

How significant a year was 2013 in Indian Badminton?

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Mumbai – IBL Final : 31-08-2013

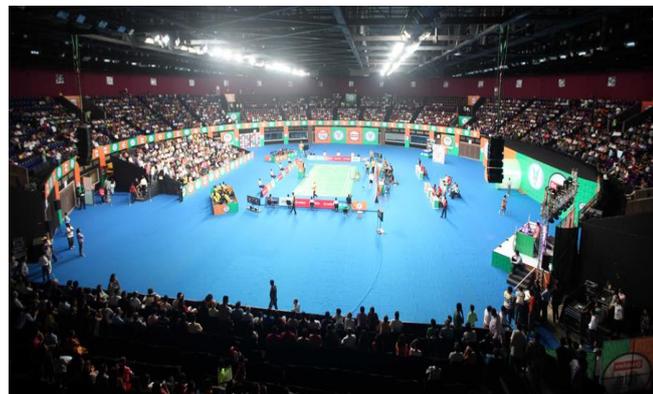
Hyderabad Hotshot Team with Vodafone IBL – 2013 Trophy

By some parameters, it was a pretty impressive year: for the first time, India had two players in the Top 10 rankings. For the first time, an Indian Women's Singles player won a medal at the World Championships. Another first: some of the world's greatest names took part in a fortnight-long festival called the Indian Badminton League, playing to packed houses in six cities.



For Indian Badminton, 2013 was a year of transition. The perception of Badminton turned from a parking-lot pastime to a more serious sport; for the first time, Badminton entered living rooms as prime-time entertainment. Moreover, it would be misleading to consider only on-court developments. Several other markers point to dramatic changes sweeping the landscape.

Stadiums have been springing up across the country. Those with a stake in the market - such as equipment makers, distributors and coaches - have seen business like never before. Coaches are reporting unwieldy numbers of children wanting to take up Badminton. Junior Tournaments are flooded with entries.



Uday Sane, international elite umpire and owner of a Badminton exclusive store in Pune, reports a doubling of sales this year. Sane credits this to several developments: the up gradation and construction of sports halls; the IBL and other minor leagues, and the following for the National Team. "The Government is developing Multi-sport Stadiums in all districts of Maharashtra," says Sane. "Each stadium has four to six courts, and its utilisation by Badminton players is very high. ." Other states, such as Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, too have invested in halls in the districts, fuelling the growth of Badminton.

There is increased demand for Badminton equipment due to the IBL, media coverage and publicity. People are fascinated with the money involved; they used to treat it like an amateur sport, but now it's being seen as a professional sport.



Another indicator of the health of the market is the number of Brands. While as recently as five years ago Yonex had a near-monopoly over the market, today there are several other players, including Li-Ning, Victor, and new entrants Adidas and Apacs, besides a number of little-known products from China and Taiwan.

The size of the market has also inspired small entrepreneurs to float their own brands, such as Meghsha, Kwality and Dayal.

Adidas is upbeat about the sport's growth. "The way Badminton has caught the imagination across the country is heartening," says Navendu Jain, Adidas's India distributor for Badminton. The game has grown beyond Urban Centres.
