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Written by [Shivani Naik](#) | Updated: August 2, 2018 8:24:39 am



“You will think I’m joking or arrogant. But one day my boys and girls will start beating Indians in badminton. And yes we can beat China.”

This was Sebastiao Coelho de Oliveira on the eve of the Rio Olympics, talking about his son Ygor, then 19, now 21, who had qualified for the Olympics as the Pan American champion two years ago. On wednesday, Ygor Coelho scored an astounding 8-21, 21-16, 21-15 victory over India’s World No 11 HS Prannoy to cause a stir at the World Championships in Nanjing.

A resident of the Chacrinha favela bordering Rio de Janeiro, who often used Samba music in his training routines while training kids from the neighbouring shanties, Sebastiao was Ygor's early coach; a physical education teacher who first brought him a badminton racquet from Italy after getting fascinated by the sport and then cut the stem to allow his 3-year-old toddler to start hitting the plastic shuttles. This bamboozling win over the Indian – which took shape at the halfway mark of the match after Prannoy had swatted away the Brazilian 21-8 in the opener – opens up badminton to its final frontier – the Americas, an area that the sport is desperately trying to woo, to make forays outside its Asian niche stronghold.

While Carolina Marin's victory at the Rio Olympics broke the shackles, bringing forth an European champ – a Spaniard at that, with little to no history of the sport, Ygor's second-round ambush of Prannoy, a bonafide Top 10 till recently, opens up the sport even further.

But first, here's what happened: If there's anything that Sebastiao fervently taught his son, it was defense. At a time when Ygor's only physical conditioning involved skipping at high speed, the only technical knowledge the father could teach the son was how to defend and retrieve manically. It was this ability to stay in a rally no matter what – and pick every bird thrown his way relentlessly – that first annoyed and then broke through and then pulled apart Prannoy on Wednesday at Nanjing.

It was at the same city that Ygor had first ventured out for the Youth Olympics four years ago, realising the might of the Chinese then, but the boy had been less cocky and more confident when he had said, "I'm a big fan of Indian Srikanth and Japanese Momota. It's gonna be tough for the Chinese the next Games. There's all these new challengers. And then there's me," he had said with his Ronaldinho like joy and gleeful verve. After the 8-21 first set, he would be given a half-shot of a confidence boost. "I was really nervous, and after going down 21-8, my coach told me this performance is not a good judging of my game," he told the BWF after beating Prannoy. He would dig deep in defense, and frustrate Prannoy who is accustomed to his mammoth big-smashing game earning him slashing winners.

It was in Set 2 that the turnaround began. “I won the second set!” he exclaimed, still surprised, adding, “I was leading by 4-5 points and I was shaking and nervous so I couldn’t smash. But I saw the chance to win,” he would say. Stringing together the points needed, while chomping into Prannoy’s depleting confidence, Ygor would then bring his net game to the table. He’s a Brazilian, but his early education in badminton included a stint with former Chinese world champ Sun Jun, according to BWF. Ygor had extended stints in Denmark as well, and has shown the flexibility to learn from both the Chinese and the Danes early in his career.

Ygor is now coached by the cross-training specialist Nadia Lyduch, who brings with her the twin knowledge of fitness and the racquet sport. The 43-year-old from Greve in Denmark, an hour from Copenhagen, is an unconventional coach, sheerly on her versatile CV. Lyduch spent a year between 2009-10 coaching former tennis Top 50 Jarrko Nieminen on the circuit, and has been guiding Ygor since the start of the year.

Responding to *Indian Express* later, Ygor would say, “Several hours after the match, it is still hard for me to believe that I won against this top player ! He started very well and after an 21-8 in the first set I thought it was the end. But Nadia Lyduch, my coach since the beginning of the year, helped me to focus again and keep believing. The two others sets were tight and both of us could have won. But it was me today. I’m really, really happy. It is for sure the best victory of my career !”

Prannoy who would want to forget this day and match in a hurry, would wilt under Ygor’s sustained stubbornness. “I was trying to do something in the second and third game but it wasn’t working. He was retrieving everything and my defence was bad today. I gave him a lot of chances for a free dribble and hit and that made him comfortable. I felt I was playing good in the first. The problem was the start of the second game was crucial and I gave him a lead. The lead gave him confidence and that was a big mistake,” he would say later.

Prannoy has a delectable game, but is prone to falling apart under pressure. “There is no exact thing you can do to make it better. I need to get back and try to do that. In the last couple of years I’ve become better at dealing with pressure, but at this

level there's a lot of work to do," he would concede to the BWF.

Ygor though was on a merry high after this win. "It's not over yet, and I hope I can bring more joy to Brazil from my badminton," he said. He'd trained to the beats of samba to improve his agility. "Up until now the East Asians had it better than everyone else. We'll start challenging them now," he had said back in Rio when badminton had pit-stopped there.