

## PV Sindhu becomes first Indian Woman to win an Olympic Silver Medal



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**PV SINDHU became India's first Woman to win an Olympics Silver Medal on Friday, creating history and pulling an entire Country out of its Games gloom with a stunning display of talent, power and grace.**

A Nation watched, its billion hearts beating, as the 21-year-old pushed World Champion Spain's Carolina Marin to the edge after building anticipation for Indians across the globe ahead of the biggest showpiece final of the quadrennial for Women's Badminton.

It's been 12 years since the flag on the podium — used to both flaunt talent and wipe tears — has been something other than that of China. And the Olympics summit clash couldn't have managed two better women in the ring.

In the end, Marin left the pavilion dazed with her 19-21, 21-12, 21-15 victory over the Indian in 83 minutes.



Sindhu stayed in the game without rolling over, as Marin's opponents have tended to, under her blistering attack of strokes and screams. Then, she stood on the podium, smiling politely, calm and poised. It was here that coach Gopichand, who joined the celebrations from the back of the crowd, standing on a chair, gestured the last of his instructions for the day — bite into the medal, as is tradition. This was a medal that meant as much to him as it did to the shuttler.

The Hyderabad Champion had taken Indian Badminton, the country's high-performing sport for a while now, a notch higher. And, it was her manner of playing that got adrenaline soaring even as Marin, a considerably better player on this day, attempted and failed to walk all over her.

The hard-hitting shuttler from India would pounce on the openings she saw, and push the final into a decider after winning the first set from 16-19 down. It was an error-prone match, but there were some stunning rallies, including a 52-shot stretch at 16-17 in the opener. The red-hot pace of the match was illustrated in the fact that 52 exchanges lasted over 49 seconds — more than a stroke per second.

Diminutive Australian Kelly Hoare sat like a matron superior on the chair umpire's perch and had a tough time keeping the two combustible players in line. If it wasn't Marin's yelps and fist pumps, it was Sindhu's insistence on changing shuttles and grabbing

breathers. At one point, Hoare would scold Marin for not having her kitbag strap hidden inside the ground tray, and the Spanish crowd didn't quite like the telling-off.

The podium was a sight for watchers around the world with not a single Chinese atop — Li Xuerui had conceded the bronze playoff to Japan's Nozomi Okuhara. It was a colossal shake-up in the world order of a sport that has seen China dominate for so long that it had been unthinkable that a Japanese, an Indian and a Spaniard would make the Rio medals list.

Not many thought he would be able to play Badminton again when Gopichand suffered a career-threatening injury at a tournament in 1994. He faced a tricky decision: Should he continue to pursue a career in Badminton when even the surgeon who was to operate on him was not confident that he would be able to take the court again? Such a decision would also prove a further financial burden on his parents, who had already sacrificed a lot for him to chase Badminton glory. With questions and doubts swirling around like waves on high tide day, Gopichand decided to go with his gut feeling. He was sure of his abilities, his capacity for hard work and was confident of making it big.



Gopichand underwent four surgeries in three years on his left knee, not only he stepped onto the badminton court again but went on to win the All-England crown — considered as the Wimbledon of Badminton, in 2001. He and Prakash Padukone are the only Indians to win the prestigious tournament, the oldest Badminton tournament in the World.

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