

Mathew stuns Malaysian

Our Sports Reporter

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Jaco T Mathew stunned giant-killer Ming Yew Si of Malaysia 6-3, 7-6, (7-4) on a day when Indian players achieved unexpected successes in the \$ 10,000 prize money ITF Futures Tennis Tournament at the Delhi Lawn Tennis Association deco turf court here today.

Jaco T Mathew, the former junior national champion, played steady tennis, with some excellent ground strokes and a dependable serve, to oust Si, who had scalped top-seeded Mustafa Ghouse yesterday. Though the second set went into the tie-breaker, there was never ever any doubt about Jaco Mathew's ability to pull off a victory.

A product of the Britannia Amritraj Tennis Academy (BAT), Jaco Mathew said the second set was stretched to tie-breaker as Si started serving better. Mathew had his chances in the second set, but failed to utilise the opportunity he got to break the Malaysian twice in the set, before the matter was decided in tie-breaker.

Mathew, who had to use the qualifying route to get into the main draw, notched up his best-ever singles victory in the senior section. "I was easily holding my serves. I was confident of beating Si", observed Mathew, who would be moving out of BAT this year, after completing six long years with the path-breaking tennis academy.

Ajay Ramaswamy, another talented junior-turned senior, played a battle of attrition against Pavel Ivanov, winner of the title at the first leg of the Futures at Chandigarh last week, before emerging victorious at 4-6, 6-1, 7-6, (7-3) in two hours and 24 minutes. Ramaswamy matched aggression with aggression to wear out Pavel, with a dependable serve, and searing ground strokes as his main weapons.

Rishi Sridhar, who had been out of action for over a year due to an injury, before making his comeback at Chandigarh, showed that he had lost none of his touch - in fact, he has only improved his game - while disposing of the aggressive Jan Masik of Czech Republic, seeded seventh, at 6-4, 6-4 in one hour and 40 minutes. Sridhar's strategy was to finish off the points as quickly as possible, as engaging Masik in rallies would have proved counter productive, as the Czech's net volleys were unretrievable, and Sridhar could triumph because of his agility, and quick finishes.

Sridhar will now take on Jaco Mathew, and considering his experience, Sridhar starts as favourite. Vinod Sridhar, who recently won the DSCL Open National Tennis Tournament at the DLTA courts, stunned sixth-seeded Boris Borgula of Slovakia with an easy 6-1, 6-2 victory. The victory could have been quicker, but for some silly errors committed by Vinod, particularly with his returns.

Kedar Tembe prevailed over Davis Cupper Vishal Uppal at 7-5, 6-4 while eighth-seeded Manoj Mahadevan beat Joseph Huber of Austria 6-2, 6-3. Kamla Kannan fought a tooth and nail match against second seeded Juraj Hasko of Slovakia before bowing out at 3-6, 7-6, (7-5), 6-4 in two hours and 36 minutes.

The only other foreigner to win was Pavel Lobanov of Russia, who beat fellow-Russian Evgueni Smirnov 7-5, 6-3.