

# The IBL has changed the way people look at Badminton

by Pulasta Dhar Sep 2, 2013



You cannot deny that the Indian Badminton League is a tournament which will only grow in the coming years.

As Saina Nehwal put it after leading her franchise Hyderabad Hotshots to the inaugural title after a 3-1 win over Awadhe Warriors, the IBL has certainly put Badminton on the map 'big time': "Without a doubt. See these things happen (referring to early criticism), but no one expected it to be such a success."

Any new league that comes up in the Country, in any sport, is instantly compared to the Indian Premier League (IPL), and styled after it. The IBL also fell victim to the comparison

Saina thinks the time for such a comparison is not right: "You cannot compare it to the IPL (Indian Premier League) at this point, because the IPL is so big in itself. But look at the crowds that have come to see us. I've never seen such a crowd at the Nationals."

And that's true. Even a stadium that is 75 percent full is a massive encouragement.

Consider asking yourself if you would recognise K Srikanth or Ajay Jayaram or even Pradnya Gadre if they walked past you. All of them are players in the top-50 of the world rankings, regulars on the National and International Badminton circuit and stars in their sport — but their connection to the Indian sports fan has never been intimate.

After the IBL, it will be a different story. As they make their way towards press conferences, word quickly spreads around the stadium and people rush for an autograph to the annoyance of burly security guards surrounding them. One may say it's the adrenaline pumping for the occasion, but look at it the other way — these guys are now wanted, loved, adored and respected by people.

People, on TV and from Stadiums, have now experienced first hand the potential of India in Badminton. While there's no doubt that Saina's Medal at the Olympics and Sindhu's at the Worlds created a buzz, the IBL was the spark needed to usher a new type of awareness. What it has also done, is pit India's players against each other and against the world's top players and such competition is vital for the sport to grow.