

Srikanth is World No. 4 in BWF Ranking

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New Delhi: Young Kidambi Srikanth continued his meteoric rise in World Badminton as he ended the season by becoming only the third Indian male shuttler to break into the top-five, reaching a career-high fourth after hovering in the 40s in the beginning of the year. He entered the event in Dubai as World No.6 but he registered victories over Kento Momota, Tommy Sugiarto which catapulted him to World No.4.

The 21-year-old Indian, who clinched the China Super Series Premier before reaching the semifinals of back-to-back Tournaments in Hong Kong and Dubai, jumped two places to join the elite club which comprises Prakash Padukone and National Chief Coach Pullela Gopichand, who were World No. 1 and 4 respectively in the past.

"When I started the year, I was in the 40s. Probably somewhere around 45. So I didn't expect that I will reach world number four. But I am really happy with my performance this season, it has been a great year," Srikanth said.

"I'll look to continue this form next season. It will be a qualification year for 2016 Rio Olympics and I will have to work hard to make the cut," he said.

But what made 2014 really memorable was without a doubt the hugely memorable impact of Kidambi Srikanth. Just four months after being in ICU with brain fever which made him miss the CWG, Srikanth wrote history when he defeated arguably the best shuttler ever, Lin Dan, in two games in the final of the China Open.

Srikanth's first big breakthrough came in 2013, when he upstaged then National Champion, Parupalli Kashyap, in the 2013 All India Senior National Championships at New Delhi, thus heralding his rise amongst the country's most talented shuttlers.

Up followed more glory in the international circuit, when Srikanth beat Thailand veteran, Boonsak Ponsana, and clinched the Thailand Open Grand Prix Gold, at Bangkok in 2013, which made him the second Indian player after HS Prannoy, to win a tournament of such stature.

Srikanth's plus points are his lightning quick reflexes, and also his ability to dictate play at the net, which are vital ingredients in the making of a badminton superstar.

Memories of that painful quarter-final loss to Singapore's Derek Wong, in the 2014 Commonwealth Games at Glasgow, have long vanished in thin air, and it is a new Srikanth that has risen to the fore in Indian badminton.

Commonwealth Games Champion Parupalli Kashyap is the only other Indian who came close to breaking the top five when he reached a career-high ranking of sixth in April last year. Kashyap had reached as high as number six.

Saina Nehwal, who also reached the semifinals of BWF's World Super Series Final, retained her number four position in the latest ranking which was released in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.
