

IBL has been a terrific experience: Gavaskar



(Actor Nagarjuna Akkineni (extreme right) and cricketer Sunil Gavaskar along with Mumbai Masters team members, during the semi final match at Indian Badminton League 2013 , at Sree Kanteerava Stadium, in Bangalore on August 29, 2013. Photo: K. Murali Kumar)

Cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar may attribute his fitness to playing Badminton as often as possible. Brand Ambassador and Co-owner of Mumbai Masters, Gavaskar played his part, encouraging the players from the stands during the IBL.

His team lost to Awadhe Warriors in the semifinals, but Gavaskar told *The Hindu* (via email) that "the IBL has been a terrific experience and to see some of the best players in the world has been fantastic indeed. Any sport to grow needs to be a career option since that encourages the youngsters to take it up seriously. And in a small way perhaps, the IBL has taken baby steps to make it so. Over the years as the word spreads about the event more and more, players will want to come and play and that will be great for the sport."

Gavaskar who used to play with his dear friend, the late Gautam Thakkar, agreed with Pradeep Gandhe that the IBL would help Indian badminton advance.

"Indian Badminton will be better as the players will have not only seen top players at close quarters, but how they train and prepare for the big games. To see so many kids at the venues is a truly encouraging sign and hopefully the Badminton Federation will take action to scout and get more youngsters develop their interest into participation. As for more franchisees coming through, time will tell; for the Badminton calendar is quite tight and there may not be a bigger window than what is available at the moment so it will probably be a wait and see situation," Gavaskar said.