

18/12/2000

We're the champions

S. Selvam

MALAYSIA completed their squash calendar this year in grand fashion when they were crowned the inaugural Head Asia Cup champions after beating Pakistan 2-1 in the final at the NSC Squash Centre in Jalan Duta yesterday.

Malaysia had earlier in the year won the Asian championships men's team title and were runners-up to Hong Kong in the women's event. Besides that, Malaysia also won the individual titles when both Ong Beng Hee and Nicol David were crowned champions in Hong Kong.

The Asia Cup, a mixed team event which is the brainchild of Asian Squash Federation president, Mokhzani Mahathir showed that Malaysia finally have the depth and consistency in the team to rival the best in the world.

Ong was the first to step on court and the 400-odd fans were given a glimpse of what the future beckons for the youngster when he overwhelmed Pakistan's No 1 Amjad Khan in four games, winning 9-1, 3-9, 9-0, 9-3 to give Malaysia the first point.

Despite dropping a game, the first in the tournament for the No 1, Ong was just too good and only dropped another four points before wrapping up the match for his first win over the Pakistani.

In the first game, Ong only needed 10 minutes to get the better of his rival, taking the game 9-1.

However, in the second game, Ong committed too many unforced errors and in his haste to beat Amjad, found himself trailing 3-7. The Pakistani made no mistakes and kept his composure to take the second game 9-3.

But Ong was back to his former self in the third game and took complete control of the game to put the pressure on the Pakistani.

Amjad tried everything in the text book, he changed tactics, tried to change the tempo of the game and even started arguing with the umpire but found Ong always a step or two ahead.

Ong took only seven minutes to wrap up the third game and although the Pakistani tried to make a game out of the fourth, there was no stopping Ong and the Malaysian took the fourth game 9-3 to give Malaysia a winning start.

And with the win, the result was a foregone conclusion as up next was the women's singles.

Pakistan who had never won a single match in the women's singles in the tournament knew that the writing was on the wall and the match only prolonged the inevitable - Malaysia were going to take the title.

Sharon Wee who was rested for the semifinal against Hong Kong made short work of Bushra and took only 16 minutes to wrap up the match and gave Malaysia an unassailable 2-0 lead, winning her match 9-4, 9-0, 9-2.

In the dead rubber, Mansoor Zaman exacted some measure of revenge for Pakistan when he defeated Kenneth Low 9-5, 9-7 in the best of three game encounter.

But by then, Malaysians were already rejoicing. Results: Final: Malaysia bt Pakistan 2-1 (Ong Beng Hee bt Amjad Khan 9-1, 3-9, 9-0, 9-3; Sharon Wee bt Bushra Haider 9-4, 9-0, 9-2; Kenneth Low lost to Mansoor Zaman 5-9, 7-9); Third-fourth placings: Hong Kong bt Japan 3-0 (Faheem Khan bt Yoshihiro Watanabe 9-3, 9-0, 9-1; Rebecca Chiu bt Mami Nishio 9-1, 9-0, 9-2; Adrian Fong bt Kimihiko Sano 9-7, 9-1); Fifth-sixth placings: Singapore bt Jordan 3-0 (Mohammad Rizal Kadir bt Mohammed Al Saad 9-7, 9-1, 4-9, 9-7; Della Lee bt Najada El Majed 9-0, 9-0, 9-0; Dermadi Adi bt Yazen Hijazi

9-5, 9-2); Seventh-eighth placings: South Korea bt Sri Lanka 2-1 (Ku Ryun-
hoe lost to Hirantha Goonesena 0-9, 6-9, 1-9; Kang Young-jin bt Yasmin
Zarook 9-6, 9-2, 9-1; Lee Yong-hee bt Janaka Suwaris 9-1, 9-4, 4-9, 9-5)
(END)