

Srikanth settles for silver, Lee takes 3rd CWG gold

GOLD COAST, APR 15 /--/ Newly-crowned World No.1 Kidambi Srikanth let slip the early advantage to settle for a silver medal in the 21st Commonwealth Games, going down to Malaysian legend Lee Chong Wei in the men's singles summit clash here today. Srikanth had beaten Lee in the mixed team championships final earlier in the Games but the former world number one rallied for a 19-21 21-14 21-14 triumph today for his third individual CWG gold. He has two more mixed team gold medals to his credit. A decade older than the Indian, Lee kept his best for the last, showing off the legendary reflexes that have earned him cult status in international badminton. But it was not all smooth sailing for him today as Srikanth started off confidently. It took Srikanth just eight minutes to go from being 0-4 down to be 10-7 ahead. The Indian was the better of the two in executing drop shots and even managed to match Lee's ability to mix power with precision. Srikanth led 11-9 at the break.



Silver medalist Srikanth Kidambi of India waves during the medal ceremony —REUTERS

Srikanth remained a step ahead until 14-13 before a misdirected smash gave Lee the equalising point. But Lee was surprisingly off when it came to retrieving the shuttle and his usual agility on the court was only there in flashes. To Srikanth's credit, he made the most of his fancied opponent's lack of intensity and took the first game 21-19 in the 25 minutes. A slight moment of drama came in the second game when it seemed Lee had struck the shuttle

twice to claim a point but was not penalised for it and the match went on despite Srikanth's protest. Lee's lackadaisical approach improved considerably thereafter and after leading 11-9 at the interval, he displayed some of the many stylish shots in his armoury to draw level and stay afloat in the high-intensity match, which was as much about elegance as sheer power. Leading 9-5 in the decider, Lee went for a change of racquet and it only got him better results as he grabbed an 11-5 lead to take the psychological upper hand. The smashes that were landing outside in the opening game became just the bit accurate and difficult for the Indian to retrieve. (PTI)

Manika claims mixed doubles bronze, Sharath settles for bronze in singles

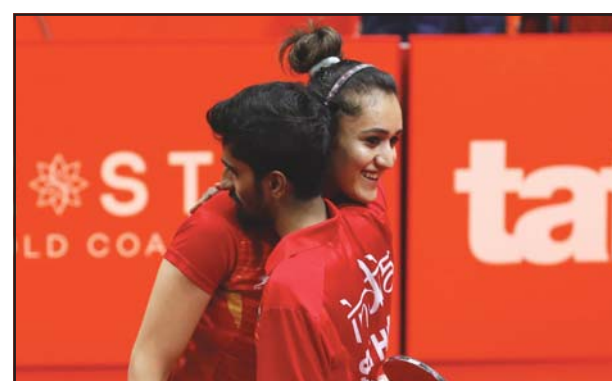
GOLD COAST, APR 15 /--/ Manika Batra's sensational run at the Commonwealth Games fetched her another medal as she teamed up with G Sathiyan to collect the mixed doubles bronze on Sunday, thereby claiming a medal in every event she competed in Gold Coast. Batra and Sathiyan defeated the compatriot senior duo of Achanta Sharath Kamal and Mouma Das 11-6 11-2 11-4 to claim the honours in the bronze medal play-off. This was Batra's fourth medal of the Games. She had earlier won a historic women's singles gold and was also a part of the top-finishing women's team. In women's doubles, she won a silver with Mouma

Das. Meanwhile, Sharath Kamal clinched his third medal of the Games by winning a bronze in men's singles after beating Samuel Walker of England 4-1 (11-7 11-9 9-11 11-6 12-10). He was part of the gold-winning men's team event and also clinched a silver in men's doubles with Sathiyan.

A 10-member Indian table tennis team secured 8 (3 gold, 2 silver and 3 bronze) medals in these Games, which turned out to be the best-ever medal haul in the history of the Games. Batra said she hoped "to stay together as a mixed pair (with Sathiyan) and play together at the 2020 Tokyo Olymp-

pics". "We've been playing our very best but there are not many tournaments for mixed pairs. We've been training in Portugal trying out different pairs. This is our first medal as a mixed doubles combination," she said.

Sathiyan said a bronze medal each should be awarded to both semifinalists in table tennis, just like in some other sports. "You start off with a round 64 and you end up here in the most terrible and impossible match. You've reached the semifinals and you can't do that without winning matches," he said. On beating his senior doubles partner Sharath, Sathiyan said.(PTI)



Sathiyan Gnanasekaran and Manika Batra of India —REUTERS



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