Womens' doubles final preview

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Full house waiting for the finals at ExCeL in London

Ai Fukuhara and Kasumi Ishikawa join Guo Yue and Li Xiaoxia in Final

With just minutes to go before the final here's a quick snap-shot of both pairs' doubles semi-finals:

Japanese Superstars Ai Fukuhara and Kasumi Ishikawa, ranked no. eight and seven in the World – the highest ranked players in the World not born in China booked their place in the ITTF Pro Tour Ladies Doubles Final. They defeated the plucky no. six seeds – the Korean pairing of World no. 23 Seok Ha Jung and World no. 20 Yang Ha Eun 4-1.

In the first two games the quick-fire play of the Japanese girls seemed to have all the answers. They sailed through the first two ends: 11-3, 11-2. Whatever their Coach said must have had the desired effect as the Korean pairing played much better in the third end. Yang Ha Eun (who has jumped from no. 88 in the World as of December 2010 to no. 20 this month) started to make her mark as the Korean pairing came close to winning the third end before bowing out 11-8. The fourth end was close throughout and the Korean girls saved a match point to win 12-10. Could they stage a fight-back?

The answer was no – the Japanese stars retained their composure impeccably to seal their place in the final 11-8. Ishikawa said afterwards: "We will start making strategies now and we will help each other out and give each other encouragement."
Ai Fukuhara and Kasumi Ishikawa will face the top seeds in the final – China's Gue Yue and Li Xiaoxia – the game everyone wanted to see. A match not to be missed because in the first semi-final top seeded Li Xiaoxia and Gue Yue ranked no. two and six in the World were always in charge against the Singapore pairing of Lia Jiawei and Wang Yuegu.

As hard as Wang Yuegu and Lia Jiawei tried they were always behind against a very well-oiled China pairing.Wang Yuegu had previously caused the biggest upset in the Ladies Singles by beating top seed Guo Yan with some lightning hitting but here she found it almost impossible to get in early – Gue Yue just wouldn't let her.

Apart from an out-of-character fourth game which the Singapore pairing won easily the Chinese girls were always in charge and they won fairly comfortably 11-5, 11-3, 11-7, 5-11, 11-7.

The end result is the potential for a classic womens' doubles final at the ITTF Pro Tour Grand Finals.

Steve Kerns and Ken Muhr.

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