

Badminton: New hope for Doubles in India **after recent improved performances**

PTI: Aug 02, 2015

New Delhi: Lack of depth in Doubles has proved to be India's bane at the World stage of Badminton but the recent success of a few shuttlers has renewed hopes that the format can yield medals on a regular basis.

Recently, two Men's Doubles Pairs -- Manu Attri and B Sumeeth Reddy and the young combo of Shlok Ramchandran and Sanyam Shukla -- showed sparks of brilliance at the US Open Grand Prix Gold and Mauritius International respectively. While Manu and Sumeeth finished runners-up at the US Open last week, before winning the Lagos open to break into the top 20, youngsters Shlok and Sanyam clinched their maiden Mauritius International Title in June.

2010 Commonwealth Games Champions Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa are also coming back in form and have clinched the Canada Open in June.

"We had Maneesha and Manu reaching the finals of Syed Modi GPG in January, then Sikki (Reddy) and Pradnya (Gadre) did well in Sri Lanka and the Polish Open, they are around 30th in Ranking now.

In Men's Doubles, we have two pairs who are doing well and Jwala and Ashwin are at World No. 12, so we are starting to see some players going up there and it is a good sign," Gopichand told PTI.

"We also have a young bunch of them, who are playing well. So I think things are really looking positive," he added.

Gopichand's optimism is also reflected in the participation at the upcoming World Championship, where India will be fielding their biggest contingent.

In Men's Doubles, India will be represented by the pairs of Manu and Sumeeth, and Pranaav Jerry Chopra and Akshay Dewalkar, while the combo of Arun Vishnu and Aparna Balan, and Kona Tarun and N Sikki Reddy will lead the challenge in Mixed Doubles. In Women's Doubles, besides Jwala and Ashwini, there will be Pradnya and Sikki, and the young pair of Dhanya Nair and Mohita Sahdev in the field.

One reason behind this change is that now slowly and steadily youngsters are turning to Doubles instead of pursuing focussing solely on Singles.

Sumeeth, for example, had started as a Singles player but a back injury forced him to turn to Doubles and he says it was a right decision for him. "I was out of action for around five months in 2011 after suffering a back injury. After that I shifted to Doubles and started playing with Manu and we won the Srinagar Nationals in 2012. We then won the Tata Open twice back-to-back in 2013 and 2014," said Sumeeth.

Shlok and Sanyam, who won the Mauritius International, started playing together only in 2013 and they clinched a Title in only their second overseas Tournament with Sri Lanka Open being their first foreign event.

Better times lie ahead as the Badminton Association of India (BAI) has recently roped in reputed Doubles Coach Tan Kim Her, who will be joining the camp in September. "He will bring a lot of experience and knowledge of the game given that he has been the Chief Doubles Coach of England, South Korean and Malaysian teams. He will be a big boost to India's Olympic campaign," said Gopichand.
