

GAME ON



OUTSTANDING
PLAYERS

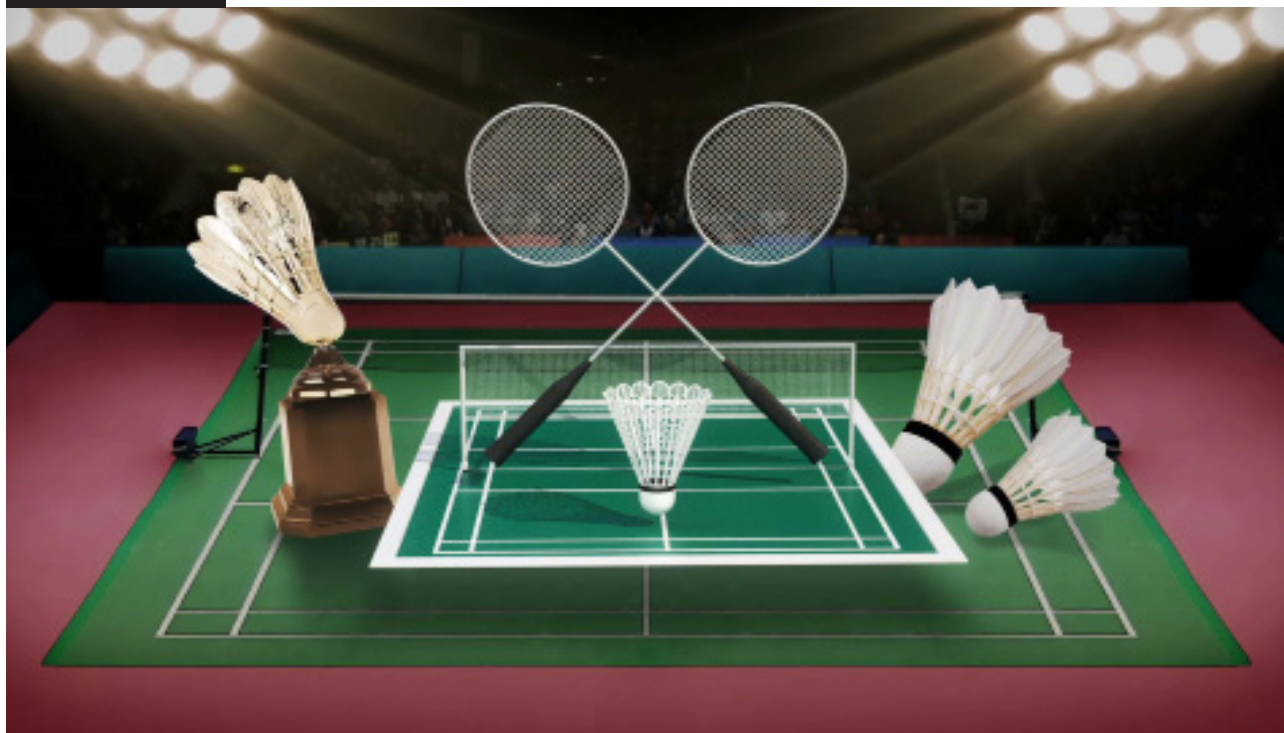
PLAY IT TO
PERFECTION

FLAWLESS FORM,
PERFECT VICTORY



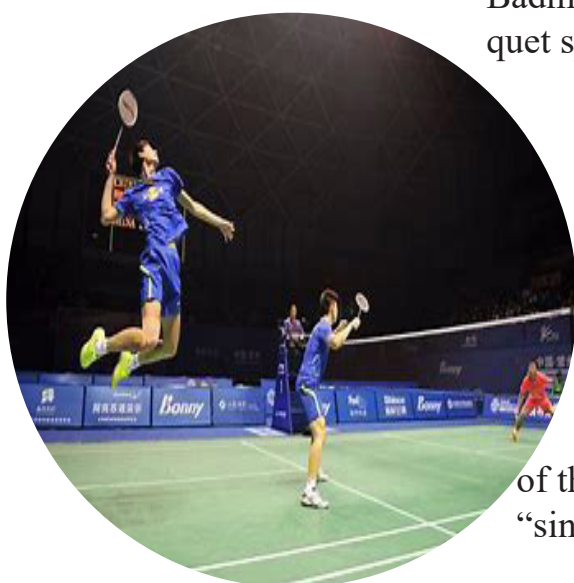
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THE FEATURE ARTICLE

The Pinnacle Of Play: Badminton Excellence



Badminton is a racquet sport played

using racquets to hit a shuttlecock across a net. Although it may be played with larger teams, the most common forms

of the game are “singles” and

“doubles”. Badminton is often played as a casual outdoor activity in a yard or on a beach; formal games are played on a rectangular indoor court. Points are scored by striking the shuttlecock with the racquet and landing it within the other team’s half of the court.

The game developed in British India from the earlier game of battledore and shuttlecock. European play came to be dominated by Denmark but the game has become very popular in Asia, with recent competitions dominated by China. In 1992, badminton debuted as a Summer Olympic sport with four events: men's singles, women's singles, men's doubles, and women's doubles mixed doubles was added four years later. At high levels of play, the sport demands excellent fitness: players require aerobic stamina, agility, strength, speed, and precision. It is also a technical sport, requiring good motor coordination and the development of sophisticated racquet movements involving much greater flexibility in the wrist than some other racquet sports. Badminton debuted as a Summer Olympic sport in 1992 with four events: men's singles, women's singles, men's doubles, and women's doubles. Mixed doubles was add



ed four years later.

Badminton is one of the most popular sports in the world, with a passionate fan following around the globe.

It is also one of the biggest draws at multi-sport spectacles like the Olympics.

A regular fixture since the Barcelona 1992 Olympics, badminton now has five disciplines at the Games after mixed doubles was introduced at Atlanta 1996.

China has since emerged as the sport's dominant

force with a total of 20 golds, 12 silvers and 15 bronze medals at the Olympics. Indonesia are second with eight golds, six silvers and seven bronze medals.

While badminton is most popular in Asia, it also attracts great interest in Europe with players from Denmark among those regularly challenging for top honours.



INTERVIEW

PV Sindhu's interesting 2018 on the tour came to an end with a gold medal at the BWF World Tour Finals in Guangzhou. After a string of silver-medal finishes during the year, the 23-year-old overcame stiff challenges from the world's best to finish unbeaten in the tournament. And now, Sindhu turns her attention to Premier Badminton League, where she will turn up for Hyderabad Hunters. It is in Hyderabad Sindhu spoke to Scroll before she left for Guangzhou. The interview was not about her game, or her results in the year or her tactics and training. It was an attempt to get to know Sindhu better off-the-court. What's her off day like? What's her advice to young shuttlers in the country? What would she have been, if not a badminton player? And more.



What would you tell 10-year-old Sindhus? I would say that... you have to keep working hard and hard work is the key to success. There is no excuse for it. And the most important thing is, they need to be dedicated and focussed. They need to have a goal to achieve. And one more thing, it's the parents support. That's the most important thing, for me my parents have been very supportive. They were always behind me. What would you be if not a badminton player? I've never thought a second thought. I started

playing around the age of 8, 8 and a half. I started for fun and then I just continued.

Favourite badminton memory from childhood

Before when I started playing, just for fun, when my sister and her friends used to play, that's when I used to go and say, please give me a chance. And they'd be like, 'no, you go, you are a small kid!' And now when we think about it, it's always funny (laughs) when me and my sister talk about it now. Those days we used to say... and now look, it's completely different.

How does it feel to play for Hyderabad, your home franchise?

It feels really very good. For the first time I am playing for Hyderabad, it's always been Chennai, Lucknow for the last years. We are going to have a lot of home crowd — the Hyderabad Hunters are always very supportive. Really looking forward to it.

PHOTO FEATURE



Indian badminton ace PV Sindhu left Tokyo 2020 having carved out a slice of history for her own.

After clinching the bronze medal in the women's singles badminton competition, Sindhu is now the first woman from her country ever to become a double Olympic medallist. Off the back of her historic silver in Rio 2016, there was an unrelenting buzz around the 26-year-old and what she might achieve in her next Olympic Games in Tokyo.

When she transformed herself from 'Silver Sindhu' to badminton World Champion in 2019, it was clear that the shuttler was entering altogether a different kind of level in her sport; no longer was she willing to settle for second best in finals. Although Sindhu was ultimately outclassed by Tai Tzu-Ying of Chinese Taipei en route to the gold medal match such was the Indian's resilience, and grit,

that she was able to brush off her golden disappointment and manifest a winner's energy to once again come home with a prize.

PV Sindhu's tournament, bar her stutter in the semi-final, was nothing short of dominant. The shuttler cruised through the competition's early group play stage, dispensing quickly with Ksenia Polikarpova of Israel 2-0 (21-7, 21-10) and then Cheung Ngan Yi in similar fashion, 2-0 (21-9, 21-16).

41 minutes was all time it took for Sindhu to fly through to the quarterfinals. Denmark's Mia Blichfeldt fell at the Indian's hands 2-0 (21-15, 21-13). Akane Yamaguchi**, ** the number four seed, suffered a similar fate thereafter. Sindhu powered through 2-0, once again without dropping a set.

The semi-final, however, was a slightly different story for the shuttler. Sindhu's opponent,

Tai Tzu-Ying used all her guile and wit to effectively neutralise the Indian's greatest weapons in the fight for a place in the gold medal match.

The shuttler from Chinese Taipei targeted Sindhu's body, challenging the shuttler to match her own formidable footwork. Sindhu however, was not able to respond as she would have liked, struggling for pace on her returns.

Sindhu hustled hard in the first as the pair moved from 11-11 to 18-18 before her rival found the next gear and clinched the set. Rattled, Sindhu was unable to find the lines with her usually lethal cross-court smashes and all but played herself out of the second set.

The door to gold had been firmly shut, the only route left open a shot at bronze.

TREND STORY

Badminton schedule 2024: Paris Olympics headlines actioned-packed year for shuttlers

The 2024 badminton calendar starts with the Malaysia Masters in January and ends with the BWF World Tour Finals in December. The Olympics are in July-August.

The 2024 badminton season promises to be a thrilling one.

Besides the customary 31 BWF World Tour events and the season-ending BWF World Tour Finals in December, the Olympics and Thomas and Uber Cup Finals will add some extra spice for badminton fans all over the world and India.

The Malaysia Open BWF Super 1000 tournament, scheduled from January 9 to 14, will be the first event on the



2024 badminton schedule. The BWF World Tour Finals, slated for December 11-15 will be the last piece of top-notch badminton action for the year. The highlight of the badminton calendar, however, will be the Paris 2024 Olympics, which will be held

from July 27 to August 5. Being an Olympic year, there will be no senior world badminton championships in 2024.

However, even before the Olympics start, top Indian badminton players including PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen, Kidambi Srikanth

, HS Prannoy and Chirag Shetty-Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, will be looking to secure their respective quotas at the upcoming Summer Games.

The Race to Paris Olympic Qualification period for badminton is already in effect and runs till April 28, 2024. This means that players will be on the hunt for qualifying ranking points before the



window closes. Barring the 31 BWF World Tour 2024 events, the World Tour Finals in Hangzhou and the Paris olympics

, Indian shuttlers will also be in action at top-tier continental competitions like the Badminton Asia Team and Individual champi

-onships The Thomas and Uber Cup Finals in April-May will also be highlights of the season. India are the reigning Thomas Cup champions, having won the prestigious team-based tournament in 2022.

The high-profile annual All England Championships is scheduled between March 12 and 17 this year.