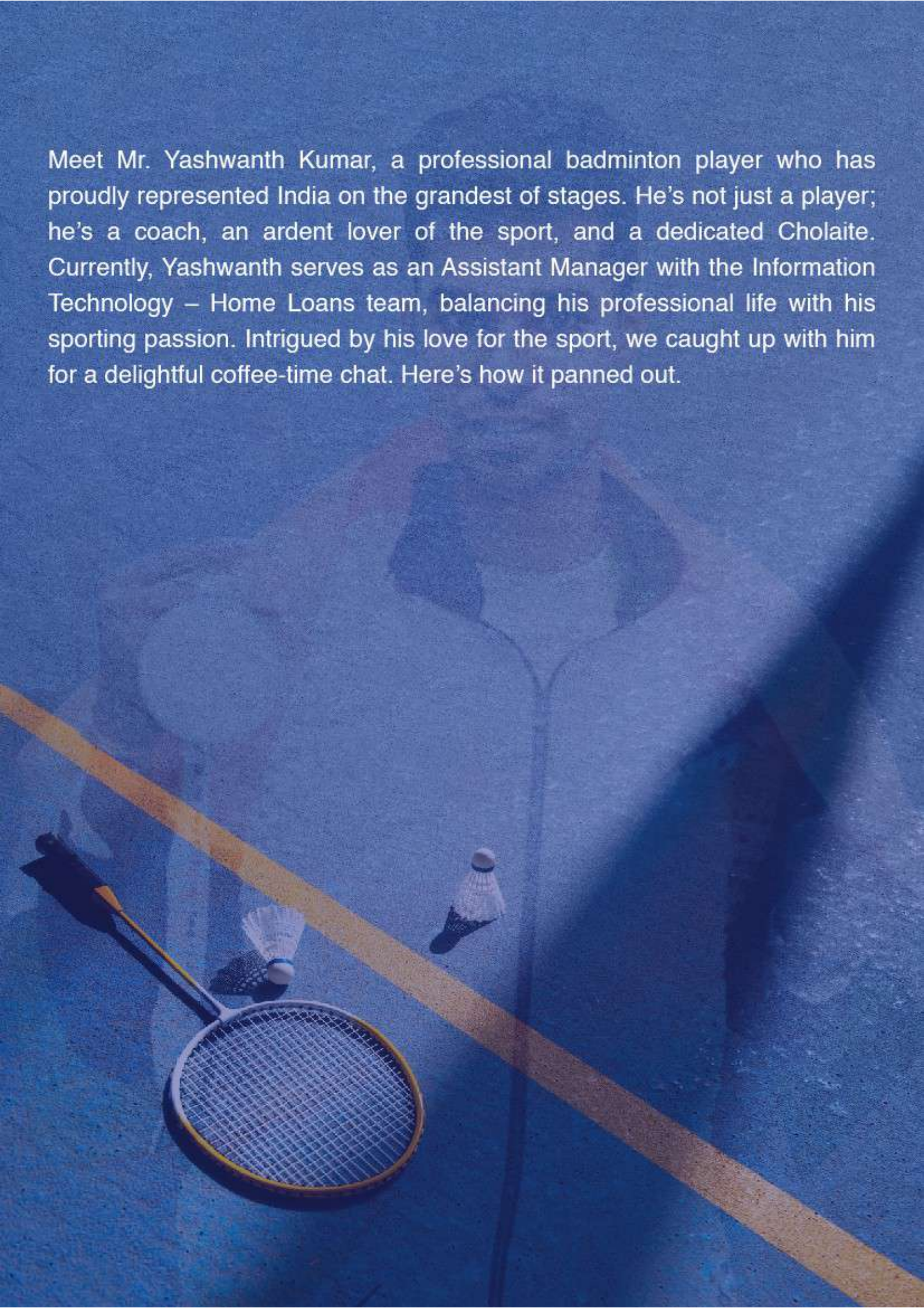
**Behind the Racket**

**A Conversation with Yashwanth**





Meet Mr. Yashwanth Kumar, a professional badminton player who has proudly represented India on the grandest of stages. He's not just a player; he's a coach, an ardent lover of the sport, and a dedicated Cholaite. Currently, Yashwanth serves as an Assistant Manager with the Information Technology – Home Loans team, balancing his professional life with his sporting passion. Intrigued by his love for the sport, we caught up with him for a delightful coffee-time chat. Here's how it panned out.





## What ignited your passion for the sport?

At the age of 12, my father introduced me to badminton. We used to play together until one day, he twisted his ankle. That incident made me wary of the sport's injury risks. But, a few months later, as he regained his fitness, my passion for badminton was rekindled. Days went by and one day I found myself in a singles match with a friend in which I was defeated quite compromisingly. That defeat ignited an unquenchable love for the game in me. From then until now, I never stopped playing.





## From an amateur to a pro, how did your journey transition?

As I became more captivated by badminton, I started playing regularly. With time, I found coaches and began formal training. By 2007, I was winning zonal matches, and around 2010-12, I clinched the state championship. This victory opened doors to new coaches and greater exposure. Along the way, I faced a lot of failures, yet I persisted and continued on.

## Who inspired you the most?

My biggest inspiration is Saina Nehwal. Watching her win the Bronze at the 2012 London Olympics was incredibly motivating. Her success sparked a transformation in Indian badminton, inspiring young players and leading to infrastructure improvements. Another player who inspires me greatly is Lee Chong Wei from Malaysia, whose finesse on the court is remarkable.





## Among your many achievements, which victory do you hold close to your heart?

Winning the silver at the South Asian Games is my most cherished victory. Unfortunately, I sustained an injury before the finals, which prevented me from performing at my best.

## What is something not many people know about badminton?

Badminton demands immense mental fortitude and physical fitness. It's often referred to as physical chess due to the strategic and physical challenges associated with it. There is a lot of strict dieting, fitness exercises, and mental toughness involved in the sport that not many people are aware of.





## Who is the toughest player you've come across?

At the South Asian Games, I faced a formidable player from Thailand in the Semi-Finals. His unique technique and strategic play made it feel like the finals for me. It was more of a mental battle than a physical one, but I persevered and took calculated risks which eventually paid off.



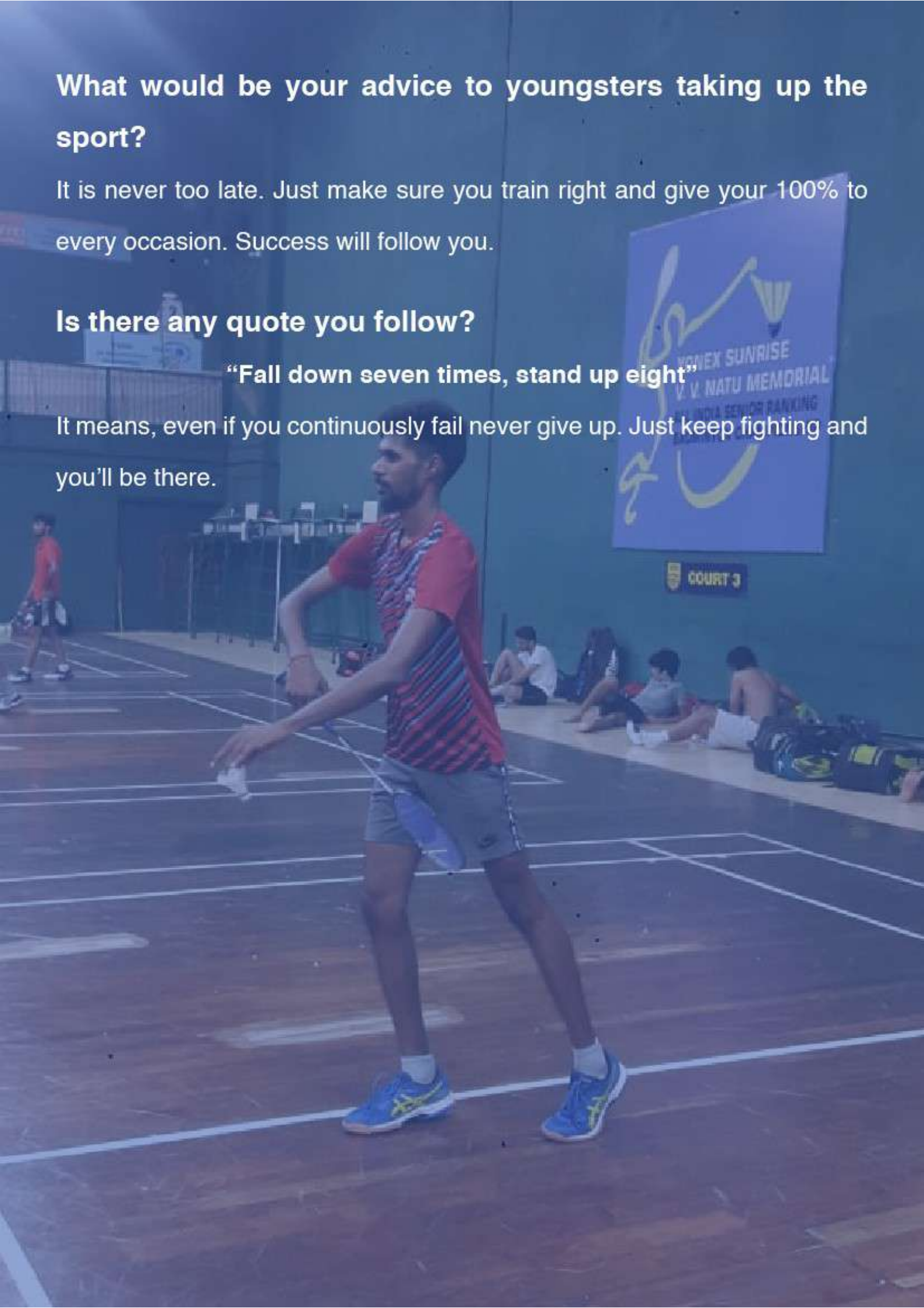
**What would be your advice to youngsters taking up the sport?**

It is never too late. Just make sure you train right and give your 100% to every occasion. Success will follow you.

**Is there any quote you follow?**

**“Fall down seven times, stand up eight”**

It means, even if you continuously fail never give up. Just keep fighting and you'll be there.







### **What was your coaching experience like? Any highlights from it?**

After my international success, I turned to coaching. One memorable experience was coaching a little girl named Dharani. She was just four years old when her parents brought her to me. Initially hesitant, I agreed to train her. She soon started winning local tournaments, and to my surprise, her parents enrolled her in a district tournament. Because I thought she wasn't ready for big tournaments like that. I was a little taken aback when she showed tremendous heart throughout the tournament. She progressed through the group stages and eventually reached the finals. She was 6 at the time and had to face a 9-year-old. She put up a great fight but lost by a mere three points. She was literally in a sea of tears and I had to console her. Despite her tears, her spirit and determination were inspiring. Now, she's aiming for nationals.

### **How did you manage time between work and practice?**

It was hectic to be plain honest. I worked night shifts at that time and in the day I practiced. I hardly found time to sleep. But these days, I'm not indulging myself in ultra-competitive tournaments and just practicing along with my colleagues twice a week.





## **Your future goals and aspirations?**

My future goal, maybe after retirement, is to open an academy and train young kids thereby securing the future of badminton. I am sure I will come across exciting young talents like Dharani.

**As Yashwant Kumar continues his exciting journey,  
Chola wishes him all the best for his future endeavors.**

**Chola is proud of you, Yashwanth!**