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# “THE ONLY THING YOU HAVE TO DO IS BELIEVE IN YOUR DREAMS”

SUCH IS THE MESSAGE OF OLYMPIC SOLIDARITY (OS) SCHOLAR AND BADMINTON PLAYER YGOR COELHO. DESPITE NOT QUALIFYING FOR THE ROUND OF 16 IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES RIO 2016, THE 19-YEAR-OLD CARIOCA AND YOUTH OLYMPIAN HAS MADE HISTORY AS ONE OF THE FIRST BADMINTON PLAYERS TO REPRESENT BRAZIL IN THE GAMES, AND IN HIS HOME TOWN NO LESS.

Born and raised in the Chacrinha favela on the western outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, Ygor Coelho has risen from unconventional circumstances to become today the face of Brazilian badminton.

“I started to play badminton thanks to my father. He wanted to start a project to improve the lives of young people,” explains the young man, who benefits from an Olympic Scholarship for Athletes for Rio 2016. “He

wanted to start with swimming, because badminton is not very well known in Brazil. But he discovered badminton via an Italian teacher who came to Brazil with two rackets and a shuttlecock. My father found this sport was easy to learn and great fun, and it made him want to start the Miratus Project.”

In his hand-built centre, Ygor’s father started giving badminton lessons to underprivileged children in the Chacrinha community in a bid to provide a healthy upbringing to the local young people. Once lessons were over, he would exchange smashes across the court with his son, who found a new vocation in this sport.

“My dream to go to the Olympic Games started in 2007 when a Canadian lady came to our community to talk about the Olympics,” recounts Ygor. “When she talked to us I was really inspired. I thought it must be sensational to play at the Olympics!”



With hard work, perseverance, discipline and plenty of dreams filling his head, a young Ygor began training with one goal in mind: to make it to the Olympic Games one day. His talent saw him represent his nation at the [Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing](#), China, in 2014 and win the Pan Am Junior Badminton Championships six times. He then amassed enough points to start competing on the world circuit. Once the young Carioca reached the round of 16 in the World Championships, the National Olympic Committee of Brazil came to him with the proposal of an Olympic Solidarity grant.

“The OS grant has been instrumental in my journey to here: I was able to train in Denmark, I was able to take part in international tournaments and score important points, all thanks to the OS grant.” He added: “Without it, I would not be here today.”

‘Here today’ means at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro as one of the first ever Brazilian badminton players. While the young upbeat Olympian was not able to reach the round of 16, his mood and enthusiasm have in no way faltered.

“I leave here very happy because of all that I have done, getting out of the favela and reaching the Olympic Games. I believe I can be an example for all the kids in my community or in a similar situation. The only thing you have to do is believe in your dreams and work as hard as you can to reach them, and one day they will come true.”

Ygor Coelho, a story of resilience and passion



***That kid grew up  
to be a professional athlete***

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Stay tuned as this promising talent and #OlympicSolidarityScholarship holder will no doubt be bearing the colours of his nation in future Championships and Olympic Games.

## OLYMPIC SOLIDARITY ATHLETES IN RIO

An impressive 830 Olympic Solidarity Scholarship-holders and 21 teams are expected to participate in the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. The Olympic Solidarity programme for athletes has offered substantial assistance to elite international athletes nominated by their respective National Olympic Committees for their preparation and qualification for Rio 2016. The priority for the IOC is to focus primarily on athletes who need it the most and place them on an equal footing with their competitors from more developed regions of the world.

Ten days into the Olympic Games Rio 2016, 67 medals have been won by the Olympic Solidarity scholarship holders, two of these were the first ever medal for their National Olympic Committees (Fiji and Kosovo).



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