

IBL 2013: Superb Lee Chong Wei leads Mumbai to 4-1 rout of Delhi

The hosts eventually won 4-1, with Chong Wei also triumphing in the mixed doubles match with partner Tine Baum. The Masters sit at the top of the league table with 11 points.

Pulasta Dhar Aug 21, 2013



Mumbai: World number one Lee Chong Wei started his Indian Badminton League journey with a hard fought 21-12, 21-17 win over Liew Daren to give Mumbai Masters the lead in their tie against Krrish Delhi Smashers at the NSCI stadium in Mumbai.



Former world No 1 Baun had extended Mumbai's lead to 2-0, beating Arundhati Panthawane (world No 54) 21-11, 21-13 in a one-sided contest before the Koo Kiet and Tan Boob beat Sumeet Reddy and Manu Attri 14-21, 21-15, 11-7 in the men's doubles match to bring Delhi back into the contest.

But it was the Sai Praneeth vs Marc Zwiebler match which stood out as the most competitive of the night. The young Indian gave world No 12 Zwiebler a great fight, and was just two points away from registering another upset in the tournament before losing.

Mumbai had already taken an unassailable 3-1 lead before Lee Chong Wei and Tine Baun overcame V Diyu and Prajakta Sawant 21-18, 15-21, 11-5. Any overconfidence in the Mumbai pair was shattered when the Delhi mixed doubles team took the second game in comprehensive fashion. However, Lee and Baun upped their play and won the final game 11-5 — taking the match 4-1.



Earlier, Praneeth took the first game 21-18 with a spate of attacking shots that troubled his German opponent. But Zwiebler walloped Praneeth 21-10 in the second game to put Delhi on the edge. A nervy final game followed, with neither able to run away with a lead. One thing that stood out was Praneeth being unable to get up fast enough from his retrievals, allowing Zwiebler to finish off points at the net while the Indian lumbered to his feet.

He didn't give up though, taking a match-point off Zwiebler, making it 9-10. Moments later though, he hit his return into the net and Zwiebler was jubilant, taking the match 18-21, 21-10, 11-9.

As for Lee Chong Wei's singles match, the world No 1, who was in the race to be fit for the tie, didn't disappoint fans with a performance which had everything from his trademark retrieving dives to his deceptive shots and at times, unstoppable smashes.

His world No 15 opponent Liew Daren was no pushover, the fellow Malaysian clever at reading Chong Wei's movement in the second game. In fact, he was leading in the 2nd game up until 13-12. But Chong Wei equaled before executing the perfect flick of the wrist at the net to leave Daren languishing and giving up his lead at the second interval of the second game.

In the lead and gaining confidence, Chong Wei quickly won a few points to assert his class. Daren started attacking more aggressively — at one point throwing a few smashes in succession towards Chong Wei — but the top ranked player in the world defended with an agility that startled the Mumbai crowd.

During the last point, Chong Wei and Daren kept tossing the shuttle — teasing the crowd — before the former decided to smash it and win the match.

And as if that was not enough, he obliged the crowd with a 'dhanyavaad' at the end of the match.

