



## The baddies of Indian Sports Of backhands, shuttles, guts and glory!

There is folk-lore about how one exotic badminton player's "hypnotic gaze" that lasted too long served as a muttering excuse for whichever player that lost that day. A folk-lore that arose from the astonishment of losing to an Indian player, that too, none other than one of the most iconic International Sportspersons India has ever given to the world- Prakash Padukone.

A recent survey conducted by SMG Insight states that Badminton is the second most played sport in India, which is not surprising considering that the game's origins are, in fact, "desi". Whilst the origins of Badminton date back 2000 years, the current format of the game was formalised in Pune (Poonah) in the mid 1800's, a city which also lent it's name to the sport for before the Duke of Beaufort rechristened "Badminton".

With the sport being immensely ingrained within the country's history, it is no wonder that India has produced some of the most illustrious players of all time; Saina Nehwal (First Indian to win an Olympic medal in Badminton), Pullela Gopichand (Padma Bhushan for outstanding contribution to the sport and currently the chief national coach for the Indian Badminton Team) , Aparna Popat (Called as the queen and a record holder of 9 times national champion) and a score a many to name.



### The Wunderkind

The current newsmaker and future poster-girl of Indian Badminton is Ruthvika Shivani Gadde. A recent news article headlined Ruthvika as "The 19-year-old shuttler who pulled off the biggest upset in recent Indian badminton history" This was given her victory over World No. 25 Nitchaon Jindapol (who has been nearly unbeatable in the past few months) at the 2016 Uber Cup Quarterfinal and in turn sealing a bronze for the team this year.

It is said that her coach, mentor and the Chief National Coach for the Indian Badminton team, Pullela Gopichand, believes that Ruthvika shall be bigger than any other female player that this country has given to the sport. A gold-medalist of the 2016 South Asian Games, Ruthvika started out at the tender age of 7, turning her passion into sport. She started training at the Gopi Chand academy 4 years ago and won her first national title last year at the age of 18. She has already been staffed by BCPL and receives support from GoSports Foundation. A fan of Aparna Popat, Gadde sure has set her goals straight and high, the first one being breaking into the world top 40!

### RIO bound shuttlers

For the first time in history, an unprecedented seven Indian shuttlers are set to qualify for the 2016 Rio Olympics

This shall be the third Olympic medal run for the 2012 bronze medallist Saina Nehwal and the second for Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa in women's doubles competition. PV Sindhu, who is ranked 10th in the BWF World Rankings , will make her Olympic debut as the second Indian player in women's singles competition at Rio. Manu Attri and B Sumeeth Reddy are the first Indian men's doubles pair to qualify for the Games.

While the singles look good especially with 2014 China Open winner Kidambi Srikanth carrying the Indian flag, no Indian pair has been able to qualify in the mixed doubles event. The celebrated Parupalli Kashyap lost his chance at a second Olympic run to a series of injuries and India number two Ajay Jayaram was the closest to securing the second spot but missed out after a torrid final 3 months in the qualification race.



Whilst the nation celebrates and hopes for the best, the contingent has their work cut out for them. Saina seems to be the safest bet to secure India a medal given her consistent performance throughout the year. As for the rest of the squad; mainstream sport journalists might have you believing that they have already been weighed, measured and found wanting, but what is sport if not a tale of misfits who stun the world. Who knows, that "hypnotic Indian gaze" just might be the squad's trump card.

Hence, to show your love and support for the game follow these stars at @srikidambi @Guttajwala @NSaina @P9Ashwini @AtriManu @Pvsindhu1 and #sumeethreddy and encourage them at each step!

Here's wishing the shuttlers all the best and hoping that this RIO creates more legends out of these baddies!