



Indian Badminton made unprecedented leap in 2014

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(Dr. Akhilesh Das Gupta, President, BAI with Mr. Poul Erik Hoyer, President, BWF)

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It turned out to be a watershed year for Indian Badminton as the home shuttlers clinched no less than eight Individual Titles and also broke new grounds in Team Championships, making India a dominant force at the International stage.

Saina Nehwal and K. Srikanth clinching Titles at China Super Series Premier and P.V. Sindhu bagging five Bronze, including a World Championship Medal, besides the historic Bronze Medals at Uber Cup and Asian Games, were the highlights of the year.

If Saina led the resurgence of Indian Badminton in the last few years, the year also saw the emergence of younger stars.

While Saina scooped three Titles, Srikanth, Parupalli Kashyap, Aravind Bhat, Sindhu and H.S. Prannoy, all laid their hands on the crown at least once in the year gone by. Saurabh Verma and P.C. Thulasi also won Titles in the International challenge category.





It was yet again Saina who set things in motion with a victory at the India Grand Prix Gold, which finally broke her long title drought. The Indian ace added two more Titles to her kitty, clinching the Australia Super Series at Sydney in June and China Super Series Premier at Fuzhou in November.

While Saina blew hot and cold, teen sensation Sindhu continued to make big strides in World Badminton with her performance, which saw her reach the finals of India Grand Prix Gold first in Lucknow and then winning the Bronze at the Asian Badminton Championship in Gimcheon.

Indian Women's Doubles pair of Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Poppanna also made their presence felt by clinching the Bronze in the same tournament in April.

In the prestigious Thomas and Uber Cup, Saina and Sindhu shepherded the Women's Team to a historic Bronze.



Sindhu had a golden chance of winning the Commonwealth Games Women's Singles Title in July but the Indian had to settle for a Bronze when she lost to Michelle Li of Canada.

However, Glasgow, turned out to be a happy hunting ground for India as Parupalli Kashyap ended India's 32-year-old wait for the Gold and R.M.V. Gurusaidutt finished with a Bronze in the Men's Singles, while 2010 Champions, Jwala and Ashwini settled for the silver.

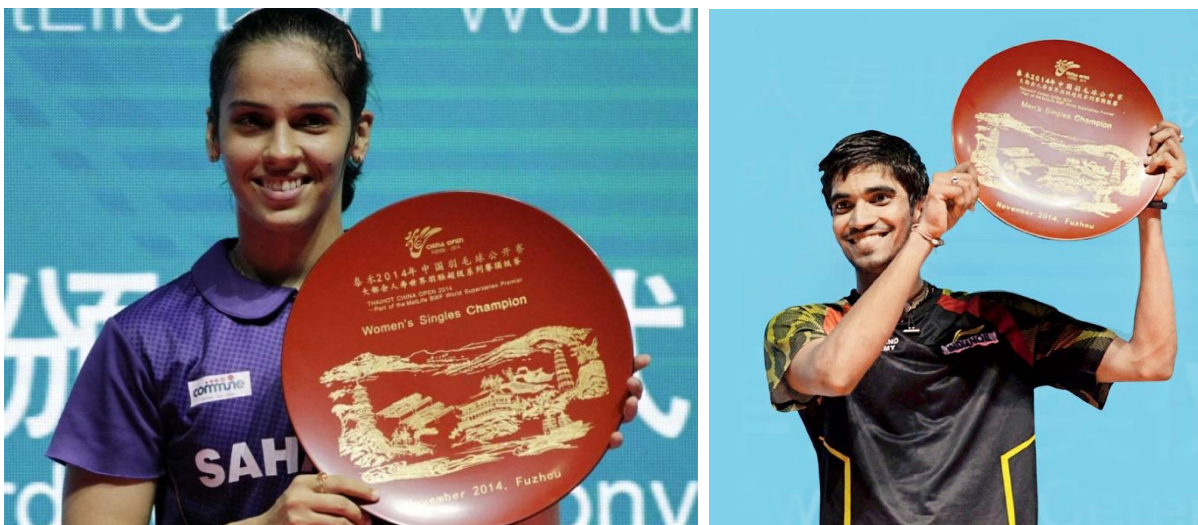
A month later, the 19-year-old Sindhu became the first Badminton player to win two Bronze medals at the World Championship after she reached the semifinals in Copenhagen.

After a week, young H.S. Prannoy made it to the finals of the Vietnam GP Open, before clinching the maiden Title of his career at the Indonesian Masters Grand Prix Gold in Palembang next week.

In the same month, India created another historic moment in a multi-sport event when they ended a 28-year-old medal drought in Asian Games Badminton after the women's shuttlers, led by Saina and Sindhu, won a Bronze in Incheon.

Within a fortnight, Ajay Jayaram, who had returned to the circuit in August after a seven-month layoff due to shoulder injury, notched up a Grand Prix Title, winning the Dutch Open in Almere.

Indian Badminton took a giant leap in November when Saina and Srikanth created history by winning the Women's and Men's Singles titles in the China Open Super Series Premier. While it was Saina's third Title, for Srikanth it was the biggest title of his career.



The 21-year-old K. Srikanth, who had hogged the limelight last year after winning the Thailand Grand Prix Gold, created a big splash when he beat home favourite and two-time Olympic Champion and five-time World Champion Lin Dan at home. The lad from Andhra Pradesh reached the semifinals of the Hong Kong Open next and also qualified for the BWF's World Super Series Finals, where only the top eight players compete.

Playing in the prestigious season-ending Super Series Finals, Saina and Srikanth made it to the semifinals to end the year on a high.



While Saina has been at the top 4 and PV Sindhu at top 11, it was the meteoric rise for Srikanth during the year. He reached a career-best ranking of world number 6 during the BWF's World Super Series Finals.



(President Pranab Mukherjee presenting the Padma Bhushan Award to Badminton National Chief Coach Mr. Pullela Gopichand)

Gopichand, one of the finest Badminton players to have emerged from the country has been conferred with the Padma Bhushan honour this year. He was conferred the Arjuna Award in 1999, Khel Ratna in 2001, Padma Shri in 2005 and Dronacharya in 2009 in a glittering career both as a player and a coach.
