

VinVijay Kannan keeps promise, Rushmi Chakravarthi defends her title - 2001

It was smart tennis that prevailed over stinging power as Vijay Kannan beat Rohan Bopanna in the men's final. By just blocking the big returns of b Bopanna, apart from the using the soft touch and sound angles, Vijay prevailed over his doubles partner the 6' 4" tall Bopanna. The conditions were in favour of the defensive player.

Incidentally, it was the third final in the national championship for the unseeded Vijay. It was a memorable double crown for the B. Com graduate from the Loyola College in Chennai, as Vijay won the doubles title with Ajay Ramaswami, beating the Kirtane cousins, Nitin and Sandeep.

While it was a case of being third time lucky for Vijay, the Coorgi lad Bopanna was losing his third final within a short span, as he had lost two finals in the ITF Futures events to Prahlad Srinath. Did he lack the big match temperament?! Only time would answer the question.

Bopanna had to come through the qualifying event as he decided to play the championship after the wild cards had been decided. Obviously, he had not entered in time to be among the direct entrants.

The Atlanta Olympics bronze medallist and a champion of many Grand Slam doubles titles, the Indian Davis Cup hero Leander Paes watched the final.

"Rohan has been doing well of late, and is in the reckoning for Davis Cup selection. He has a big game but needs maturity. He didn't handle the conditions well. The ability to overcome the conditions is the mark of a champion", Leander observed.

"With the right support, he can become a good player. We will take care of him", said Mahesh Bhupathi who had watched the final on TV. Bopanna was ruthless in dismissing the challenge from Sunil Kumar, who had just been crowned the Asian junior champion. He was equally superb in cutting through the

defensive tactics of the defending champion Nitin Kirtane. He did face some problem against the counter-attacking Kamala Kannan.

In the women's event, Rushmi Chakravarthi defended her title, but not before Sonal Phadke teased her in the semifinals. Rushmi eventually beat the Mumbai girl, 6-1, 6-7 (3), 7-6 (5). The Indian Oil officer from Chennai, Rushmi was fluent in her win over Sheethal Goutham in the final.

Rushmi recovered from being a set down to beat Sania Mirza, the star in the horizon, 2-6, 6-4, 6-2 in the quarterfinals. However, the 15-year-old Sania had the satisfaction of winning the doubles title with Ankita Bhambri as the duo beat the seasoned combination of Rushmi and Sai Jayalakshmy in a thrilling final at 6-3, 2-6, 7-6 (5).

Arun Prakash Rajagopalan and Isha Lakhani won the boys and girls titles respectively. Both faced tough competition from Somdev Dev Varman and Samrita Sekar respectively, and prevailed in three sets each in the finals. Isha won the junior girls doubles title as well with Megha Vakharia.

Tushar Liberhan in the under-16 event and J. Vishnu Vardhan in the under-14 competition served notice as the players to watch out for in the future. Sanaa Bhambri and Kartiki Bhat were the ones to draw attention in the girls under-16 and under-14 events respectively.

The results (finals):

Men: Vijay Kannan bt Rohan Bopanna 6-4, 6-4, 5-7, 6-1; **Doubles:** Vijay Kannan and Ajay Ramaswami bt Nitin Kirtane and Sandeep Kirtane 6-2, 6-4.

Women: Rushmi Chakravarthi bt Sheethal Goutham 6-4, 6-3; **Doubles:** Ankita Bhambri and Sania Mirza bt Rushmi Chakravarthi and Sai Jayalakshmy 6-3, 2-6, 7-6 (5).

Mixed doubles: Sania Mirza and Rohan Bopanna bt Shruti Dhawan and Mustafa Ghouse 6-4, 6-4.

Under-18 boys: Arun Prakash Rajagopalan bt Somdev Dev Varman 3-6, 6-2, 6-1; **Doubles:** Rohan Gajjar and Amanjot Singh bt Shivang Mishra and Arun Prakash Rajagopalan 6-3, 6-4.

Under-18 girls: Isha Lakhani bt Samrita Sekar 6-3, 6-7 (3), 6-1; **Doubles:** Isha Lakhani and Megha Vakharia bt Sasha Abraham and Preeti Rao 6-4, 7-5.

Under-16 boys: Tushar Liberhan bt Nihal Advani 6-1, 6-4; **Doubles:** Tushar Liberhan and Chatwinder Singh bt Anshuman Dutta and Rupesh Roy 7-6 (1), 6-1.

Under-14 boys: J. Vishnu Vardhan bt Sumit Prakash Gupta 6-0, 2-6, 6-2; **Doubles:** Franklyn Emmanuel and N. S. Nishendran bt Hrishikesh Pataskar and Sumit Prakash Gupta 6-4, 6-4.

Under-16 girls: Sanaa Bhambri bt Parul Goswami 6-1, 6-4; **Doubles:** Ankita Bhambri and Sanaa Bhambri bt K. Pooja and Shradha Lodha 6-2, 6-3.

Under-14 girls: Kartiki Bhat bt Sandri Gangotri 6-3, 6-1; **Doubles:** Madura Ranganathan and Vandana Murali bt Sandhya Nagaraj and Sandri Gangotri 6-4, 6-4.