

Delhi Acers beat Mumbai Rockets to clinch maiden Premier Badminton League 2016 Title

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New Delhi: A high-octane action coupled with Bollywood star quotient kept the spectators enthralled in the final of the Premier Badminton League between Delhi Acers and Mumbai Rockets here on Sunday.

The city team, didn't disappoint a sizeable crowd at the Siri Fort Sports Complex as it clinched the title beating Mumbai 4-3 in an exciting tie.



Mumbai, who entered the final match with a 3-2 lead, saw themselves losing the last match when Delhi's Rajiv Ouseph, an England-born shuttler of Indian origin, playing in his Trump Match, scrape aside Gurusai Dutt 15-11, 15-6 to power the hosts to title victory.

Earlier, it was Mumbai's Mixed Doubles pair of former World Champion Kamilla Juhl and European Champion Vladimir Ivanov which drew the first blood.

Playing against Delhi's Akshay Dewalkar and Briton 2014 Commonwealth Games Champion Gabrielle Adcock, Juhl and Ivanov dominated the proceedings from the word go as they won the first game convincingly 15-6. The Delhi duo gave them stiff challenge in the second game but Juhl and Ivanov won it 15-12 to seal the match.

"The first win is a very good start for the team. This was a big match for us and we didn't want to give any room to the opponents. We started with aggressive strategies and pushed ourselves hard to win the first match for our team," Kamilla Juhl/Vladimir Ivanov said after the match.

2014 World Championships Bronze Medallist Tommy Sugiarto of Indonesia proved that he is a force to reckon with as he maintained his unbeaten record in the league, winning his final match against Mumbai's World No. 12 HS Prannoy.



There was an intense fight between the duo in the first game as they engaged in long rallies and scored points on smashes. It was Prannoy who won the first game 15-13, but in the second and third game he ran out of steam and it was Sugiarto who was dictating the terms.

Sugiarto turned the tables on Prannoy as he won the second game 15-9. The Indonesian shuttler continued his purple patch in the third game as well. Though he seemed to take a backseat in the dying stages as Prannoy scored three quick points, it was too late to make a comeback for the Indian shuttler as Sugiarto sealed the match, winning the third game 15-9.

Sugiarto, who is the son of former World Champion Ickur Sugiarto, finished the league unbeaten and he also upset a two-time Olympic Silver Medallist Lee Chong-Wei of Malaysia in one of his matches.

"It was a tough match as it is the final tie of the league, so it's quite expected. Prannoy played very well today and gave me good competition. Losing the first match was a setback but I came back with better strategies. I am happy to win the match, it's big boost for my team."

After their match, Bollywood actors Akshay Kumar, Riteish Deshmukh and Abhishek Bachchan entertained the capacity crowd as they took up raquets to play the match along with and against established badminton stars.

Akshay partnered with a two-time World Championships Bronze Medallist PV Sindhu to play a Mixed Doubles match against Abhishek and doubles specialist Jwala Gutta.

Later, the three actors played against Sindhu, Jwala and her partner Ashwini Ponappa. The spectators cheered their every move and the actors, especially Akshay send the crowd berserk with his animated talks, mock fight with Abhishek and theatrics during the match.

It was followed by a Mixed Doubles match between multiple World Championships Medallist pair of Koo Keat Kien and Tan Boon Heong from Delhi and Mumbai's 2012 Olympics Silver Medallist Mathias Boe and Ivanov. It was the most fiercely-contested affair as both the pairs fought tooth and nail to not give an inch to each other.

Mathias and Ivanov pipped Kien and Heong 15-14 to win the first game, but the Delhi pair staged a superb comeback to win the second game 15-10. The third game, however, kept spectators on the edge till the end. Kien and Heong seemed to run through their opponents when they established a 10-3 lead.

Even as it appeared that the duo was about to win the game, Mathias and Ivanov started making a comeback and caught up with their rivals at 14-14 to make crowd biting their nails.

However, Mumbai pair faltered at the last hurdle and their shot outside the baseline saw Delhi pair winning the enticing battle.

In her trump match, Mumbai's Han Li, who was high on beating Saina Nehwal in her previous match, played against Delhi's PC Thulasi. (If one wins her trump match she gets two points for her team, but if she loses a point is deducted from side.)

In the beginning of the fourth match, Thulasi seemed to steal the thunder from Li as the Delhi shuttler won the first game 15-12. But she probably invested her entire energy in the first game itself as Li eased past the Delhi shuttler in remaining two games 15-8 and 15-8.

Li's win helped Mumbai get a 3-2 lead and it took the contest to the final match, which was a men's singles between Delhi's Ouseph and Mumbai's Dutt. Ouseph, however, kept Dutt at bay throughout the match and won both the games to hand Delhi title victory in front of home crowd.



Results:

Mixed Doubles: Kamilla Juhl Vladimir and Vladimir Ivanov (Mumbai Rockets) beat Akshay Dewalkar and Gabrielle Adcock (Delhi) 15-6, 15-12.

Men's Singles: Tommy Sugiarto (Delhi) beat HS Prannoy (Mumbai) 13-15, 15-9, 15-9

Mixed Doubles: Koo Keat Kien and Tan Boon Heong (Delhi) Mathias Boe Vladimir Ivanov (Mumbai) 14-15, 15-10, 15-14

Women's Singles (Trump Match): Han Li (Mumbai) beat PC Thulasi (Delhi) 12-15, 15-8, 15-8

Men's Singles second match (Trump Match): Rajiv Ouseph (Delhi) beat Gurusaidutt (Mumbai) 15-11, 15-6.
