

Big victory for Men's Badminton in India, Srikanth wins Thailand Open-2013

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K Srikanth has become the first Indian man to win a major Badminton title outside India after Pullela Gopichand's All England Championship in 2001. The 20-year-old beat top seed Boonsak Ponsana 21-16, 21-12 in 34 minutes to win the Thailand Open Grand Prix- 2013 on Sunday.

While India No. 1 P Kashyap has also won a Grand Prix Title, his achievement last year came at a tournament in Lucknow.

Coach Gopichand attributed Srikanth's win to "that rare belief, which means he is not afraid of walking new ground". "I have seen players falter at the last step, but Srikanth has great mental attitude," he said. Guntur-born Srikanth trains at Gopichand's academy in Hyderabad.

Indian men's Badminton has felt this gap acutely, with shuttlers scoring stray victories over marquee players, shocking a top name here and there, but never quite managing to win titles.

Ranked 61, the lanky shuttler confessed to being a little tense going into the final against Thailand's local favourite Ponsana, and deciding to go on the offensive. "I wanted to put pressure on Boonsak. He was the top seed but I knew my offensive game — attack all the time — would help me against him. Once I took the lead, I never gave him a chance," Srikanth said.

A turning point was the four straight points that he won at 16-15 in the opening game. "That was an important stage and after that I knew I had him," he said.
