

Saina breaks a 'jinx' Srikanth doubles India's joy

Rakesh Rao , New Delhi, 30-03-15



Finally, Saina Nehwal broke her 'jinx' in the \$275,000 India Open Badminton Championship here and K. Srikanth doubled India's joy.

In what turned out to be a repeat Indian 'Double' as seen in the China Open last November, Saina and Srikanth reinforced their status among the strongest non-Chinese players in the world.

As though to mark her newly-acquired stature as the World's No. 1-in-waiting, Saina blitzed past former World Champion Ratchanok Intanon 21-16, 21-14 for her ninth BWF Superseries title and first National Open before a packed house at the Siri Fort Sports Complex.

The Thai girl, winner here in 2013, was no match for a determined Saina who led throughout the 49-minute contest. Even in their previous meeting, here in the Uber Cup in May last year, Saina posted a straight-game victory.

After Ratchanok's brilliant comeback in Saturday's Semifinals against the reigning World Champion Carolina Marin, a close-contest final was expected but Saina's best turned it into a one-sided match. This was Saina's sixth victory over Ratchanok in nine meetings.

Big burden is off

"I think a big burden is off. Last four years, I was struggling, losing in pre-quarters or quarters, this is the first time I have reached the final and won it. So, too many surprises for me in this tournament — being the World No. 1..., winning the title. I am very proud of myself, never thought this day will come after so much struggle, this is the best phase of my life."

Srikanth, who beat Viktor Axelsen in their only previous meeting to win the Swiss Open earlier this month, raced away with the last 11 points to script a brilliant 18-21, 21-13, 21-12 triumph.

The 22-year-old took time to settle down and dominated the second and third games to leave Axelsen exasperated in the end. The Dane who led 11-9 at the mid-game break in the decider, admitted losing his rhythm following a series of "poor shots." Srikanth controlled the net admirably and left nothing to chance.

"It feels great to win the back-to-back titles. I am really enjoying this phase. I have an eye on the World No. 1 ranking and wish to continue working towards it. At present, I want to focus on the upcoming Malaysia Open and perform well there."

The Results (all Finals):

Women Singles:



(1-Saina Nehwal (Ind) bt 3-Ratchanok Intanon (Tha) 21-16, 21-14)

Men Singles:



(2-K. Srikanth (Ind) bt 6-Viktor Axelsen (Den) 18-21, 21-13, 21-12)

Men Doubles:



**(3-Chai Biao and Hong Wei (Chn) bt
7-Mads Conrad Petersen and Mads Pieler Kolding (Den) 21-18, 21-14)**

Women Doubles:



**(1-Misaki Matsutomo and Ayaka Takahashi (Jpn)
bt 2-Luo Ying and Luo Yu (Chn) 21-19, 21-19)**

Mixed Doubles:



**(2-Liu Cheng and Bao Yixin (Chn) bt 1-Joachim Fischer Nielsen and
Christina Pedersen (Den) 21-19, 21-19)**
