



## Epic final sees Austria win historic title

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**Posted On:** September 29, 2015

Austria became European champions for the first time in their history in a thrilling final against Germany.

Robert Gardos struck first for the champions, saving a match point as he fought back from 2-0 down against Patrick Baum to win 7-11, 8-11, 11-8, 11-7, 13-11.

There was also a match point saved in the next as Dimitrij Ovtcharov levelled by overcoming Stefan Fegerl in a match lasting 74 minutes, finally prevailing 10-12, 19-17, 11-7, 12-14, 12-10.

Continuing the theme, Germany's Patrick Franziska saved two match points against Daniel Habesohn in the fourth set of match three, but to no avail as Austria moved back in front, Habesohn taking it 11-9, 11-7, 10-12, 10-12, 11-5.

Ovtcharov again drew the match score level, this time needing only four sets against Gardos (8-11, 11-8, 11-8, 11-5).

In the event the decider was the shortest tie, Fegerl beating Baum 9, 8, 6 to spark Austrian celebrations. Belarus and France were also on the podium.

By contrast, the women's final was relatively routine as Germany made it a hat-trick of titles by beating Romania 3-0.

Han Ying won the first against Bernadette Szocs in three straight (12-10, 11-1, 11-1) and it was also 3-0 as Xiaona Shan beat Elizabeta Samara 12-10, 12-10, 11-5.

Petrissa Solja then clinched the title against Daniela Monteiro-Dodean in five (11-8, 11-6, 8-11, 8-11, 11-9). Ukraine and hosts Russia joined the finalists on the podium.



Germany women on the podium. Picture: ITTF

England men finished 20th and the women 22nd. Of the other home nations, Ireland's men were 31st, overcoming Norway 3-2 in their final play-off, with Gavin Maguire winning both his matches, while Scotland were 35th. They also enjoyed a 3-2 triumph in their last match, against Cyprus, with a double for Craig Howieson before Chris Wheeler took the decider.

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