

Guo Yue/Li Xiaoxia win womens' final

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Still unbeaten – the unbelievable partnership of Guo Yue and Li Xiaoxia

Guo Yue and Li Xiaoxia cruise to victory

There was no stopping Guo Yue and Li Xiaoxia in the Ladies' Doubles Final in the ITTF Pro Tour Finals. The Chinese aces raced home 11-8, 11-5, 11-7, 11-6 against their Japanese opponents Ai Fukuhara and Kasumi Ishikawa.

Undoubtedly, the strongest Ladies' Doubles partnership in modern table tennis Guo Yue / Li Xiaoxia's amazing unbeaten record dates back to September 2008. Guo Yue, the 2007 World Singles Champion made it an incredible 35 doubles titles on the ITTF Pro Tour and this is her third Pro Tour Final's victory, the first having come when she was 13 in 2003.

The early exchanges were very tight before the game started to open up with the Chinese playing typically fast over the table. They then opened a small gap in the score leading 6-4 before Ishikawa started playing forehands from all over the table resulting in the Japanese taking the next three points. Gue/Xiaoxia halted the run of points and then were gifted the game as Ishikawa top edged a forehand off the end.

The second game began very much the same as the first, however you could feel that the Japanese were always trying to force the play. The Chinese seized upon this opportunity and stormed into a 6-2 lead, now in full flow even a net cord couldn't stop them, as Xiaoxia fired a faded forehand to seal the game 11-5.

It was clear to see that the Chinese pairing were in control and they even got the luck of a net to help them on their way at the start of the third game. Even though there were flashes of brilliance from the Japanese pair, mainly Ishikawa who surely has a bright future ahead of her, they could never retain the consistency to trouble Gue/Xiaoxia.

It was all one-way traffic and it didn't look promising for the Japanese, who were trailing 3-0 in games and 3-0 in points, It only got worse as they sealed the game and the title winning 11-6.

The Chinese players were typically modest in victory. Li Xiaoxia gave an insight into why they are so good at Doubles when interviewed by Ian Marshall – "We practice doubles every day as well as singles and we talk about doubles a lot. That might surprise people but we talk about doubles a lot. You know – tactics and what we can do to improve".

Guo Yue, a childhood prodigy and seemingly still as enthusiastic for the game as when she won her first Pro Tour Finals title at 13 was asked to compare her current partner with the lady she won her title with in 2003. She gave an honest answer – "Niu Janfeng was a great player but Li Xiaoxiao can do it all – she's fantastic to play with".

By Steve Kerns and Lewis Gray

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