

‘The goal was to finish’

Aishwarya Pissay was returning from an injury

MOTORSPORTS

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA
BENGALURU

Aishwarya Pissay returned home on Wednesday after her triumph in the 2019 FIM Bajas World Cup.

The 24-year-old rider, who emerged on top of the women’s section and second in the junior category, described the reaction to her feats as “overwhelming.”

Last year, Aishwarya had suffered a serious injury in her first international event – the Baja Aragon – where a crash left her with a ruptured pancreas.

She expressed delight at having been able to finish all four rounds of the Bajas World Cup this time around.

“Last year, I could not ride for two and a half months after surgery. I could not work on my core because the injury had not healed. I stayed in hospital for a month, after which I still had a tube hanging off my body when I came back to India. Psychologically, I had to work on my riding after the accident. This year, I got a lot more seat time, which itself is progress,” the TVS rider said.

Aishwarya’s cause was helped by the fact that she was the only woman rider to compete in all four rounds, enabling her to gather more

points than her rivals. She was the sole woman rider in the first round in Dubai, finished third out of three women in the second round in Portugal, fifth out of five at the Baja Aragon in Spain, and ended the season with a fourth place among four women riders in Hungary.

Aishwarya did not feel, though, that the size of the field diminished her accomplishment. “It does not devalue the achievement,” she said. “In the Olympics, if there are five people on the track, would you say the same thing about them? Overall, if you look at the women’s field in motorsports worldwide, five is a good number. The women I raced against have ridden in the Dakar (Rosa Romero and Sara Garcia Alvarez). It wasn’t easy.”

Aishwarya, who was ranked 23rd overall (and second out of 11 riders in the Junior section), was positive in her assessment of her own performance. “Honestly, to even be able to finish these races is a huge task,” she said.

“For a person like me, after having that big crash last year, the first goal was to finish each race, no matter what. The bonus was that we won the championship. I definitely finished a lot better than I thought I would.”



Smile of success: Aishwarya Pissay expressed delight at having been able to finish all four rounds of the Bajas World Cup this time around. ■ SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA