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## Beaten favela kid Ygor Coelho de Oliveira soaks up support

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De Oliveira's loss eliminated him from the tournament but he has another chance to bask in the spotlight with his second match in the three-player pool against German Marc Zwiebler. (Source: Reuters)

Crowds can get rowdy at big badminton tournaments but nothing could prepare Brazil's samba-dancing favela dweller Ygor Coelho de Oliveira for the ear-splitting support during his group match defeat to Ireland's Scott Evans at the Olympics on Saturday.

It was pretty stunning for Evans, too, who was roundly jeered throughout the men's singles duel and especially so when he completed an emotional 21-8 19-21 8-21 win at the Riocentro.

The triple Olympian Dubliner was naturally thrilled with the result but it was 19-year-old De Oliveira, raised in a Rio slum by a badminton-loving father, who was soaking up the attention as he spoke of the dream of competing at his home Games.

"It was just fantastic," Coelho told Reuters after being cheered incessantly by about 200 badminton-playing children and fans from his hard-scrabble neighbourhood of Chacrinha.

"In the beginning I was nervous but the people helped me to get up. In the second game, it was fantastic (that) I could play my best. In the third set, I think I lost my mind and he played well," he added.

"But I played my best."

De Oliveira's loss eliminated him from the tournament but he has another chance to bask in the spotlight with his second match in the three-player pool against German Marc Zwiebler, who also lost to Evans.

De Oliveira was born into badminton, with his father Sebastiao Dias having introduced the genteel sport into Chacrinha by building a court next to his home.

Hoping to get local kids off the street, he began offering training as a social project but had to overcome some initial scepticism.

Introducing samba music into training sessions proved a master-stroke and the school now has about 200 local children training there.

Badminton is a mystery to many Brazilians but De Oliveira has risen to a world ranking of 64, a remarkable achievement given the lack of top coaches and elite compatriots to train with.

## DRUG DEALER

Another player from the school, 20-year-old Lohaynny Vicente, also competed at Rio, losing her second pool match earlier on Saturday to be eliminated despite similar deafening barracking.

Vicente's father, a drug dealer, was killed in a shootout with police when she was four.

"Believe in your dreams," De Oliveira said in a message to Brazil's slum-dwelling children.

"Because your dreams can be true. I came from a favela and now I'm in the Olympics. If I can do it, they can, too."

It was also a fairytale evening for 28-year-old Evans, whose win over the local favourite ensured he would become the first Irishman to reach the last 16 of an Olympic badminton tournament.

On Friday, he became his nation's first to win a match at a Games with his victory over Zwiebler.

After winning both matches, he ripped off his shirt and slammed it on the court surface, celebrating wildly.

"I knew that the crowd would be crazy tonight but it beat all my expectations," he told Reuters.

"I don't know if I have experienced that at many football matches.

"Of course the crowd was against me and I understand that, but to play in that kind of atmosphere, it's something really special. I'll definitely never forget tonight."

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