

Tommy Sugiarto relishes Premier Badminton League success

Shaghil Bilali : IBNLive.com, Jan 27, 2016



New Delhi: Indonesian ace shuttler Tommy Sugiarto had unforgettable experience at the just-concluded Premier Badminton League (PBL), where he remained unbeaten and played a pivotal role in taking his Team - the Delhi Acers - to the Title.

His victories were no mean feats as in one of them he upset Malaysian great and a two-time Olympic Silver Medallist Lee Chong-Wei, who was playing for the Hyderabad Hunters. In the final last week, Sugiarto beat Mumbai Warriors' HS Prannoy at a crucial juncture when Delhi had lost their first match.



Sugianto, son of 1983 World Champion Ickur, rates his performance in the PBL high and says it will spur him on for the Rio Olympics, scheduled to be held in the Brazilian City from August 5-21.

“The PBL provided me a good practice platform in the beginning of an Olympic year. It gave me good experience, motivation and a will to improve ahead of the Rio Games. I enjoyed my stay in India because our Delhi teammates shared a great camaraderie between them,” he told *IBNLive*.



Sugiarto, a 2014 World Championships Bronze Medallist and a world No. 11, has to stay in top-16 by the deadline of May 5 in order to have direct qualification for the Rio Olympics. The Indonesian wants to carry forward his PBL form into the upcoming tournaments.

“It’s an Olympic year and everybody wants to be in the bracket of direct qualification. I also have to play really well to maintain my world ranking. There are a lot of tournaments lined up before the deadline of Rio Olympics. I just want to keep my focus on Olympic qualification and try to continue my form into the upcoming events,” the Indonesia said.

The PBL saw intense competition between the players and a lot of upsets during the 10-day tournament. When asked whether he will be able to replicate his PBL form into the mainstream tournaments, Sugiarto said. “I don’t differentiate between a Super Series tournament and a league. In a league I have to give my 100 per cent as it benefits my team. In a tournament also I have to give my best as it boosts my individual rankings. The main thing is to keep winning anywhere you play,” he said. Coming from a nation, which is the most successful country after China with 21 gold medals at the World Championships, Sugiarto has seen many World and Olympic Champions coming from his country. He, however, doesn’t underestimate Indian shuttlers as he feels they have made quick progress in the recent past.



“There is a lot of improvement in Indian Badminton, especially in last five years. Saina Nehwal among women and Kidambi Srikanth among men have achieved some notable feats in the last couple of years. Leagues like the PBL

are also helping local shuttlers as their confidence is boosted quite a few notches when they beat higher-ranked international players," Sugiarto reckoned.

During his stay in India, while Badminton remained on his priority list, Sugiarto relished his favourite Indian dishes - *chicken tikka masala* and *chicken tandoori*. He also wanted to visit his favourite Indian monument, the Taj Mahal, in Agra but his commitment to sports didn't give him time to do that.

However, he excelled in his sport and his victory over Chong Wei, who is also a three-time World Championships runners-up, was talk of the town. Sugiarto recovered from a set down to notch up the win against the Malaysian.

"I was playing against him after a long time," he recalled. "I was trailing after the first game, but I didn't think that I was playing against a player ranked much higher than me. I told myself to keep focusing on the game and rest of the things fell in place."

"Every Badminton player plays to be the World and Olympic Champion. My aim is also the same and I know it's not easy. But I also want to prepare world-class shuttlers in Indonesia.
