



AS IT IS

Even Without Arms, Pakistani Man Is Skilled Snooker Player

October 31, 2020

A Pakistani man who was born without arms has developed into a highly skilled snooker player.

In the game of snooker, players traditionally use long sticks to hit colored balls into holes at the end of a **table**. But Muhammad Ikram has learned a different method. He uses his chin to hit the balls into the holes.

The 32-year-old lives in Samundri, a rural town in Pakistan's Punjab province. He has spent eight years perfecting his game and says he is not afraid to take on any players.

"I have met very good snooker players who tell me I am a real **genius**, that I can bring great fame to Pakistan," he told Reuters Television.

Muhammad Ikram is one of nine children. He did not receive an education and his family faced struggles meeting basic needs.

Growing up, Ikram spent much of his time watching people play snooker, a game no one dreamed he could ever play. He says he does not remember exactly how the idea of playing struck him. But at some point, he started **practicing** the game in secret.

"He would **eagerly** watch the other boys play. He would keep wishing he also had arms so he could play like them," said his mother, Razia Bibi. "Then he started using his chin."

Mian Usman Ahmed is co-owner of the Cuemaster Snooker **Club**. He says Ikram won several prizes in local competitions over the past two years.

“He would come to the club and ask that he be **allowed** to play. We would look at his arms and feel he was unable to,” Ahmed said. “He **insisted** we allow him to ... prove himself. When he did that, we saw he was actually very good.”

Ikram says many people like his undying spirit. Some eateries even permit him to eat their food for free, with waiters volunteering to feed him.

He told Reuters, “God has not given me arms, but he has given me **courage**. And I have used that spirit to fulfill my **ambition**.”

When asked what he would say to others with physical disabilities, Ikram said “no one should lose hope.” He added that he would one day like to compete at the international level, hopefully with government support.

Pakistani government records show that the country has 3.3 million people with disabilities. But some studies have estimated the actual number could be as high as 13 percent of the population.

I’m Bryan Lynn.

Reuters reported on this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the report for VOA Learning English. George Grow was the editor.

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Words in This Story

table – *n.* a piece of furniture with four legs that is used for eating, putting things on, etc.

genius – *n.* a person who is extremely intelligent or very good at doing something

practice – *v.* repeatedly doing an activity to improve your skills

eager – *adj.* wanting to do or have something very much

club – *n.* an organization for people with shared interests to take part in activities

allow – *v.* permit

insist – *v.* to say firmly something is true

courage – *n.* the ability to do something without being afraid

ambition – *n.* a particular goal or aim : something that a person hopes to do or achieve
