

Ashok Kumar, director, SAAP, was a table tennis champ and loved skiing and horse riding

It's all in the game

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Srinivas Setty

THE cell buzzes and Ashok Kumar reaches for it, talks for a few moments and switches it off. "That was Mahesh Bhupathi," he says with a smile. The tennis pro? "Yes. One good thing about this job is that I get to meet a lot of interesting people and know them at a more personal level," says the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh director.

An officer of the 1991 batch, Ashok has met beauty queens ("Celina Jaitley in Jamaica") and sportstars, friendly villagers and hostile tribals in his career and he's enjoying every bit of it. "I joined the civil services because there's a variety of challenges that make the job an interesting one."

Born in Chengannur in Allepey district, Kerala, he shifted to Trivandrum soon for his schooling, finishing his academics as an electronics and communication engineer. His days as an engineer have left their mark on him. "I am a gizmo freak and love to tinker with the latest gadgets," he says while pointing to a pocket PC, a cool cell-phone and a digital organiser. "Sometimes, when I am out touring I just take out my organiser, find out the names of the local officials and address them. They get really surprised and think I have got this super memory," he recollects with a laugh.

An avid sportsman in his college days, he was the university table tennis champ. Ashok is still actively involved in sports. "I have climbed a 21,000 feet peak near Himachal and done skiing at Auli. In the Academy, I was a good horse rider." He still



Ashok Kumar is a music lover and a gadget freak

goes for an hour of tennis in the morning before he leaves for office.

Back at home, he loves listening to music. "When it comes to music, my wife thinks I am stuck in the seventies. I love the Beatles, Carpenters and Simon and Garfunkel. My favourite song is *Lay me down as a bridge over troubled waters...* by Simon and Garfunkel," he says.

Despite his packed schedule, he finds time for his son. "My wife is a gynaecologist and sometimes she has to leave early. That's when I have to get him ready for school. And I love it."

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hyderabadtimes@indiatimes.com