



Olympic gold ends a Long journey for Ma

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Ma Long completed the set of major titles as he defeated compatriot and defending champion Zhang Jike in the Olympic men's singles final.

The No 1 seed, who had previously won the World Championship, World Cup and ITTF World Tour Grand Finals, added the Olympic gold in fine style, taking the final 4-0.

The first game was tense, but once Ma took it 14-12, he never looked back, romping to a final scoreline of 14-12, 11-5, 11-4, 11-4.

The champion said: "I played well throughout the match, the title is only possible with that high level of play. We both know each other very well, so it's not a competition of skills, but more of mentality and psychology.

"For me, I'm not defending any title here, so I have less pressure on court. After winning, I'm still feeling calm. This moment, I think I have improved."

Silver medallist Zhang told the ITTF website: "The crucial part of the game lies in the first game, I was still slow in my reacting and weaker in rallies with my backhand. If I had won the first game, the whole match might have turned a different way."

"Ma Long's skills are better than mine, no matter is it in his first three strokes, or changing between attacking and blocking. Congratulations to him!"

The bronze medal match saw Jun Mizutani of Japan beat Vladimir Samsonov of Belarus 4-1 (11-4, 11-9, 6-11, 14-12, 11-8).

In the semi-finals, Ma Long had to stave off a bold comeback from Mizutani to take his place in the gold medal match. It all looked good when Ma won the first three games, all for the loss of five points, but Mizutani won the next two before the top seed sealed it 4-2 (11-5, 11-5, 11-5, 7-11, 10-12, 11-5).

Zhang Jike's last-four match against Samsonov was tight but the 2012 champion was always in front as he won it 4-1 (11-9, 13-11, 12-10, 6-11, 11-9).

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