

Punna Vishal and Ankita Bhambri have their say - 2003

Punna Vishal sprung the surprise in the men's section, while Ankita Bhambri turned the spotlight on herself in the women's field. In fact, the Delhi girl Ankita won a double crown as she captured the doubles title with her sister Sanaa.

While that was a happy tidings for Delhi tennis, it was a heart-break as the 17-year-old Delhi lad Divij Sharan lost three finals, the men's singles and doubles apart from the junior singles. Yet, it was a brave effort from Divij, who had been ranked world No.5 in doubles.

The focus on Punna Vishal, the Hyderabad lad, who was keen to capitalise on this run, as he remembered losing the National Games final, exactly a year back on the same day, to Nitin Kirtane in front of an adoring home crowd that had packed the arena.

"I had lost the National Games final on the same day a year ago. I was determined to win this one", revealed Punna, who had shown his class by reaching the semifinals of the \$10,000 ITF Futures event earlier in Dehra Dun.

An athletic player who approaches the net quite often, Punna was eventually given a place in the Indian Davis Cup squad as he continued to do well, including the qualifying event of the prestigious Chennai Open ATP Tour event. Unlike many others who had been restricted to the bench, Punna got to play a rubber in an away tie against New Zealand.

Punna played so well in the tournament that he dropped only one set, to Kamala Kannan in the semifinals, on way to the trophy.

Divij showed his staying power and fighting qualities as he saved three matchpoints to beat the former national champion Vinod Sridhar in the semifinals. He was perhaps too drained physically and emotionally after winning so many matches, and thus was not at his best while tackling Navdeep Singh later in the day in the junior final. The doubles title too eluded him, but he vowed to return as a better player next time and give it a better shot.

Navdeep Singh was all energy on court as he won the junior title in a draw of 64. The 17-year-old Navdeep saved seven matchpoints and converted his seventh matchpoint in a battle of wits against his doubles partner Saurabh Kohli in the semifinals.

"This title is important for me, to gauge my growth as a player", said Navdeep who has been based in Dubai and has been training with John Hicks in the United Kingdom.

The Hyderabad lass Punam Reddy, a trainee of Vasudeva Reddy and S. Narendranath, played with considerable intensity of focus to beat Madura Ranganathan. She had beaten the favourite Sanaa in the semifinals in the third set tie-break.

Peter Agnel Gladwin, a trainee of Mayur Vasant, caught everyone's eye as he won both the under-16 and under-14 singles titles without dropping a set.

Shivika Burman handled fluctuating fortunes as she slipped from 5-2 to 5-6 in the final with composure to emerge the champion in the under-16 section, while G. K. Shweta was too good in the under-14 event.

The results (finals):

Men: Punna Vishal bt Divij Sharan 6-3, 6-2, 6-1; **Doubles:** Rishi Sridhar and Ajay Ramaswami bt Somdev Dev Varman and Divij Sharan 7-6 (7), 6-1.

Women: Ankita Bhambri bt Sanaa Bhambri 6-3, 6-3; **Doubles:** Ankita Bhambri and Sanaa Bhambri bt Geeta Manohar and Archana Venkataraman 6-1, 6-2.

Under-18 boys: Navdeep Singh bt Divij Sharan 6-3, 3-6, 6-3; **Doubles:** Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan and Sanam Singh bt Lalit Mann and Sandeep Kumar 7-5, 6-1.

Under-18 girls: Punam Reddy bt Madura Ranganathan 6-0, 6-7 (3), 6-2; **Doubles:** Kartiki Bhat and Sandra Sashidharan bt Sandri Gangotri and Sandhya Nagaraj 7-6 (4), 6-4.

Under-16 boys: Peter Agnel Gladwin bt Kinshuk Sharma 6-3, 6-2.

Under-16 girls: Shivika Burman bt Daksha Mulay 4-6, 6-0, 7-6 (7-5).

Under-14 boys: Peter Agnel Gladwin bt Vijayant Malik 6-4, 6-3; **Doubles:** Krishna Karsolia and G. P. Prajnesh bt Yuki Bhambri and Debendra Das 6-3, 6-1.

Under-14 girls: G.K. Shweta bt Parija Maloo 6-1, 6-1; **Doubles:** Karina Ahuja and Sanjana Kapoor bt Shivika Burman and G. K. Shweta 6-2, 1-6, 6-4