PIVOT

PIVOT 1.0

Building a Career Transition Pathway for Women Athletes

Impact & Learning Report 2026

What we tested. What changed. What it will take to build the next generation of athlete support in India.



Your move beyond sport.

SIMPLY SPORT

socialpanga

anantapur sports academy

Inside this report

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Leadership

A NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER

Athletes prepare for the next competition, the next big moment. But what prepares them for the day they begin a new career beyond sport? Some step away after school-level competition, some after years of representing their state or country, and some balance sport with education, family responsibilities or financial pressure.

When we started PIVOT, the question was simple: what happens to an athlete when the structure of competitive sport begins to change?

Athletes spend years learning how to work toward long-term goals, respond to feedback, manage pressure, recover from setbacks and commit to a process even when the outcome is uncertain. These are not only sporting qualities. They are professional qualities. Yet the systems around sport do not always help athletes translate them into careers, networks and economic opportunity.

For women athletes, that gap can be particularly sharp. The years devoted to training and competition often overlap with the years when their peers are building internships, workplace experience and professional networks. The result is not a lack of ability. It is a lack of translation and access.

PIVOT 1.0 was our first attempt to build that bridge in a structured way. Eighteen women athletes, selected from more than 140 applicants, spent 2026 learning new tools, working with mentors, building professional identities, exploring careers, developing group ventures and presenting their ideas to an external judging panel. What stood out was not simply participation. It was the willingness of athletes to step into unfamiliar professional spaces and learn by doing.

The first year also taught us where the model needs to become stronger. Exposure must lead to demonstrated capability. Career awareness must connect to real role pathways. Mentorship must be intentional. And the transition journey cannot end when a programme ends.

PIVOT is therefore not just about helping an athlete find a job after sport. It is about ensuring that years spent in sport become an asset in whatever comes next. PIVOT 1.0 gave us the first proof points. The next chapter is about building the ecosystem around them: education partners, employers, funders, sports organisations, mentors and alumni working together so that athlete transition becomes part of the sporting lifecycle, not an afterthought.



FOUNDING BELIEF

No female athlete should feel that when sport ends, she has to start from zero. Her sporting journey should count as the foundation for her next professional chapter.



Ankit Nagori

Founder, Simply Sport Foundation

The case in brief

PIVOT 1.0 AT A GLANCE

PIVOT 1.0 was a proof of concept designed to test whether women athletes could build professional capability, career awareness and networks while continuing to navigate sport, education and personal responsibilities.

140+ Applications	**18** Athletes selected	**8** Sports	**84%** Attendance
38 Sessions	**18** Expert speakers	**44** Mentor calls	**4** Projects pitched

WHAT THE FIRST YEAR SUGGESTS

Demand is real.
There is significant demand for structured career-transition and professional-readiness support among women athletes.

Athletes can sustain it.
A structured learning journey works alongside training and competition when delivery is designed around athlete realities.

Applied learning matters.
Projects, presentations, assignments and career assets show growth more clearly than attendance alone.

Mentorship is not an add-on.
It helps athletes turn general learning into personal direction and action.

Exposure is not enough.
The next model must build stronger bridges to role pathways, interviews, internships, jobs and alumni support.

! **What PIVOT 1.0 does not yet prove.** This first cohort gives encouraging evidence of demand, engagement, learning and career readiness. It does not yet establish long-term employment impact. That requires longitudinal tracking across employment, education, income, internships, entrepreneurship and continued sporting participation.

01 WHY PIVOT BEGAN?

The question that started it all

Competitive sport prepares athletes to perform. But sporting excellence does not automatically translate into professional opportunity.

Women athletes build capabilities that employers value deeply: discipline, resilience, teamwork, leadership, goal orientation, coachability and the ability to perform under pressure. Yet years dedicated to training and competition can limit exposure to conventional internships, workplace environments, professional networks and career guidance.

Uncertain prospects, limited earnings, family responsibilities, gendered expectations, unsafe experiences, losing a coach and mental strain can all interrupt a sporting career.

THE CORE INSIGHT

THE GAP IS NOT CAPABILITY. THE GAP IS TRANSLATION.

WHY WOMEN ATHLETES

Women athletes often navigate a particularly complex intersection of sport, education, income and social expectations. Competitive sport demands time precisely during the years when young adults typically build qualifications, internships and networks. For women athletes, this can be compounded by lower and less predictable earnings in sport, family responsibilities and fewer established pathways into the sports industry and wider workforce.

The opportunity is therefore not to 'fix' women athletes. It is to ensure that the capabilities they already built through sport translate into economic agency, professional identity and greater choice during and beyond competition.

> **"What if I don't make it big in sport?**

> **"What if I cannot earn enough through sport?**

> **"I had to leave because of family responsibilities.**

> **"The environment changed, and continuing was no longer possible.**

PIVOT began with a simple question: what would change if athletes had a pathway to explore who they could become next?



FROM SPORT TO WORK

The PIVOT thesis

Sport builds discipline, leadership and resilience. Athletes may still need professional networks, digital skills and support to put these strengths to use at work.

PROGRAMME HYPOTHESIS

If women athletes receive structured opportunities to understand their strengths, build workplace capability, gain professional exposure, access mentors and apply their learning, they will be better able to navigate education and employment pathways during and beyond sport.

ATHLETE REALITY	PIVOT RESPONSE	INTENDED SHIFT
Limited professional networks	Mentorship, LinkedIn, networking and practitioner access	Stronger social and professional capital
Low confidence in formal communication	Communication Catalyst, essays, presentations and pitch practice	Express ideas and experience with greater clarity
Uneven digital exposure	Google Workspace, Canva, generative AI and digital assignments	Confidence with tools used in modern work
Sport identity not yet translated into career identity	Personal branding, reflection and portfolio building	Articulate strengths beyond medals
Career uncertainty and no structured transition support	Career exploration, goal setting, bootcamps, mentor calls, group projects and employer pathways	Move from aspiration to informed planning

With skills, support and networks, athletes can use what they have learned in sport to take the next step in their careers.





FROM PILOT TO PIVOT

How the model evolved

FALP · Female Athlete Leadership Program

Before PIVOT, Simply Sport Foundation tested elements of the model through the Female Athlete Leadership Program at Anantapur Sports Academy. The pilot combined leadership and soft skills, career exploration, financial literacy, female athlete health and mentorship through classroom learning, online sessions, projects and interactions with women leaders.

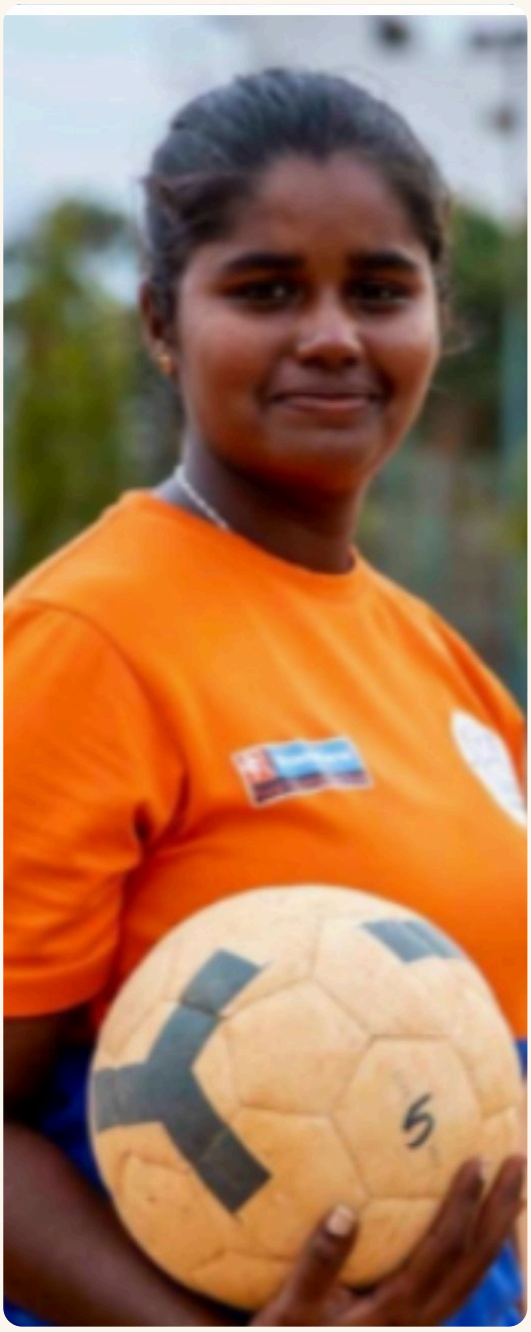
45	17
athletes trained in 2025	graduated

It showed the value of combining skill-building with reflection, mentorship and leadership opportunities.

> **Anjali Devi** moved from being quiet and reserved to becoming a confident leader. She organised a sporting event and began pursuing coaching and higher-level football.

PIVOT 1.0 BEGINS

PIVOT began on **15 January 2026** with an induction for 18 women athletes selected from more than 140 applicants. It was designed as a selective, high-touch, fully funded and hybrid programme that could work around training schedules, competition calendars, different cities and varying levels of exposure to English, digital tools and professional environments.



Anjali Devi, FALP graduate

02 PROGRAMME DESIGN

Built around athlete realities

PIVOT is for women athletes aged 18 and above who are still competing, considering a Plan B, or moving into employment. It meets athletes at different points in their sporting and personal journeys.



It is fully funded and hybrid, so cost is never a barrier. Athletes can learn online while training, studying or managing responsibilities at home. The design rests on a simple principle: athlete transition cannot be solved by one workshop. It requires continuity, practice, reflection, relationships and access to opportunity.

OUR FIVE OBJECTIVES

1 Self-discovery
Recognise interests, strengths, values and aspirations

2 Career exploration
Understand possible pathways in and beyond sport

3 Professional readiness
Build communication, digital, workplace and employability skills

4 Mentorship and networks
Connect with professionals who offer guidance and perspective

5 Exposure to opportunity
Access employers, internships, employment pathways and real projects

PROGRAMME COMPONENTS

COMPONENT	WHAT IT DID	WHY IT MATTERED
Self-paced digital modules	Flexible learning in Google Workspace and generative AI	Built digital confidence without competing with training schedules
Live workshops and webinars	Leadership, communication, career exploration, digital literacy and workplace readiness	Brought practitioners into the athletes' week
Integrated mentorship	Individual and group conversations with a dedicated mentor	Continuity, accountability and personalised direction
Group projects	Teams developed ventures around problems in women's sport	Turned learning into applied leadership
Residential bootcamps	In-person learning at Anantapur Sports Academy	Space for reflection, practice, relationships and intensive collaboration

THE LEARNING SEQUENCE

Know yourself → Build skills → Apply them → Understand opportunities → Prepare for the world of work

WHO ENTERED THE JOURNEY

The first cohort

PIVOT opened applications through social media, sporting networks and wider outreach. More than 140 athletes applied.

Selection looked beyond medals. The process considered each athlete's sporting journey, level of competition, access to a laptop and internet, comfort with English, career aspirations, reasons for joining and readiness to learn.

140+
applications from 12 states / UTs

18
selected from 6 states / UTs

SELECTION PHILOSOPHY

PIVOT looked for intent and potential to learn, explore and build professional skills, not sporting achievement alone.

18	8	6	18–29
athletes	sports	states / UTs	age range

Sports represented: Football · Athletics · Volleyball · Wushu · Discus Throw · Sailing · Rugby · Ultimate Frisbee

WHAT UNITED THE COHORT

Not one sport, one achievement or one definition of success. The common thread was a willingness to keep learning and to imagine what an athlete's journey could become beyond performance alone.

COHORT DIVERSITY

- Athletes still actively pursuing competitive goals
- Athletes considering education, employment or a parallel career
- Athletes returning from injury or navigating uncertainty
- Athletes interested in coaching, sport-sector roles, government pathways and careers outside sport



MEET THE COHORT

18 athletes. 18 journeys. One shared next step.



Sunita Choudhary

19 · Jalore, Rajasthan

WUSHU

Gold at Batumi International Open 2025

Wants to be a role model



Sheetal Sanag

22 · Delhi

ULTIMATE FRISBEE

Community sport leader; empowered 200+ young people

Wants to expand her impact



Payal Saran

21 · Jodhpur, Rajasthan

WUSHU AND BOXING

Senior Nationals silver

Aims for Asian Games gold



Annu Saini

22 · Itawa, Rajasthan

ATHLETICS (3000M STEEPLECHASE)

Three-time state medallist

Wants to represent India



Sunita Jakhar

25 · Nagaur, Rajasthan

RACE WALK AND KHO-KHO

Race-walk gold medallist

Wants a government job



Priyanka Yadav

19 · Sikar, Rajasthan

DISCUS AND NCC

Discus gold medallist; NCC cadet

Wants to be a PE teacher



Kongara Preethi

19 · Hyderabad, Telangana

SAILING

Competed at the 2023 Asian Games

Wants to coach



Tara Ansari

19 · Delhi

FOOTBALL

Delhi Women's League bronze; AIFF D Licence

Wants to grow in football



Kusum Kumari

18 · Delhi

FOOTBALL

Best Goalkeeper award

Wants to play for India

Every card holds a different definition of success.

MEET THE COHORT

Different sports. Shared possibility.



Sheetal Sharma

29 · Delhi

RUGBY

Former India captain; Asian Games; recovering from an ACL injury

Wants to continue leading



Riya Almiya

20 · Delhi

VOLLEYBALL

World Para Athletics volunteer

Wants to teach and coach



Rokhsar Banoo

20 · Delhi

FOOTBALL

State and national level; returning from an ACL injury

Wants to rebuild her path



Khushboo Jha

18 · Delhi

FOOTBALL

Delhi Women's League bronze; AIFF D Licence

Wants to grow as a player



Raziya Khan

20 · Delhi

FOOTBALL

Signed by Odisha FC, Garhwal FC and HOPS FC

Wants to progress professionally



Archi Singhvi

27 · Jodhpur, Rajasthan

WUSHU AND RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS

State Wushu gold; 4th at nationals in rhythmic gymnastics

Wants to join the Army



Kunttimalla Lahari

20 · Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh

ATHLETICS

Asian Youth Para Games involvement

Wants to mentor para-athletes



Pulajuttu Susmitha

18 · Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh

FOOTBALL

Khelo India Youth Games

Wants to keep competing



Lavanya Verma

20 · Ahmedabad, Gujarat

FOOTBALL

AIFF U-17 India women's team camp

Wants to explore purpose beyond sport

Not one sport, one achievement or one definition of success.

03 THE LEARNING JOURNEY

From sessions to capability

The year was designed as a journey from knowing yourself to showing what you can do.

Athletes first built digital and communication confidence, then practised storytelling and presentation before moving into professional identity, leadership, project work, career exploration, mock interviews and employment readiness. Regular pauses helped athletes reflect on what they were learning and where it could take them.



Online backbone · **Bootcamp 1** · **Mentorship line** · **Bootcamp 2** · **Group projects** · **Pitch Fest** · **Bootcamp 3**

The curriculum is best understood not as a list of sessions, but as a set of capabilities athletes practised and demonstrated.

CAPABILITY DOMAIN	WHAT ATHLETES WORKED ON
Digital capability	Google Docs, Sheets, Drive, Meet, Canva, generative AI and online collaboration
Professional communication	Writing, speaking, storytelling, presentations, interviews and workplace communication
Professional identity and visibility	Resume building, LinkedIn, personal branding and networking
Leadership and execution	Goal-setting, collaboration, conflict, project management, accountability and stakeholder management
Business and financial thinking	Budgeting, fixed and variable costs, revenue thinking, feasibility, sustainability and project planning
Career awareness and readiness	Sports industry, sports science, nonprofits, events, law, coaching, analytics, broadcasting and finance

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

Learning was captured through tangible outputs: digital literacy certificates, essays, Canva assets, psychometric reflections, leadership manifestos, project plans, pitch decks, resumes and goal-setting documents.

SHIFT IN EVIDENCE

The strongest signal was not 'I attended'. It was 'I built something I can show'.

WHAT ATHLETES LEARNED, AND FROM WHOM

PIVOT 1.0 combined practical skills with mindset and career tools. Sessions were interactive, application-driven and relevant to athletes' goals.

Digital Literacy
Google Workspace and generative AI, with 11 certificates per athlete.

Communication Catalyst
Three sessions led by Ipsita Basu: verbal relay, grammar quizzes and reflective essays to communicate with clarity in any setting.

Canva 101
Led by Sourabha G. Designing engaging visuals for presentations, social media and personal projects.

Personal Branding
Led by Shamim Mokles, Social Panga. Exploring strengths, stories and values to build an authentic personal brand.

LinkedIn and Resume Building
Led by Nainika Babbar, Social Panga. Profiles and resumes that describe skills, experience and career goals.

Networking
Led by TimTim Sharma, endurance athlete and coach. Building and nurturing professional relationships.

Goal Setting
Led by Nilanjana Paul, executive coach. Clear, actionable goals and habits to stay focused and accountable.

Project Management
Led by Malathi Renati, The Takshashila Institution, using the RACI framework to assign roles and coordinate work.

AI and LLMs
Led by Chinmay Athaley, DeepIntent, using the RCTF prompting framework with ChatGPT, Claude and NotebookLM.

Financial Literacy
Led by Meghana Murali. Practical knowledge on saving, budgeting and investing.

CAREER EXPLORATION SERIES · JUNE 2026

Aaditya Ranade Sports industry	**Kirti Agarwal** Sports science	**Meghana Murali** Financial literacy
Kshitij Patil Sports not-for-profits	**Tanvi Lad** Sports events	**Ishaan Micheal** Sports law
Sameer Subhedar Sports coaching	**Naveen Ningaiah** Sports analytics	**Debayan Sen** Sports broadcasting

WHAT WE SAW

Skills became easier to use when athletes could connect them to a real next step.

2026

THE YEAR IN ONE TIMELINE

The core shift was not a single moment. Across the year, athletes began to see themselves as people who can communicate, build, pitch, lead and belong in professional spaces.



15 Jan	Induction and keynote by Kanika Nagori
7–9 Feb	Bootcamp 1: Let's Meet
Feb–Jul	Mentor calls
Apr	SMART goals
Apr–Jun	Expert sessions
1–4 May	Bootcamp 2: From Leadership to Pitch
Jun	Career Exploration Series; IOA Athletes Forum
Jul	Group project prelims
2 Aug	Pitch Fest (online)
Aug–Sep	Employment readiness: resumes and mock interviews
30–31 Oct	Bootcamp 3 and Graduation

04 LET'S MEET

Bootcamp 1 · 7–9 February 2026 · Anantapur Sports Academy

The first bootcamp brought the cohort together in person for the first time. The focus was self-awareness, connection and setting goals.

Athletes explored identity and gender, emotional intelligence, SMART goals and the meaning of community. The shift was from individual journeys to a shared learning journey.

MODULES COVERED

- Identity and gender
- Emotional intelligence
- SMART goals
- Community

ARTEFACTS CREATED

- Psychometric assessments
- SMART goals

> Learning, sharing, and supporting each other made our bonding beautiful.
>
> Annu Saini

> It was a unique experience to gather together as athletes from different sports and parts of India.
>
> Lavanya Verma



05 FROM LEADERSHIP TO PITCH

Bootcamp 2 · 1–4 May 2026 · Anantapur Sports Academy

The second bootcamp moved the cohort from 'Who am I?' to 'How do I lead, contribute and create?'

Athletes worked on leadership identity, a leadership manifesto, power and stakeholders, conflict and collaboration, negotiation, project refinement and pitch readiness. The shift was from learning about possibility to taking ownership and applying learning.



MODULES COVERED

- Leadership identity
- Leadership manifesto
- Power and stakeholders
- Conflict and collaboration
- Project refinement
- Pitch readiness

> The constructive feedback we received on our group project will be really helpful in refining our final deck and pitch. We'll definitely work on the improvements.
>
> Sheetal Sanag





06 CELEBRATING THE JOURNEY

Bootcamp 3 · 30–31 October 2026 · Anantapur Sports Academy



The final bootcamp was a graduation, a celebration of wins and a bridge into the alumni community.

Athletes looked toward their next professional journeys and marked the progress made across the year. The programme closed with the Pitch Fest winners' felicitation, the PIVOT Future Leaders Scholarships and the launch of the alumni community.

Certificates were presented by **Mrs. Visha Ferrer**, Director, Women Empowerment, Rural Development Trust; **Mr. Dharmveer Choudhary**, Men's 4×400m Relay Bronze Medallist, 20th Asian Games 2026; **Mr. Darshan NK**; and **Mr. Sai Krishna Pulluru**, Director, Anantapur Sports Academy.

WHAT THE IMMERSION MODEL TAUGHT US

Online learning provided continuity. Residential bootcamps created the moments that benefit most from being together: self-reflection, peer relationships, leadership practice, group problem-solving and intensive feedback.

LESSON

Online learning is the backbone. Focused residential experiences create depth, connection and practice. The two formats serve different purposes.







Know yourself → **Lead yourself** → **Look beyond sport**

07 PIVOT FUTURE LEADERS SCHOLARSHIPS

Recognising growth, commitment and diligence

Recognising the overall growth, commitment and diligence demonstrated by athletes throughout the programme, the top three performers were announced as recipients of the PIVOT Future Leaders Scholarships.



1st

Sheetal Sanag

Ultimate Frisbee · Delhi



2nd

Lavanya Verma

Football · Ahmedabad



3rd

Riya Almiya

Volleyball · Delhi

₹50,000 each

Scholarship prize money to invest in their education, professional development and continued growth as future leaders.

08 MENTORSHIP

The continuity layer

Mentorship became the bridge between learning and personal direction.

Each athlete was paired with a dedicated mentor. Individual and group calls, small mentor groups and email follow-ups kept the journey personal, across sport, careers, education, confidence and next steps.

Conversations moved from 'What has been occupying your mind?' to specific next steps on CVs, scholarships, education, interviews and internships.

44 mentor calls

5 mentors

18 athletes



Dr. Chaitanya Sridhar



Pragnya Mohan



Aditi Mutatkar



Darshan NK



Ayesha Billimoria

WHAT MENTORSHIP ENABLED

- Real conversations about choices, uncertainty and priorities
- Goal-setting and accountability through smaller, trackable actions
- Reflection on values, strengths and patterns of behaviour
- Practical guidance on resumes, scholarships, education, interviews, entrepreneurship, internships and earning opportunities

WHAT MENTORS SAW CHANGING

SHIFT	WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE
Confidence	More willingness to name challenges, aspirations and support needs
Clarity	Broad uncertainty turned into specific questions and pathways
Ownership	Athletes began identifying their own next steps
Strategic thinking	Prioritising and making decisions more deliberately
Career thinking	Learning connected to education, employment and entrepreneurship

Content builds capability. Mentorship helps athletes decide what to do with it.

MENTOR AND ATHLETE VOICES

MENTORS

"

The mentee conversations created a beautiful opportunity to look beyond medals, achievements and outcomes, and reflect on what truly shapes us. Hearing the athletes speak about hard work, courage, teamwork, consistency and growth showed how deeply these values are rooted in their journeys. It was inspiring to see them think not only about what they want to achieve, but also about the kind of people they want to become.

Pragnya Mohan, Mentor

"

What stayed with me was seeing how differently each athlete was growing. Preethi became more strategic in the way she approached decisions, Lahari was learning to prioritise instead of taking on everything at once, and Raziya was learning to weigh different options and make informed choices. Their journeys remind us that progress does not look the same for everyone.

Dr. Chaitanya Sridhar, Mentor

"

What stood out to me was the shift from simply thinking about the future to taking ownership of the present.

Ayesha Billimoria, Mentor

ATHLETES

"

My mentor, Ayesha Ma'am, helped me realise the importance of prioritising things, and that some things will be left behind and that is okay. Through the PIVOT mentorship, I learned to try things without giving up and to be confident. She also offered me an internship with her. What meant the most to me was having a safe space to share how confused I feel about my career direction, and getting her guidance on how to work on myself and become independent.

Sheetal Sanag

"

My mentor, Darshan Sir, made me feel truly understood not just as an athlete, but as a person. He created a comfortable and trusting bond where I could openly share my emotions, feelings, strengths and weaknesses without any hesitation.

Sheetal Sharma

"

My mentor has created a safe space where I can openly share my challenges.

Tara Ansari

09 GROUP PROJECTS

From learning to demonstrated capability

The group projects were one of PIVOT's strongest tests of whether learning could move into application. Eighteen athletes formed four teams, each building a venture around a problem they recognised in sport.

Teams worked on problem identification, solution design, business planning, stakeholder mapping, project management, investment and budgeting, execution, risk mitigation, sustainability, scalability, profitability and impact.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Identify a problem	Research it	Design a solution	Map stakeholders	Build a budget	Divide responsibility	Respond to feedback	Present and defend

AKATSUKI

VIRA: Return-to-Play Support Initiative

Supporting women athletes recovering from injury through rehabilitation, guidance and community.

Sheetal Sharma, Riya Almiya, Annu Saini, Khushboo Jha, Sunita Jakhar

FEARLESS FEMMES

Second Innings: Women's 35+ Football League

Creating opportunities for lifelong participation and challenging assumptions about age.

Payal Saran, Sunita Choudhary, Rokhsar Banoo, Raziya Khan

HERIZON

Herizon: Women's Sports Broadcasting Platform

Increasing the visibility of women athletes and women's sport through storytelling and coverage.

Lavanya Verma, Kunttimalla Lahari, Kusum Kumari, Kongara Preethi, Pulajuttu Susmitha

POWERPUFF GIRLS

Winner

Adyvora: Women's Sports Academy

Holistic training, mentoring, education support and wellness for women athletes from underserved backgrounds.

Sheetal Sanag, Archi Singhvi, Priyanka Yadav, Tara Ansari





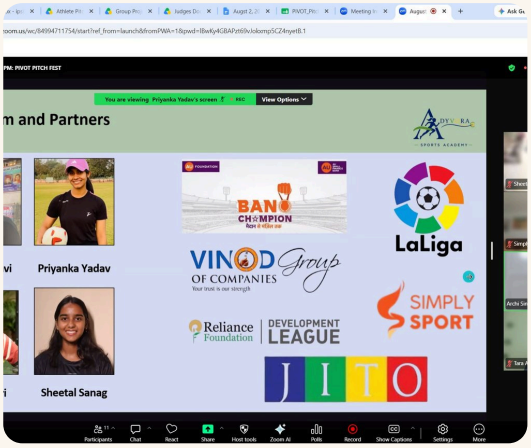
10 PITCH FEST

2 August 2026 · Online

For most athletes, it was their first business plan and their first formal pitch before an external panel.

Each team had 10–15 minutes to present, followed by about 10 minutes of questions from the judges. The online format kept the event accessible and gave teams practice presenting in a professional setting.

The purpose was not to identify the next startup. It was to practise the behaviours professional environments require: problem-solving, collaboration, communication, ownership and decision-making.



OUR JUDGES



Sharda Ugra

Sports journalist



Nisha Millet

Olympian, Arjuna Award recipient, coach



Chanakya Gupta

Co-founder, Tuco Kids

JUDGING CRITERIA

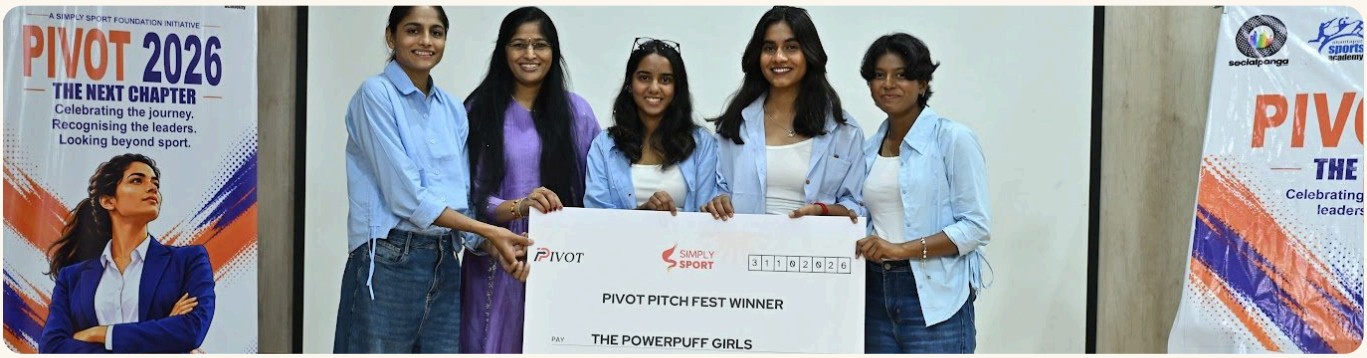
Problem identification · **Innovation** · **Feasibility** · **Impact** · **Presentation**

★

WINNER · PIVOT PITCH FEST 2026

Powerpuff Girls: Adyvora Women's Sports Academy

₹1,00,000 cash prize



11 FROM GOALS TO OPPORTUNITY

Career pathways

Career transition requires more than ambition. Athletes need to describe their experience professionally, navigate recruitment processes and access real opportunities.

In April, athletes set SMART goals and reviewed progress through August. Each athlete also created a one-year development plan. Employment readiness work in August and September focused on professional communication, resume building and mock interviews.

1

I learned

Career awareness, professional communication, resume building and workplace skills

2

I can apply

Mock interviews, articulating transferable strengths and preparing for recruitment

3

I can access an opportunity

Introductions to internships, apprenticeships, employment pathways and scholarships

EMPLOYMENT-READINESS OUTPUTS

17
resumes completed

11
mock interviews

- Career exploration across multiple sport-sector roles and adjacent professional pathways
- Goal-setting and one-year development planning

PATHWAYS IN FOCUS

India Khelo Football with TYGER Capital and KNOVAONE
Apprenticeships, internships and full-time roles

Godrej Consumer Products

Godrej Consumer Products
Field Sales Officer roles

Outcomes from these pathways are being tracked and will be reported once confirmed.



12 IMPACT DASHBOARD

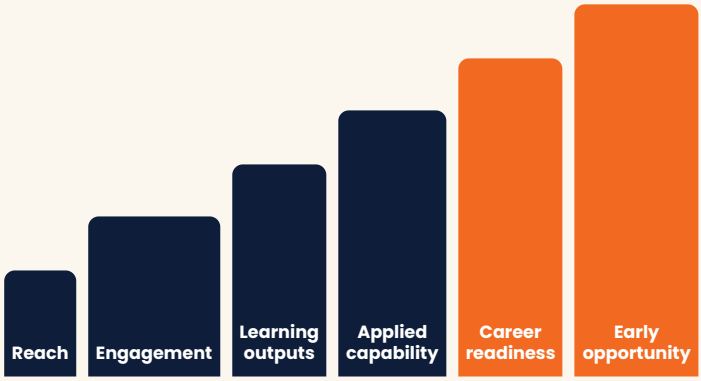
What changed, and what we can responsibly claim

Programme records show reach, participation, completed work and early signs of career readiness. Longer-term outcomes still need to be tracked.

140+ applications for 18 places	**38** sessions	**18** expert speakers	**84%** attendance	**4.5/5** session rating	**113** assignments
8.0/10 average grade	**44** mentor calls	**4** group projects pitched	**17** resumes	**11** mock interviews	**3** bootcamps

LEVEL	EVIDENCE FROM PIVOT 1.0
Reach	140+ applicants; 18 participants
Engagement	84% attendance; 44 mentor calls
Learning outputs	Digital certificates, 113 assignments, essays, resumes, LinkedIn work, project plans and budgets
Applied capability	Four ventures pitched; budgeting, stakeholder mapping, collaboration and presentation
Confidence and identity	Athlete reflections, leadership manifestos, mentor observations and public pitching
Career readiness	17 resumes, 11 mock interviews, goal-setting and role exploration
Early opportunity	Individual examples of jobs, scholarships and selections
Long-term outcomes	Not yet established; requires alumni follow-up and longitudinal tracking

EVIDENCE LADDER



Long-term outcomes not yet established

HOW TO READ THESE NUMBERS

These indicators show demand, engagement and learning consistency. They are not evidence that PIVOT has already created long-term employment outcomes. The next step is to track conversion from readiness into sustained education, internships, employment and other opportunities over time.

13 ATHLETE STORIES

What the numbers do not show

The dashboard captures participation. Individual stories show how athletes began using what they learned.



Sunita Jakhar — Getting tech-savvy

Once working at a medical store with no digital exposure, Sunita believed modern office tools were out of her reach. Through PIVOT she completed digital literacy certifications, mastered Canva and Google Workspace, submitted structured assignments, contributed to her team project and found the confidence to speak up. Today, running her own LinkedIn profile, she sees her potential reaching far beyond a pharmacy counter and is actively looking for better opportunities.



Riya Almiya — Acquiring skills, expanding horizons

Before PIVOT, Riya believed computers and AI were not meant for athletes. Through the programme she built leadership and negotiation skills while learning AI tools and polishing her LinkedIn profile. She finished third in the PIVOT Future Leaders Scholarships and is now confidently exploring careers across sports education, fitness and athletics officiating.



Annu Saini — From track to uniform

As a 3000m steeplechase athlete, Annu had big dreams but lacked clarity about a career beyond the track. Through PIVOT's collaborative projects she built leadership skills and realised she can build an identity beyond sport. She was recruited into the Rajasthan Police through the sports quota, and says PIVOT helped her communicate with more confidence during selection and beyond. She now aims to grow her career there and inspire young women.



Rokhsar Banoo — Comeback beyond the field

Sidelined for 1.5 years by a severe ACL injury, Rokhsar felt stuck watching her peers advance. PIVOT reignited her drive with professional teamwork habits, problem-solving skills and modern AI tools. She has now taken her first role off the field, serving as Team Manager for an AIFF Youth League squad.

Kongara Preethi · Taking opportunity overseas. A sailor who has competed at the Asian Games, Preethi earned a World Sailing Training Scholarship in the United Kingdom. This is not presented as caused by PIVOT; it shows the level of ambition athletes in the cohort were pursuing alongside the programme.

Payal Saran · Commitment under pressure. Payal balanced PIVOT with major competitions, attending part of the second bootcamp before winning silver at the All India Inter-University Wushu Championship 2026, the scheduling reality PIVOT was designed to work around.

Featured story · Identity, transition and direction

FINDING HER VOICE. REDISCOVERING HER PURPOSE.

Lavanya Verma, PIVOT 2026's second-ranked athlete and a Future Leaders Scholarship recipient, has grown in her ability to ask better questions, approach people and choose a direction with confidence.

Lavanya started playing football at eight and often found herself the only girl on the field. Her journey took her to an AIFF U-17 Indian women's team camp. Later, for personal reasons, she chose to step away from competitive football. The transition challenged an identity built over years: if she was no longer competing, what did the skills, relationships and experiences developed through football mean for the rest of her life?

Through PIVOT's mentorship, career-awareness sessions and goal-setting, Lavanya began exploring research, design, consumer behaviour and psychology. She became more willing to approach professors and professionals, contribute to projects and own her academic and career choices. Mentorship helped her embrace her athletic identity with pride and see how resilience, discipline and an understanding of people could become part of her professional foundation.

In June 2026, through PIVOT, she attended and volunteered at the 2nd IOA Athletes Forum at Major Dhyan Chand Stadium, New Delhi, engaging with athletes, Olympians and the IOA team, including a brief interaction with IOA CEO Raghuram Iyer.

Today she aims to pursue a master's in marketing while advocating for athlete safety and mental health, and for spaces where women athletes can talk openly about belonging and life in sport.

STORY INSIGHT

PIVOT did not ask Lavanya to leave her athlete identity behind. It helped her understand how to carry it forward differently.

Her voice beyond the field, her confidence beyond competition, her purpose beyond sport.



14 OUR PARTNERS

PIVOT was built by an ecosystem

PIVOT 1.0 depended on partners who contributed in different ways: funding, expertise, infrastructure, mentorship, hospitality, access and belief in the potential of women athletes.

SOCIAL PANGA · FUNDING + KNOWLEDGE

Social Panga's contribution went beyond financial support. As CSR and knowledge partner, practitioners including Shamim Mokles and Nainika Babbar led sessions on personal branding, LinkedIn, resume building and professional visibility, bringing the professional world directly into the learning journey.

ANANTAPUR SPORTS ACADEMY · INFRASTRUCTURE + COMMUNITY

Anantapur Sports Academy hosted all three residential bootcamps and supported accommodation, meals and logistics. Residential learning cost athletes nothing.

> The honesty in the room made the learning real.
>
> Shamim Mokles, Social Panga

> The athletes were willing to open up and step outside their comfort zones.
>
> TimTim Sharma, Faculty

A MODEL FOR PARTNERSHIP

CONTRIBUTION	WHAT IT CAN UNLOCK FOR ATHLETES
Funding	Accessible participation and programme continuity
Academic expertise	Structured learning and credible certification
Practitioner expertise	Industry-relevant skills and professional context
Infrastructure	Residential learning and community building
Mentorship	Individual guidance and accountability
Employee engagement	Exposure to workplace culture and professional networks
Employer pathways	Internships, jobs, apprenticeships and live projects
Sports ecosystem access	Athlete identification, referrals and lifecycle integration

PARTNERSHIP THESIS

PIVOT's long-term model is not CSR funding a training programme. It is an ecosystem in which different institutions contribute the asset they are best placed to provide.

15 RESOURCEFULNESS AND WHAT WE LEARNED

More with less

PIVOT was designed as a fully funded, hybrid initiative that used existing digital platforms, practitioner expertise, mentorship, group projects and focused residential bootcamps to reduce friction for athletes' schedules and locations.

RESOURCE	DESIGN CHOICE	VALUE CREATED
Digital tools and platforms	Self-paced learning and online collaboration	Flexible access, continuity and digital confidence
Experts and CSR partners	Practitioner-led sessions	Industry exposure and practical relevance
Anantapur Sports Academy	Focused residential bootcamps	Deeper engagement, relationships and teamwork
Online presentation platforms	Virtual Pitch Fest	Professional presentation experience without additional travel

TOTAL PROGRAMME INVESTMENT

₹17 lakh

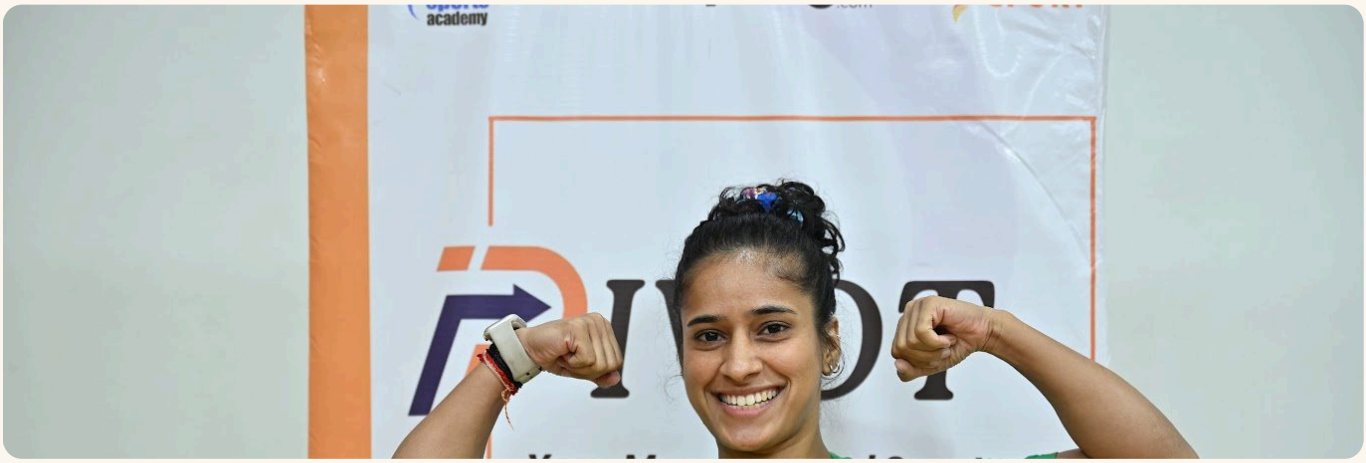
for the full year for 18 athletes: hybrid learning and mentorship, all three residential bootcamps and the graduation, the PIVOT Future Leaders Scholarships (₹1.5 lakh) and the Pitch Fest prize money (₹1 lakh).

WHAT WORKED

Designing around athletes' needs and schedules. Combining flexible online learning with practitioner sessions, practical projects and ongoing mentorship.

WHAT WAS HARD

Athletes have different learning needs and competition schedules. Career exposure needs follow-up support, and confidence must be reinforced through practice.



What we learned

SIX LESSONS FROM PIVOT 1.0

1

Start with the athlete, not the job

Transition cannot begin with a vacancy list. Athletes first need to understand their strengths, experiences, interests and aspirations. The sequence (identity, capability, application, opportunity) mattered.

2

Hybrid learning fits athlete realities

Online sessions created continuity and reduced travel, while residential bootcamps created depth, reflection, peer learning and community.

3

Practitioners make career learning real

Experts across branding, project management, networking, AI, financial literacy and sports careers showed not only what a skill is, but what it looks like in professional practice.

4

Applied learning turns confidence into evidence

Group projects and Pitch Fest moved athletes from consuming information to researching, planning, budgeting, dividing responsibility, responding to critique and presenting.

5

Mentorship provides continuity

A session can introduce an idea. A mentor can help an athlete work out what that idea means for her own decisions and next steps.

6

Exposure alone does not create opportunity

Career awareness must connect to credible resumes, role mapping, interview practice, employer understanding and sustained follow-through. The next model needs a stronger conversion engine from learning to opportunity.

WHAT WAS DIFFICULT, AND HOW THE MODEL MUST IMPROVE

Design implications

CHALLENGE OBSERVED	IMPLICATION FOR THE NEXT MODEL
Athletes are not a homogeneous learner group	Segment learners and provide differentiated support for English, digital confidence and workplace readiness
The athlete calendar is not a student calendar	Build flexibility around training, travel and competition without lowering completion standards
Exposure does not automatically become opportunity	Map role pathways and connect learning to employer access, internships and recruitment
Confidence is not the same as capability	Assess outputs and demonstrated work, not only self-reported confidence
Transition does not end at graduation	Build alumni tracking, career support and continued opportunity sharing

SPORT-TO-WORK TRANSLATION

Training	→ **Discipline**	Competition	→ **Performance under pressure**
Team sport	→ **Collaboration**	Captaincy	→ **Leadership**
Goal setting	→ **Execution**	Setbacks	→ **Resilience**
Years of competition	→ **Commitment and learning agility**		

CORE BELIEF

WOMEN ATHLETES ARE NOT STARTING FROM ZERO. SPORT HAS ALREADY BUILT SUBSTANTIAL CAPABILITY. PIVOT'S ROLE IS TO MAKE THAT CAPABILITY LEGIBLE AND USEFUL IN PROFESSIONAL CONTEXTS.

16 THE ROAD AHEAD

From proof of concept to a pathway

PIVOT 1.0 answered the first question: will women athletes engage seriously with structured career and professional development while navigating sport? The evidence suggests they will. The next question is harder: can that learning be converted into a credible, repeatable education-to-employment pathway?

PIVOT IS MOVING FROM PILOT TO INSTITUTION

IIM Indore is incubating and co-designing a **25-week General Management and Employability Certification** with residential components for women athletes.

THE ALUMNI NETWORK

- Monthly job updates
- Quarterly check-ins
- A cohort-led newsletter
- Masterclasses
- An annual homecoming
- Alumni as future mentors

WHAT THE NEXT MODEL SHOULD LEAVE EVERY ATHLETE WITH

A professional CV · **A complete LinkedIn profile** · **STAR interview stories** · **Digital work samples** · **Management assignments** · **A capstone project** · **A career action plan**

FROM		TO
Individual sessions	→	**A structured curriculum**
Exposure	→	**Demonstrated capability**
Broad career awareness	→	**Mapped role pathways**
Informal mentorship	→	**An intentional support layer**
Participation	→	**Measurable readiness**
A time-bound programme	→	**A sustained transition pathway**

THE NEXT MEASUREMENT FRONTIER

PIVOT 2.0 will measure whether athletes can articulate their strengths professionally, identify realistic career pathways, build credible work samples, apply for opportunities, perform in interviews and make informed decisions about education, employment and entrepreneurship.

MEASUREMENT SHIFT

From 'I feel more confident' to 'I can demonstrate what I can do'.

The next chapter needs partners who can connect learning to real pathways.

IT TAKES AN ECOSYSTEM TO TRANSITION AN ATHLETE

The role of partners

PIVOT's next phase cannot be built by Simply Sport Foundation alone. Different institutions have different assets to contribute.

PARTNER TYPE	POTENTIAL ROLE
Funders / CSR	Finance cohorts, scholarships, learning infrastructure and evidence-building
Universities	Curriculum, faculty, assessment, certification and academic credibility
Employers	Internships, jobs, apprenticeships, live projects and interview access
Companies	Practitioners, mentors, employee engagement and functional expertise
Sports federations / associations	Athlete identification, referral and lifecycle integration
SAI centres, state sports centres, academies	Athlete outreach, local infrastructure and referral
Sport, health and wellness companies	Sector-specific pathways, role exposure and employment
Nonprofits	Athlete access, community pathways and wraparound support
Alumni	Peer support, referrals, mentorship and future advocacy

WHAT SSF IS LOOKING FOR

- Partners who can fund cohorts and scholarships
- Academic institutions that can strengthen structured learning
- Employers willing to offer internships, apprenticeships and early-career roles
- Professionals who can mentor, teach and review athlete work
- Sports organisations that can identify and refer athletes
- Partners willing to help build evidence on effective athlete transition in India

THE ASK

Support PIVOT not only by funding participation, but by opening knowledge, networks and opportunity.



YOUR MOVE BEYOND SPORT.

PIVOT 1.0 began with a question: what happens when an athlete's potential extends far beyond the field, but the opportunities to realise it do not?

In 2026, 18 women athletes gave part of the answer. They learned new tools, reflected on their identities, built projects, worked with mentors, explored careers and presented their ideas in unfamiliar professional settings. They did not need to be 'motivated' into leadership. They already carried many of its foundations. PIVOT gave them language, tools, networks and opportunities to practise using them differently.

From **athlete** to **leader**.

From **participation** to **possibility**.

From **the field** to **the future**.

THE PIVOT PROMISE

No female athlete should feel that when sport ends, she has to start from zero. Her sporting journey should count as the foundation for her next professional chapter.

PIVOT 1.0 is not the finish line. It is the evidence base for what comes next.

We thank the 18 athletes, our mentors and expert speakers, judges Sharda Ugra, Nisha Millet and Chanakya Gupta, Social Panga, Anantapur Sports Academy, India Khelo Football, Godrej Consumer Products and the Simply Sport Foundation team.

Reference

APPENDICES

A · PIVOT 1.0 COHORT

ATHLETE	AGE	FROM	SPORT	SELECTED HIGHLIGHT
Sunita Choudhary	19	Jalore, Rajasthan	Wushu	Gold at Batumi International Open 2025
Sheetal Sanag	22	Delhi	Ultimate Frisbee	Community sport leader; empowered 200+ young people
Payal Saran	21	Jodhpur, Rajasthan	Wushu and Boxing	Senior Nationals silver
Annu Saini	22	Itawa, Rajasthan	Athletics (3000m steeplechase)	Three-time state medallist
Sunita Jakhar	25	Nagaur, Rajasthan	Race Walk and Kho-Kho	Race-walk gold medallist
Priyanka Yadav	19	Sikar, Rajasthan	Discus and NCC	Discus gold medallist; NCC cadet
Kongara Preethi	19	Hyderabad, Telangana	Sailing	Competed at the 2023 Asian Games
Tara Ansari	19	Delhi	Football	Delhi Women's League bronze; AIFF D Licence
Kusum Kumari	18	Delhi	Football	Best Goalkeeper award
Sheetal Sharma	29	Delhi	Rugby	Former India captain; Asian Games; recovering from an ACL injury
Riya Almiya	20	Delhi	Volleyball	World Para Athletics volunteer
Rokhsar Banoo	20	Delhi	Football	State and national level; returning from an ACL injury
Khushboo Jha	18	Delhi	Football	Delhi Women's League bronze; AIFF D Licence
Raziya Khan	20	Delhi	Football	Signed by Odisha FC, Garhwal FC and HOPS FC
Archi Singhvi	27	Jodhpur, Rajasthan	Wushu and Rhythmic Gymnastics	State Wushu gold; 4th at nationals in rhythmic gymnastics
Kunttimalla Lahari	20	Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh	Athletics	Asian Youth Para Games involvement
Pulajuttu Susmitha	18	Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh	Football	Khelo India Youth Games
Lavanya Verma	20	Ahmedabad, Gujarat	Football	AIFF U-17 India women's team camp

B · GROUP PROJECTS

TEAM	VENTURE
Akatsuki	VIRA: Return-to-Play Support Initiative
Fearless Femmes	Second Innings: Women's 35+ Football League
Herizon	Women's Sports Broadcasting Platform
Powerpuff Girls	Adyvora: Women's Sports Academy (winner)

C · TEAM AND CONTRIBUTORS

NAME	ROLE
Ankit Nagori	Founder, Simply Sport Foundation
Kanika Nagori	Executive Director; opening keynote at induction
Aditi Mutatkar	Head, Women Initiatives; mentor; coordinated expert sessions
Darshan NK	Head, Programs and Partnerships; mentor
Ipsita Basu	Project Lead, PIVOT 1.0
Harshita Chaurasia	Athlete management and tracking officer

Mentor panel: Dr. Chaitanya Sridhar, Pragnya Mohan, Aditi Mutatkar, Darshan NK, Ayesha Billimoria. Dashboard figures reflect PIVOT 1.0 programme records. Ages are as at programme start.

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