

PV Sindhu doesn't have mental block in major finals, insists Prakash Padukone



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NEW DELHI: Indian badminton great Prakash Padukone insists that P V Sindhu doesn't have any mental block in major finals and urged the media to not put the star shuttler under pressure by focussing on her defeats.

The former All England Champion backed Sindhu to win the World Championship crown soon after two consecutive silver medal performances in the prestigious event.

Sindhu lost the World Championship final to Spain's Carolina Marin on Sunday, her third major final defeat. She had lost the Worlds final last year and the title clash of the 2016 Rio Olympics.

She also finished runner-up in the Superseries Finals in Dubai last year.

"It is quite creditable that she reached the final again. The competition is very tough. She should aim for the gold next time. She beat two Japanese players (Okuhara and Yamaguchi) against whom she normally loses. Unfortunate that she could not do the same in the final," said Padukone on the sidelines of PNB Metlife Junior Badminton Championship here today.

Asked if she has a mental block in major finals, he said: "There is nothing like that. She is still young, she will definitely win (the world championship) in near future. She is already one of the greatest players from India."

"We should not put too much pressure on her when she is doing well. She is world number three. The focus should be on how we can make her win rather than why she is losing the final again and again. If we keep doing that, she would only feel more pressure."

National coach Pullela Gopichand has produced a host of world-class players including Sindhu, Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth.

Padukone feels time has come that an overburdened Gopichand gets some assistance.

"Gopi is doing a good job. He needs somebody with him to assist him. There are so many good players. For one coach to take care of so many players, it would be difficult," said the former World Cup winner.

On Saina's recent run, he said: "she needs to be a little consistent and manage her schedule better."

World Championships are to be followed by the Asian Games later this month in an already tight calendar. Padukone said the Asiad challenge would be a tough one for Indian players.

"It (Asian Games) is so close to the World Championships. It is difficult for players to peak at two important back-to-back events. The schedule is tough anyway. Players have to pick and choose, there is no other way (to manage workload). In a way, it is good that more sponsors are showing interest in the sport. Both stakeholders (sponsors and BWF) need to sit together and sort it out."

Performances in the last five years have proved that India is now at par with badminton giants such as China and Japan.

"I think they have already conquered (the Asian wall). Just that we are not able to put it across in important events. Most of the leading India players have beaten most of the world's top players in some tournament or the other. We just need to click in important events. Last five years, we have been at the top. We are no less than China, Japan or Korea."

However, India is still lagging behind in doubles events.

"We are improving steadily (in doubles) but talent is more in the singles. Now one or two players are doing well in paired events. We did not even have that two years ago. It takes time. We need more Centres of Excellence apart from the one in Hyderabad," felt Padukone.

He said he was impressed by young shuttler Lakshya Sen.