

# Finishing races itself is a big task: Aishwarya

My story gives hope for everyone who dreams big, says rally rider

SANDEEP MENON  
BENGALURU, DHNS



**Bengaluru biker Aishwarya Pissay poses with her FIM World Cup in the women's category spoils on Wednesday.**

DH PHOTO/ JANARDHAN B K

It's been an 'overwhelming' 48 hours for Aishwarya Pissay. Back in Bengaluru, the rally rider, who turned 24 on Wednesday, admits she is 'happy'.

After a grueling year, much of which went in returning from a career threatening injury, winning the FIM World Cup in the women's category has been more than she expected.

"This year I got a lot more seat time which is a big plus," she says. "To be able to finish these races is a task. After the crash last year, my first goal was to finish the race. Bonus is that we won the championship."

In the third race of the four-race series in Aragon, she finished the stage - the very same where she crashed and ruptured her pancreas a year ago - overcoming her demons.

"The injury took me one step back to achieve what I have," she says.

"After the surgery (in end of July) I was at the hospital for a month, after which I still had a tube hanging off my body for

another month. Post that, half a month, I started training. Started riding in October," she says of the time.

## Returning from injuries

As a rally racer, injuries are part and parcel. She had earlier broken her collar bone and Aishwarya, who finished four points clear of her nearest rival in the championship, says, the approach to returning remains the same.

"Every time, the approach is how are we going to approach the next race? How are we going to focus on recovery? That's exactly how I was able to bounce back quicker, than thinking about the situation I was in," she reveals. "I have a mental and physical conditioning coach.

We replicate race situation during my training. Mentally as well, no matter how difficult it gets, to believe in yourself and focus is very important. In Spain, psychologically I had to work a lot more on myself."

Aishwarya, who picked Hungary and Portugal - which had 400km to cover in one day - as the hardest races, was one of the five women participating in the event and the only one to have raced in all four races in the series.

"There were three women from Spain, one from Portugal," she says about her competitors. "It was a big number Baja has seen, compared to last year. Overall, even in the world motorsport stage, I think there are 3-4 women who take part. These women are veterans of Dakar, champions of different races," she says.

What has also gone slightly under the radar is that she finished second in Junior Baja category, behind De Gavardo Tomas of Chile.

With the wind in her sails, Aishwarya is now heading to Coimbatore for the Indian National Rally later this month.

A year after she was in the hospital making plans for the races this year, Aishwarya is ready.

"I think it definitely gives hope to everyone who dreams of achieving something big. I think this will help," she says of her story.

"To race in Dakar is the ultimate goal. This is one stepping stone towards that."