

Domestic Umpires to gain from rich IBL exposure: Suhrid Barua



The much-hyped Indian Badminton League (IBL) is seen as a harbinger of hope for everyone associated with the sport in the country. Of course, when one talks about what 'good' it could do to Indian Badminton, quite often the focus is riveted on the players, who no doubt are going to hog the limelight.

But if we look at the bigger picture, we will realize that it's not just the players who grab the spotlight and go home happy. The 'unsung heroes' of the game – the Badminton Umpires (Chair Umpires, Linesman, etc) are also going to benefit greatly from the inaugural edition of the league.

These umpires will have plenty to gain both in terms of money and exposure. "The IBL will be a big boost for the domestic Umpires. (It's) not just that they will get higher fees than what they are offered for various domestic Tournaments, (but) they stand to be richer with the IBL exposure," a seasoned official said on condition of anonymity.

Actually, rather than the monetary part, the more important gain for the domestic Umpires will be the exposure they will get from officiating

matches featuring some of the top shuttlers of the world.

“Money-wise domestic Umpires get peanuts but in IBL they will surely get little more as fees; but still it is nothing compared to what Umpires make for cricket in India. The biggest plus for the domestic Umpires will be the rich exposure they get officiating in matches featuring top guns like Lee Chong Wei or Tom Nguyen among others,” the official pointed out.

It may be mentioned here that India currently has three Badminton World Federation Certified umpires (Girish Natsu, Uday Sane and Apinder Sabharwal). The country also has two Badminton World Federation accredited Umpires (Vrushali Upadhye and Sudip Barve).

The quality of Badminton Umpiring in India has frequently left a lot to be desired. Even the country’s top-ranked men’s singles shuttler Parupalli Kashyap played the poor standards of Umpiring in India at the 2012 Senior Nationals in Srinagar. Kashyap was of the opinion that Indian umpires need to be trained so that they can perform the roles as umpires do for international events.

The Badminton India Technical Officials Association (BITOA) is working overtime to improve the umpiring standards in India. The IBL will provide an opportunity for the talented domestic Umpires to not only derive rich exposure from the IBL, but also take significant strides in moving up the ladder in order to obtain Asian Badminton Confederation (ABC) accreditation and Badminton World Federation (BWF) accreditation. These umpires would then be eligible to officiate in big ticket events like the Olympics, Sudirman Cup, Thomas and Uber Cups, Super Series finals, etc.

The IBL promises to bring a windfall of riches and benefits for everyone involved with it, but if it helps the unsung heroes of the sport get the help and recognition they deserve, that could possibly be the most important contribution of the league.
