

Saina Nehwal wins Australian Open Super Series - 2014 Title

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SYDNEY: Ace Indian shuttler Saina Nehwal produced a dominating performance to lift her second Title of the season, winning the \$750,000 Star Australian Super Series after beating Spain's Carolina Marin in the summit clash on Sunday.

The sixth seeded Indian, who had won the India Open Grand Prix Gold earlier this year, prevailed 21-18, 21-11 in a 43-minute contest.

The 24-year-old Saina, who enjoyed a 1-0 head-to-head record against Marin going into Sunday's match, logged the first point and displayed some deft net play against her rival, stroking in some delectably timed volleys to take a 5-2 lead in the opening game.

But the 21-year-old Marin was not the one to give up easily and showed just why she is considered one of the most feisty players on the circuit. She narrowed the gap to 6-8 but seemed distinctly out of her comfort zone every time Saina dragged her towards the net.

Also, Marin didn't help her cause by committing a service error to gift an easy point to Saina, who went into the interval leading 11-7 after an intriguing rally which ended with the Spaniard smashing the shuttle wide.

Marin raised her game and the decibel levels after the break but Saina was quick to counter-attack and returned her rival's attempted smashes with quiet intensity.

In between, Marin played some fine strokes but they never came consistently enough as Saina made it 17-12. Marin's dogged determination was there to be seen in every point she played for but that alone was never going to be enough to upstage a composed Saina.

The Indian, who didn't seem affected at all by Marin's aggressive outpouring of emotions after every claimed point, sealed the opening game 21-18 after her world number 11 rival smashed one into the net 23 minutes into the match.

In the second game, Marin's determination helped her take a 3-1 lead to start with but it was not too long before Saina came back into the fray, this time on the back of some well-placed strokes from the baseline.

Perhaps taking a cue from Marin, Saina too let some emotion show as she clenched her fist and shouted 'come on' after every clinched point. But one of her screams came about in the middle of a rally, prompting Marin to complain to the chair umpire, who merely asked her to continue.



The distraction didn't do any good to Marin as Saina raced to a 11-4 lead against the Spaniard, who looked to be in disarray.

After the interval, Saina kept up the pressure, regularly inducing errors from Marin, who struggled to maintain the intensity she displayed in the opening game. Dominating the proceedings, Saina produced some of her trademark smashes to further demoralise her rival, whose shoulders had dropped by that stage.

But there was to be some moments of drama before the win came about.

Leading 19-9, Saina challenged a line call that went against her but replays showed that the shuttle had in fact landed wide. The Indian made another mistake while playing the very next point as she buried an attempted smash into the net.

But Saina made amends quite quickly and clinched the title after Marin lobbed a shuttle wide.



With only a few weeks left for the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, her return to form augurs well for Indian fans.
