

Jagshaanbir Jhavar: The Gentle Giant of Basketball, Brotherhood, and a Love for Laughter

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Jagshaanbir Jhavar playing Hedbanz with his girlfriend. Photo courtesy of Jagshaanbir

At seven feet tall, with thick dark hair, and a full beard that covers his face like a mask, Jagshaanbir Jhavar has a commanding presence whenever he enters the room. One would never imagine he's the type of person to get into exaggerated poses and cheer for his teammates on the sidelines or even play pranks on his roommates and brother.

Jhavar's story is one of a very stoic yet goofy student who became an athlete, an international player trying to create a place for himself in American basketball. But he is much more than that, he is a loving brother and friend who is always looking to lighten the mood and make good memories. Whether it is through playing, coaching or analyzing the game, there is no doubt that his story is just beginning.

A stone-cold exterior hides the inner kid who seeks chaos through his love of harmless and humorous situations.

Outside of the basketball court Jhavar transforms into a playful prankster who loves to create humorous situations. He hides in closets and behind doorways to frighten his roommates and records their reactions. He pokes playfully at his teammates on the sidelines as joke.

Every person in his social circle remains constantly alert because they never know when Jhawar will surprise them with his next well-timed scare.

People who truly understand Jhawar recognize that underneath that intimidating exterior lies just a big kid who finds great amusement in practical jokes and the sound of someone else's startled scream.

Born and brought up in the suburbs of Punjab, India, Jhawar was not always a basketball enthusiast when he was young. In those early years, he focused more on academics.

"I was always a good student, always got A's, always got hundreds," he said. "I was student of the year four times."

But it was in ninth grade that he says he suddenly experienced a change – he gained 6 inches within three months and stood at 6'6." A coach told him that he should try out basketball. From there, he started to have interest in the sport.

However, basketball is not the most popular sport in India.

"Where I come from, we don't have many opportunities to play sports," Jhawar explains. "Cricket is the dominant sport—more than half of the people in India play cricket."

Despite this, he says he continued with the sport and was signed by the NBA Academy, a training program for prospects from around the world.

It was then that he says he understood that basketball could take him past the boundaries of his home country.

Through the NBA Academy, Jhawar was able to travel the world and play in tournaments in Australia, China, Bangladesh, and Thailand.

"We were traveling with police escorts, getting new gear—it really showed me how big basketball is globally," said Jhawar.

He got a chance to come to the United States in 2019 for a tournament and a year after that, he was admitted to a collegiate program to play basketball.

For Jhawar, the change of country was not always smooth. He says that he experienced homesickness, particularly for food.

"Food is what makes me think about home," he says, smiling. "Just thinking about my mom's food—it hits different."

His younger brother, Akshatbir Jhawar, knows the difficulties that Jhawar, whom he calls Jags, has gone through and understands the challenges of moving to a new country.

“Moving to a new culture and being away from family is never easy,” Akshatbir shares. “But Jags has always been driven. He knew that basketball could take him places and he never let any setbacks get in his way.”

Jhawar also says the cultural transition was also difficult because there are very few Indian basketball players in American college basketball.

“It’s hard to find people from my culture here,” Jhawar says.

“But whenever I meet someone from India or the South Asian community in sports, we stay connected. There’s a growing network on social media of brown athletes, and it’s great to see that representation.”



The Jhawar Brothers standing next to each other (Akshatbir on left, Jagshaanbir on right) Photo courtesy of by Akshatbir

Akshatbir isn’t the only one who has noticed Jagshaanbir’s commitment. His previous teammates and coaches have also praised him for his hard work and determination.

“Jags was always one of the hardest workers in the gym,” noted his teammate at Point Park University for three years, Nate Van.

“He would be there early, leave late and would always try to push himself. He never cut corners.

Jhavar's time in the states has been full of highs and lows, but despite any obstacles, his love for the game remains unwavering.

"I watch every March Madness game—I just love being around basketball."

Akshatbir also shared his perception on the struggles that Jagshaanbir has made to achieve his dream.

"People don't know what it takes to have to leave your home country at such a young age," he said. "It's not just about basketball—it's about adapting to a whole new world, learning to be independent, and constantly proving yourself. Jags has done all of that and more."

Jhavar is also interested in the athletic career but has other plans as well – he wants to work in the field of sports analytics or get a job with the NBA. "

Basketball brought me here," he says. "It provided me with two degrees, and I need to contribute my best to the game in any way that I can, whether it is on the court or off the court."

Jhavar says mental strength plays a big role in the journey.

He has maintained the right attitude to enable him push through injuries, tough losses and moments of doubt.

"There were times when I thought I should quit, when I doubted if I was on the right track," he shared. "But I always told myself why I started. I wanted to prove to myself and to other people that I can do this."