

Shuttlers fail to break drought

Duo cry foul over Indian point but Singapore end Games full of great memories

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NEW DELHI — One racket flew high up into the air at the Sirifort Sports Complex, while the other was smashed out of shape on the arena floor and abandoned.

Hopes were high that Singapore would break the eight-year gold-drought in badminton at the Commonwealth Games — since Li Li's victory in the women's singles in Manchester — and cover themselves in glory like their counterparts from shooting and table tennis.

But there was no joy for Shinta Mulia Sari and Yao Lei, they fell controversially 21-16, 21-19 to the Indian duo of Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa in the women's doubles final. With the scores tied at 18-all in the second set, Shinta raised her hand before Jwala served, to signal that she was not ready to resume play, but the Indian served and umpire Ian Spear awarded the point despite a few minutes' discussion with the players and the chief umpire.

Singapore tied the score at 19-19, but went on to lose the set and match. Eyes still red two hours after the end of the final, when she spoke to Singapore media, Yao said: "It's not just Shinta and I, everyone is angry. That was definitely a critical point, at 18-18 the game could have gone either way.

"The Indian girl was just playing the point, but there was no doubt about it, the umpire should have replayed that point."

Singapore badminton could not break new ground, but with one silver medal and two bronzes to their name, and a taste of playing in front of a capacity crowd under their belt, the shuttlers will be all the better for their experience.

Shinta's racket rising in the air and dropping back in her hand and Yao's disfigured implement lying on the Sirifort arena will soon be forgotten, but there were several moments in Delhi that will be burned into sporting folklore.

Indian shooter Gagan Naran, four-gold Aussie swimmer Alicia Coutts and the Singapore table tennis contingent's six-gold



■ A ROUSING FINALE

The most controversial Commonwealth Games in his history came to a close Thursday without any major glitches as India celebrated the finale with an extravagant cultural show at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

The closing ceremony began with a performance of the martial arts from several provinces of India, and showcased the culture of Scotland, which will host the next Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014.

The Indian authorities will also heave a sigh of relief that the games passed off without any security incidents. AP

haul of the seven medals on offer will be remembered as some of the highlights of the Games.

As will the Indian hockey men's rollercoaster ride of emotions from their 5-2 loss to Australia in the group stages, to their 7-4 thumping of Pakistan and the penalty shootout win over England in the semi-final; and the meek 8-0 capitulation to the Aussies in the final.

India broke the 100-medal mark, a milestone for the country that won 38 gold, 27 silver and 36 bronze to finish second behind the Australians (74-55-48).

Singapore too, crossed a major milestone: the Republic's tally of 31 medals (11-11-9) far surpassed their largest ever haul of 18 at the 2006 Melbourne Games.

Said chef de mission Annabel Pennefather: "The performance has well exceeded that of the last Games. We've had to overcome several challenges, and although it tested the character of everyone here, I'm pleased how the athletes responded to the challenges and still went out to give strong

gutsy performances."

The problems surrounding the Delhi Games have been well-documented, but by the time the curtains came down on the 12-day event, India had salvaged what had looked like being a complete disaster.

The Indians may find it difficult hosting an Olympic Games in the near future, but perhaps more importantly, they have new heroes, world-class sporting venues and a public whose imagination has been firmly captured.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Australia	74	55	48
India	38	27	36
England	37	59	46
Canada	26	17	32
South Africa	12	11	10
Kenya	12	11	9
Malaysia	12	10	13
Singapore	11	11	9
Nigeria	11	10	14
Scotland	9	10	7

*Correct at press time

By any measure, it was a spectacular showing. Our athletes delivered a sterling performance which has surpassed all expectations. With a record medal haul and many personal bests, this is Team Singapore's most outstanding performance at the Commonwealth Games since we first participated in 1958. Congratulations to all our athletes, coaches and officials. They have covered themselves in glory in New Delhi.

Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister of Community Development, Youth and Sports, congratulates Team Singapore

Shot putter Luan loses case against SAA

SINGAPORE — China-born shot putter Luan Wei has lost his civil suit against the Singapore Athletic Association (SAA).

District Judge James Leong ruled yesterday that the 27-year-old's case lacked merit, and ordered the former national athlete to pay costs for the 12-day trial. The amount will be decided by the court's

registrar if both parties are unable to reach an agreement.

The Liaoning native was one of six throwers recruited in 1999 under the Foreign Sports Talent Scheme, but was dismissed five years later for sub-par performances and poor discipline.

Luan Wei and another athlete, EXiaoxu,

sued the SAA in the High Court in 2005 for unfair dismissal, claiming the association had not fulfilled their promises to them, which included education, training and food arrangements, allowances and Singapore citizenship. The case stalled after they could not raise the security for costs.

Luan Wei and his mother Zhang Ping,

who were represented by Edmond Pereira, took the case to the Subordinate Courts last December.

SAA president Tang Weng Fei was relieved to hear the verdict. He said: "Let's put this behind us as we have a lot of other things to do — next year's SEA Games, marathon and multi-year funding plan." LOW LIN FHOONG