

# Vinesh Phogat-The Indian Grappler

Vinesh Phogat (born 25 August 1994) is a retired Indian professional freestyle wrestler. She is a multiple Commonwealth Games gold medalist, having won golds at the 2014, 2018, and 2022 Games. She became the first Indian woman wrestler to win a gold medal at the Commonwealth and Asian Games after she won the gold medal in the 2018 Asian Games. She has also won two bronze medals at the World Wrestling Championships.

She is a three-time Olympian, having competed in three different weight classes: 48 kg in 2016, 53 kg in 2020, and 50 kg in 2024. In the 2024 Summer Olympics, she became the first international wrestler to defeat the then-reigning Olympic champion Yui Susaki, on the way to becoming the first Indian female wrestler to reach an Olympic final. However, she was disqualified after exceeding the stipulated weight by 100 grams (3.52oz) on the second day of her event. After her disqualification, she announced her retirement from the sport with immediate effect.

Phogat was nominated for the Laureus World Sports Awards in 2019 and was the first Indian to get a nomination for the award. In 2023, she was part of the 2023 Indian wrestlers' protest against then president of Indian Wrestling Federation and BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who was accused of sexual harassment by several female wrestlers.

#### Early and personal life

Vinesh was born on 25 August 1994 in Charkhi Dadri, Haryana, India. She is the daughter of Rajpal Phogat and Premalata Phogat and hails from a family of wrestlers. Her sister Priyanka Phogat and cousins Geeta Phogat, Ritu Phogat and Babita Kumari are all wrestlers. She was trained by her uncle Mahavir Singh Phogat. During the early years, her father and her uncle had to deal with opposition from the community in their village to help Vinesh and her cousins pursue competitive wrestling as they were judged to be going against the morals and values of their community. Vinesh was just nine years old when a mentally unstable relative of her family is said to have shot her father Rajpal Singh dead in front of their house.

On 13 December 2018, she married fellow wrestler Somvir Rathee from Jind. Both of them worked for the Indian Railways and have known each other since 2011.

#### Early career (2013-2016)

At the 2013 Asian Wrestling Championships held in New Delhi, Vinesh won the bronze medal in the women's freestyle 51 kg category. She defeated Nanami Irie of Japan in the initial bout before she lost to Tatyana Amanzhol of Kazakhstan in the quarterfinals. In the repechage rounds, Tho-Kaew Sriprapa of Thailand to win the bronze medal. In the subsequent Commonwealth Wrestling Championships held in Johannesburg, South Africa, she won the silver medal in the 51 kg category after she lost to Odunayo Adekunle of Nigeria in the final. In her first Commonwealth Games in 2014, she competed in the 48 kg category. She defeated Rosemary Nweke of Nigeria in the quarterfinals and Jasmine Mian of Canada in the semi-finals. In the gold medal bout, she defeated Yana Rattigan of England by a score of 3-1 and won her first gold medal at the Games.

Vinesh won a bronze medal in the 48 kg category at the 2014 Asian Games held in Incheon, South Korea. She defeated Yongmi of North Korea in the first round before she overcame Dauletbike Yakhshimuratova of Uzbekistan in the quarterfinals. She lost to Eri Tosaka of Japan in the semi-finals by a scoreline of 1-3. She won the bronze medal after she beat Narangerel Eredenesukh of Mongolia by technical superiority in the repechage bout. She won the silver medal in the 2015 Asian Championships held at Doha, Qatar after she was unable to beat Yuki Irie of Japan in the finals.

#### Injury and comeback (2016-2020)

In April 2016, Vinesh was slated to compete at the 2016 World Wrestling Olympic Qualification Tournament 1 held at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in a bid to qualify for the 2016 Summer Olympics. But, she was disqualified from the competition as she was found to be 400 grams above the weight category and was let off with a warning. Subsequently, Vinesh qualified for 2016 Summer Olympics at the 2016 World Wrestling Olympic Qualification Tournament 2 event held in Istanbul, where she beat Polish wrestler Iwona Matkowska in the final. She competed in the 48 kg category at her first Olympics in 2016 at Rio de Janeiro. She won the round of 16

bout against Alina Vuc of Romania easily by technical superiority. During the quarterfinal bout against Sun Yanan of China, she retired after she suffered a anterior cruciate ligament injury during the match.

Vinesh made a comeback and participated in the 50 kg category in her second Commonwealth Games in 2018 in Gold Coast, Australia. In the event which was held in round-robin format, she won all her matches to secure her second gold medal across the Commonwealth Games. In the subsequent 2018 Asian Games at Jakarta, she competed in the 50 kg category. She avenged her loss against Sun Yanan of China in the round of 16 before she beat Kim Hyung-joo of South Korea in the quarterfinals and Dauletbike Yakhshimuratova of Uzbekistan in the semi-finals. In the finals, she beat Japan's Yuki Irie to win the gold medal. She became first Indian woman wrestler to win a gold at both the Commonwealth and Asian Games. In the 2019 Asian Wrestling Championships, she won a bronze medal by defeating Qianyu Pang of China. In the subsequent 2019 Yasar Dogu Tournament, Vinesh won the gold medal by defeating Ekaterina Poleshchuk of Russia in the final.

In the 2019 World Wrestling Championships, she won the bronze medal in the 53 kg category after she defeated Maria Prevolaraki in the bronze medal match. She also became the first Indian wrestler to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics 2020 by virtue of her top six finish in the tournament. In January 2020, she won the gold medal in the Rome Ranking Series after she defeated Luisa Valverde in the finals.

Vinesh defeated the 2017 World Champion Vanesa Kaladzinskaya of Belarus to win the gold medal at the Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers and Coaches Memorial tournament held in Kyiv in February 2021. She also won the gold medal at the 2021 Matteo Pellicone Ranking Series event to become the world number one in her weight category. In June 2021, she won the gold medal in the 53 kg category in the Poland Open wrestling tournament in Warsaw after defeating Ukraine's Khrystyna Bereza in the final.

In August 2021, she headed to compete in the women's 53 kg event at the 2020 Summer Olympics as the world number one. Though she defeated Sofia Mattsson of Sweden in the first round, she was beaten by Belarusian Vanesa Kaladzinskaya in the quarterfinals. Soon after the Olympics, she was suspended by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) for indiscipline citing that she had refused to train with her Indian teammates at the Olympics Village and had not worn the official Indian kit at the Olympics. As WFI expressed its disapproval of private partners, she issued an apology on the matter. In November 2021, WFI prevented-

ed private NGOs from signing contracts with and training wrestlers without its approval, leading to Phogat losing her private contract with JSW Sports

In the women's 53 kg event at the 2022 Commonwealth Games held in Birmingham, she bagged the gold medal after she won all her bouts. In the 53 kg event at the 2022 World Wrestling Championships held in Belgrade, she won her second World Championship bronze medal.[45] She lost her first round bout against Batkhuyagin Khulan of Mongolia, but won three straight games in the repechage rounds to win the bronze.

As Antim Panghal earned the quota in the class of 53kg, Vinesh competed at the 2024 Asian Wrestling Olympic Qualification Tournament in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and earned a quota place for the 50 kg category in the 2024 Summer Olympics. In the first round of the Paris Olympics, she defeated reigning Olympic and world champion Yui Susaki of Japan, who had not conceded a single point to an opponent in the Tokyo Olympics. The match was a cagey affair with Susaki leading 2-0 through two penalty points until the final few seconds when the Indian effected a takedown and scored an upset win. Phogat beat Oksana Livaich of Ukraine in the quarterfinals and Yusueylys Guzmán of Cuba in the semifinals by point decisions to qualify for the final. However, Phogat was later disqualified for being above the stipulated weight by a mere amount of 100 g (3.5 oz) during the weigh-in on the morning of the finals. As a result, she was relegated to last place in the classification.

After her disqualification, Vinesh announced that she had appealed against the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. She had demanded that she be awarded the joint silver medal in the event as she was within the legal weight limits during the first day of the bout. She also announced her retirement from the sport with immediate effect.

Vinesh was awarded the Arjuna Award in 2016. In 2018, she was nominated for Padma Shri by the Sports Authority of India. She was nominated for the Laureus World Sports Awards in 2019 and was the first Indian to get a nomination for the award. In 2020, she was awarded the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna, India's highest sporting honour. She was also nominated for the BBC Indian Sportswoman of The Year award for 2022.



## Baked Bread Rolls



#### INGREDIENTS

10 fresh whole wheat bread slices  
melted butter for greasing and brushing  
**For The Stuffing**  
2 tsp oil  
2 tsp finely chopped spring onions with the greens  
2 tsp finely chopped capsicum, 2 tsp grated carrot  
1/4 cup finely chopped cabbage  
1/2 cup boiled whole wheat noodles , roughly chopped  
1/4 cup finely chopped paneer (cottage cheese)  
1 tsp soy sauce, 1 tsp schezuan sauce  
a pinch of sugar, salt

#### Method

**For the stuffing**  
Heat the oil in a broad non-stick pan, add the spring onions, capsicum, carrots and cabbage and sauté on a

medium flame for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the noodles, paneer, soya sauce, schezuan sauce, sugar, salt and pepper and mix well. Keep aside.

#### How to proceed

Remove the crust from the bread slices and roll each using a rolling pin. Place a rolled bread slice on a clean, dry surface and spread 1 tbsp of the prepared stuffing at one end of the bread slice and roll it up tightly. Apply some water at the edges and press to gently seal the stuffing. Repeat steps 2 and 3 to make 9 more rolls. Place the rolls on a greased baking tray, brush little butter evenly on top of the bread rolls and bake in a pre-heated oven at 200°C (400°F) for 15 minutes. Turn them over and bake again at 200°C (400°F) for 5 more minutes. Serve immediately.

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## Russian Salad Bread Cups



#### INGREDIENTS

For the toast cases  
8 slices of whole wheat bread, 2 tsp butter  
**For the Russian salad filling (makes approx. 1½ cups)**  
1/4 cup peeled, boiled and chopped potatoes  
1/4 cup boiled green peas  
2 tsp peeled, chopped and boiled carrots  
2 tsp boiled french beans  
2 tsp peeled and chopped pineapple  
2 tsp chopped apples, 2 tsp chopped lettuce  
2 tsp Eggless Mayonnaise  
1 tsp fresh cream  
salt and freshly ground black pepper (kalimireh) powder to taste  
**Method**  
**For the toast cases**  
Slice off the crust from the bread slices.

Wrap the bread slices in a muslin cloth and steam in a pressure cooker for 5 to 7 minutes. Flatten the bread slices and press each bread slice into the cavities of a muffin tray greased with butter. Brush some melted butter over them and bake in a pre-heated oven at 200°C (400°F) for 10 minutes or until crisp. Demould and keep aside.  
**For the Russian salad filling**  
Mix all the ingredients in a bowl.  
**How to proceed**  
Divide into 8 equal portions and keep aside.  
**Fill a portion of the mixture in each toast case. Serve immediately.**  
**Tips**  
Muffin trays are used for making cup cakes, muffins etc. They are available at any shop which sells cake moulds.