

## China wins three gold in World Badminton Championships

China dominated the Proton World Badminton Championships Sunday, winning three gold medals here on the final day, with Lin Dan and Zhu Lin winning the singles gold medals with authoritative performances.

Lin became the first man since Yang Yang (1987, 1989) to defend his title, while Zhu won her first. China's women's doubles teams took both the gold and silver medals in an all-Chinese final.

Indonesia was the second most successful team with two gold - in the men's doubles and mixed doubles. The two-gold haul means that Indonesia has had its most successful world championships since 1995.

The day began with an Indonesian strike in the mixed doubles event. Second seeds Nova Widiyanto and Lilyana Natsir, expected to be easy game for top seeds Gao Ling and Zheng Bo of China hardly allowed their fancied opponents to get a foot in the match.

Widiyanto and Lilyana played a brilliant tactical game, suddenly shifting the line of attack from one flank to another with wristy twists keeping the Chinese pair off-position throughout. It was 17-9 before the top seeds could gather their wits and climb to a striking distance at 14-18. The Indonesians closed out before it got uncomfortably close.

By the middle of the second game the Chinese coach was furiously yelling at his players. Widiyanto and Natsir were stealing points with great efficiency, the highlight of which was a Widiyanto smash that bisected the Chinese after both were manoeuvred out of position.

The men's singles final was disappointingly tame to begin with. Sony Dwi Kuncoro of Indonesia, having exhibited wonderful movement and power in his matches up to the final, played a strangely subdued game, choosing to toss high even when presented with the opportunity to smash.

The only explanation seemed to be that his tired legs weren't letting him do what he normally does. After a first game washout and trailing 5-11 in the second, coach Hendrawan went up to his charge and pleaded with him. 'Come on Sony,' he said, 'If you have to lose, at least show some fight. Play like you play in training. Enjoy your game.'

That did it. Kuncoro was a changed man, and soon the audience was being treated to some of the best badminton seen in this tournament. Having shaken off his defensive mindset, Kuncoro began to execute some big smashes, opening up the court by attacking Lin Dan's flanks. Dribbles began to catch the tape and die down; the Indonesian's defence was suddenly impregnable, and there was a spring in his step.

Still, defending champion Lin managed to steal points in the fashion he always does. He has the most unusual attacking game in the world - he can conjure a smash out of nothing; he does not need to set himself up under a high shuttle to deliver it. Instead, with a non-existent swing, he can drill the shuttle with great power and precision to unreturnable corners.

The scores inched level until Sony took what looked like the decisive lead at 19-17. But the champion won serve with a smash to the Indonesian's backhand, and then beat him at the net.

Kuncoro saved one match point but could not hold out any longer. Lin showed why he is the greatest player of the last decade. This is his second world championships, and apart from the Olympics, he has won them all.

Wang Chen of Hong Kong looked the favourite for the women's singles gold against Zhu Lin of China, given her greater experience and that she had beaten top seed Zhang Ning in the semi-finals.

But Zhu was younger by nine years and fitter - and from the beginning, it was obvious which way the match was going. Wang has several deceptive strokes, but Zhu had the stronger legs and the harder smashes, and Wang could never adequately answer any of that. Wang put up better resistance in the second game, before Zhu wrapped things up with a 21-8, 21-12 victory.

In the women's doubles, the legendary pair of Gao Ling and Huang Sui failed to win their fourth World Championships gold, going down in straight games to compatriots Yang Wei and Zhang Jiewen. The men's doubles went to Indonesia's Markis Kido and Hendra Setiawan, who, like their mixed doubles compatriots, outplayed Koreans Lee Yong Dae and Jung Jae Sung in a tactical battle.

Results:

Mens's singles: Lin Dan (China) bt Sony Dwi Kuncoro (Ina) 21-11 22-20

Women's singles: Zhu Lin (China) bt Wang Chen (Hong Kong) 21-8 21-12

Men's Doubles: Markis Kido/ Hendra Setiawan (Ina) bt Lee Yong Dae/ Jung Jae Sung (South Korea) 21-19 21-19

Women's Doubles: Yang Wei/ Zhang Jiewen (China) bt Gao Ling/ Huang Sui (China) 21-16 21-19

Mixed Doubles: Nova Widianto/ Lilyana Natsir (Ina) bt Gao Ling/ Zheng Bo (China) 21-16 21-14

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