

Press Release

Maharashtra's Aryaan, Mihika in race for tennis gold at Khelo India Youth Games

Pune, January 16: Two-time national junior champion and top seed Mahak Jain of Madhya Pradesh had to dig deep to get the better of Gujarat's third seed Zeel Desai 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 and will meet the unseeded Mihika Yadav of Maharashtra in the gold medal match of the girls Under-21 singles competition of the Khelo India Youth Games here.

In Wednesday's second U-21 girls semi-final, Mihika dumped the unseeded Kaavya Sawhney of Uttar Pradesh 6-3, 6-3 after the latter had ousted second seed Humera Shaik 6-3, 6-2 in the quarters. Girls U-21 finalist Mihika has fond memories of this venue as she won her maiden \$10,000 ITF women's title here in 2016.

Maharashtra's Aryaan Bhatia produced a dominant performance to beat top seed Sushant Dabas of Haryana 7-5, 3-6, 6-2 and reach the boys U-17 singles final while Dhruv Sunish and Girgi Pawar of Maharashtra also reached the semi-finals of the U-21 boys and U-17 girls' events respectively.

The unseeded Bhatia, an 11th standard Commerce student of Rizvi College in Mumbai, had a battle on his hands against Dabas with his heavy and aggressive, baseline game.

But Bhatia's powerful serve proved too big a weapon for Dabas to overcome. Bhatia broke in the seventh game for a 4-3 lead and then held serve to win the set 7-5 in 38 minutes.

In the second set, the left-handed Dabas fought back with an early break as Bhatia started to commit unforced errors after a close line call went against him. Dabas drew level after winning the set with some comfort at 6-3 but Bhatia regrouped with some flawless tennis to close out the match 6-2 in the decider.

Bhatia later said, "Honestly, when I saw the draw I didn't think I would reach the final. I had never beaten any of the guys in my section before and today I beat Sushant. I believe I've made my state and family proud."

Aryaan faces the unseeded Dev Javia of Gujarat who won an all-Gujarat semi-final 4-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7-1) against fourth seed Krish Patel.

In the boys U-21 singles, Dhruv Sunish who played the qualifiers of an ATP Challenger last year in Pune, won a thrilling 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 encounter against top seed Eqbal Ishaque of West Bengal in two hours and 25 minutes.

After the match Dhruv said, "It's a big win for me as I've been struggling with back and elbow injuries in recent months. Even when I lost the second set, I reminded myself that I've beaten the same opponent a couple of times and that made the difference in the crucial third set."

Dhruv takes on fourth seed Paramveer Bajwa of Chandigarh who beat Abhinav Sanjeev of Tamil Nadu 6-7 (6-8), 7-5, 6-3 in another close encounter.

In other U-21 quarter-final action, the unseeded Nitin Sinha of West Bengal created a huge upset as he ousted second seed Faisal Qamar of Rajasthan 6-1, 6-3. Sinha will meet the in-form Sureshkumar Manish of Tamil Nadu who has dropped only two games in the tournament so far.

Third seed Manish was untroubled by S. Karteek Ganta of Telangana 6-1, 2-0 (ret) in the quarters.

Results:

U-17 boys singles semi-finals: Aryaan Bhatia (Mah) bt Sushant Dabas (Har) 7-5, 3-6, 6-2; Dev Javia (Guj) bt Krish Patel (Guj) 4-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7-1)

U-21 boys singles quarter-finals: Paramveer Bajwa (Chd) bt Abhinav Sanjeev (TN) 6-7 (6-8), 7-5, 6-3; Suresh Kumar Manish (TN) bt S. Karteek Ganta (Tel) 6-1, 2-0 (ret.); Nitin Sinha (WB) bt Faisal Qamar (Raj) 6-1, 6-3; Dhruv Sunish (Mah) bt Eqbal Ishaque (WB) 6-4, 4-6, 6-3.

U-17 girls singles quarter-finals: Gargi Pawar (Mah) bt Anjali Rathi (Har) 6-2, 6-7 (4-7), 6-3; Prerna Vichare (Mah) bt S. Pandithdyrai (TN) 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7-5); Priyanshi Bhandari (Guj) bt Vanshika Choudhari (UP) 6-2, 6-2; Lakshmi Reddy (AP) bt Sanjana Sirimalla (TS) 6-2, 2-6, 6-3

U-21 girls singles semi-finals: Mahak Jain (MP) bt Zeel Desai (Guj) 6-4, 2-6, 6-4; Mihika Yadav (Mah) bt Kavvya Sawhney (UP) 6-3, 6-3.