

# **Saina and Srikanth storm into Finals of China Open**

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Olympic Bronze - Medallist Saina Nehwal and young shuttler K. Srikanth stormed into the finals of the Women's and Men's Singles events respectively at the USD 700,000 China Open Super Series Premier in Fuzhou on Saturday.

In her sixth appearance in the prestigious tournament, Saina continued her rampaging run as she produced another good show to outclass World No. 17 Liu Xin of China 21-17 21-17 in the Women's Singles semifinals that lasted 47 minutes at the Haixia Olympic Sport Center.

The World No. 5 Indian will take on the winner of match between fifth seed Bae Yeon Ju of Korea and Akane Yamaguchi of Japan, in the summit clash on Sunday.

World No. 16 Srikanth too set up a mouth-watering finale with two-time Olympic and five-time World Champion Lin Dan after his opponent in the Men's Singles semifinal, Marc Zwiebler of Germany, retired midway with the score reading 21-11 13-7 in the Indian's favour.

In the Women's Singles semifinals, Saina took time to get going initially as Liu opened up a slender 7-4 lead but the Indian soon clawed back and went into the interval with a narrow 11-10 lead. She came out all guns blazing after that to create a huge 19-13 gap. The Chinese girl reeled off four points to reduce the margin but the Indian soon pocketed the first game.

In the second game, Liu once again marched ahead 5-2 but Saina didn't take much time to draw level and enter the break with a two-point lead. Saina's angled strokes had Liu struggling but the Chinese kept herself in close range after the Indian stumbled to some unforced errors. At 14-14, Saina hit long allowing Liu to take the lead. However, Liu then fell pray to a series of unforced errors as Saina soon moved to a three-point cushion. Liu once again hit wide helping Saina clinch her place in the final.

The last time Saina reached the finals of a tournament was at the Australian Super Series, where she defeated Spain's Carolina Marin to win the title. The Indian had won the Syed Modi International Grand Prix gold early in the year.

Srikanth, who had a 1-1 record against Marc ahead of the match, dished out a dominating show as from 6-6 the Indian didn't give any chance to the German to make a comeback. World No. 25 Marc was probably affected by the gruelling three-game matches which he played before coming into the semifinal. He tried his best to fight but decided not to continue after lagging 7-13 in the second game.

The 21-year-old Indian, who won the Thailand Grand Prix Gold in 2013, finished runner up at the 2014 India Open Grand Prix Gold in Lucknow. He was a quarterfinalist in this year's Malaysian Open.

He was also a part of the Indian Badminton contingent that reached the semifinals of the Mixed Team event at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

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