

Interview with India's Badminton star PV Sindhu: I would like to finish among the top six in 2014

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So a good win and then the IBL immediately and then getting an Arjuna Award, one by one, (it was a big year)



**P. V. Sindhu won
Bronze Medal
at
BWF World Badminton
Championship - 2013**

Only 18, PV Sindhu is pushing the envelope like no teenage Badminton player had done before in the history of Women's Badminton in India. After a sensational year both on and off the court, the teenager is busy preparing for another action packed season.

Sindhu shall kickoff 2014, traveling to Kuala Lumpur for the Maybank Malaysia Open that starts on Sankranti day. Soon as she is back in India, Lucknow beckons as the Syed Modi Indian Open is scheduled for the week immediately after the event in Malaysia.

Here are some excerpts from the conversation with Sindhu :-

Fantastic end to the year, what does winning the National Championship mean to you?

Of course great, because this is my second time. First time, I won it at the under-19 level when I won both the Seniors and Juniors together. It means a lot because Senior Championships is very prestigious and it is all the more special when you win it as a Junior. So, it was very good.

How do you think your game has evolved over the year – as far as your own expectations are concerned? You won a couple of Grand Prix Gold Titles during the year, did you expect these successes?



I didn't think that I would win, because when I played Malaysia I was the top seed. It was a tough tournament for me and it was a good win as it was the first tournament that I won. Then I got a little bit of confidence and started practicing hard.

Then we went to the World Championships, where suddenly I came back with a medal beating two Chinese players. That really was a good win as World Championship Bronze is a big thing plus nobody had done it in a long time after so many years since Prakash sir won it.

Let us talk about that match with Wang Shixian in the World Championships. Tell us about your memories from the match; when did you begin to feel that you could win?



That was the second time I played Wang Shixian, first time I played was in senior ABC in China. That time I won against her in 3 sets and this was the 2nd time and I beat her in straight sets. So of course, she is a great player and former world no.1. So I didn't go with any intention that I can win. I was just looking at playing my game and she is obviously a senior, so was just looking to give 100%.

Then I had to play Wang Yihan in the quarters, I had played once against her and lost in the Sudirman cup in three sets. So I wasn't (really) concerned about winning or losing. Even my coach ([Pullela Gopichand](#)) was asking me to just play my game. He didn't say "you have to win" or anything like that and asked me to play my game. In the end I won, and he was very happy.

The semifinals was with [Ratchanok Intanon](#). She really played very well, she's my age too, just one year elder than me and she won the Championship this year.

Then the IBL happened, you led your team the [Awadhe Warriors](#). How easy or difficult was it to lead the side at such a young age?



In the IBL, there were many players like Saina, Kashyap along with me and we were all icon players.

I didn't really lead the team, because there were many senior players in the team. [Mathias Boe](#), from Denmark, was actually the captain, him being quite senior, both in terms of age and experience. He was actually guiding the team and telling people what to do. So it was a good experience. We played very well as a team.

Do you think you can carry this team playing experience forward to other International Tournaments like the Sudirman cup?

Its really very good. IBL was good for everyone, especially since it was a team event. As a team, being together and encouraging each other was obviously very good.

The Arjuna Award, how did you feel when it came, were you intimated in advance or was it a surprise?

It was a surprise for me as I did not know. We were busy with the IBL immediately after the World Championships, so I had to travel a lot. I had to go immediately to Delhi for IBL. That time, I didn't know directly, my dad called me and told me and then it came in the news.

Of course, I was very happy. My father was very happy, I never expected to get it at such a young age. So yeah, it was very special.

How much mentoring/guidance have your father and mother been able to give you? How involved are they since they are former volleyball players?

Guidance wise, every time I go for National level tournaments, they accompany me there and when I practice and play, they tell me what I'm doing. My dad gives me a summary of how I play and it is very helpful, because as outsiders who look at it, they will know more about the game. As Badminton players, we obviously will know a few things, but someone from the outside can pinpoint stuff that we may not notice easily.



So, both as counselors and parents, it is really helpful.

The year is coming to an end. What do you think were the biggest improvements for you this year?

I think my game as such improved a lot. Playing with the Internationals and Seniors in the IBL helped a lot. Also the World Championships – I think I have gotten a lot of confidence from my performances there. It is always a learning experience playing against players such as [Tine Baun](#) and [Juliane Schenk](#).

I had not beaten them before, but in the IBL, with the support that the team and crowd gave, I managed to beat them and it was a great experience.

So, I think I now have the confidence that I can compete at that level with such players. Then later on there were other tournaments like in Demark, France, Japan, I couldn't play very well there. I skipped China, then played Hong Kong and then Macau.

Practical question – it's not possible for a Badminton player to win week in and week out. As a top player, to just go to a tournament and psychologically adjust with an early loss, does it hurt when you don't win?

If you don't play well and go out in the first round, second round, you feel bad, especially if you're one of the top players. But you need to come out of it and practice harder and learn what you did wrong and identify your mistakes. I think, to come out of it, it takes time. But ups and downs are always there, and you need to cope with it.

December, you went to Macau as the top seed and expectations were there. But you were coming off a series of losses, what was your mindset?

Immediately after Hong Kong , there was Macau. Once again there were high hopes from people. For me , it was one match at a time. No match was obviously easy, because all players were of a certain level. I had an early flutter, but managed to stay alive after a tense three game victory in the first round. An Indonesian coach and Madhumita Bisht were there with me. In the SF's I won the first, lost the second, and I was totally down in the third. But I managed to come back to make it to the final. In the final, it was slightly easier. Macau was a good win.

Which of the two Gold GP's was more memorable for you?

Obviously, Malaysia as it was the first, so very memorable.

You were in the midst of the Nationals and just won the Team event, when you were declared the winner of the Indian of the Year Award ? How did it feel?



Team event was good as almost all the top players were in PSPB and we were playing against Air India. We won 2-0 in the singles and doubles, and on the rest day I got the CNN-IBN Award. So I was nominated amongst six top athletes, so being chosen was a great honour. When I came to know, I was really happy. It was a very big award and my senior Saina had got it in 2009. There were lot of stars present at the function, and I was really happy.

Then came the Singles title, where I got a good draw. I had to play with Thulasi, Arundhati, lot of players from our Academy. All were good matches, because we play against each other every day. Even in the final, it was the Junior Champion, Rituparna, but she played really well. She beat the defending Champ Sayali. Overall, it was a good tournament especially since this was a second title.

You started the year at 19, you were in the top 10 briefly, now you're at 11. Do these numbers really matter that much, when you started the year you wanted to be in the top 10, is it such a big difference between 10 & 11 for you?

Not so much, but it matters how we play. If you play, the rankings go up, so it does reflect how you're playing.

2014 will once again be a busy season, Asian Games, Common Wealth Games, and of course, the other major tournaments. As far as rankings are concerned, do you have any targets?

For 2014, there is a tough schedule, because apart from the regular tournaments you have Asian Games and [Commonwealth Games](#). I want to try and be in the top 6 by the end of the year. I am ranked 11 now and the climb from 10 to 1 is very tough. I think I really need to work very hard, to break into the top 6 will require a lot of hard work.

Any other specific goals for the year? CWG and Asian Games must obviously be your focus among other things?

Of course, this will be the first time, that I'm playing both the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games. The events shall be held in Korea and Scotland, I'll look to give my best. The draw of course matters.

So will you have enough opportunities to do that, or is it difficult?

I think, in the Super Series if you make the SF's consistently, you can make the top 8. Of course, anyone is fine, I'm ready to play with anybody anytime.

If I had to ask you, what are the two or three strengths that you would pick as your game is based around?

One is attacking play, then the momentum, to go fast. Sometimes my opponent makes the game slow, and try and make me play the game according to their own pace. But, my game depends on playing fast and using the smashes and gaining momentum.

For someone of your height, how difficult is it to constantly transition from backcourt to forecourt – switching between offence and defense ?

There are some advantages and disadvantages to being tall. Advantage being you can cover the court & disadvantage is that they play very low shots and you need to bend a lot. I need to improve some strength in my thighs and legs. It is not so much of a disadvantage is what I feel.



So, you see that you have made some improvements in your agility on the court?

Yes I am moving very well. Game wise, I need to improve my strokes. And I need to work on my defense, because they play shots at my body, and play low shots to make it tough for me.

Are there any specific things you do in the Academy to improve your transition game?



There are many Physios and Coaches and obviously Gopi sir, who are there to tell you what to do. So basically there are a lot of people who are always there for you and you know that things will be fine.

Speaking of support system, what do you do in terms of nutrition? What sort of diet do you follow?

Nutrition wise, we have non-veg everyday, milk and eggs and bread. Of course, junk food is not allowed. It affects you and your game when you have that. We do think a lot about what we eat before the match.
