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Experience Ensures Korean Crown, Jolts German Goal and Hinders History

By: Ian Marshall, ITTF Publications Editor

6/14/2009 [Japan Open](#)

Korea's Oh Sang Eun, the no.3 seed, won the Men's Singles title at the Japan Open in Wakayama on Sunday 13th June 2009, beating Germany's Patrick Baum in a close seven games encounter at the final hurdle and thus prevented a new chapter in the history books of the ITTF Pro Tour being written.

No player, required to negotiate the qualification stage has ever won an ITTF Pro Tour Men's Singles title; Patrick Baum who missed a direct entry to the main draw by one place and was the highest world ranked player in action in the group stage came the closest yet.

Caused Problems

The fast attacking skills of the German left hander caused the tall stylish right hand counter topspin skills of Oh Sang Eun a host of problems.

Oh Sang won but only just; he succeeded 7-11, 13-11, 11-6, 9-11, 11-7, 6-11, 11-6.

Memories of Three Years Earlier

In many ways it was a similar encounter to 2006 when Oh Sang Eun had won the Men's Singles crown at the Chinese Taipei Open; on that occasion he had to withstand a barrage of fast attacking strokes from another European left hander, Christophe Legout of France.

In Taipei City he stood firm in seven games, three years later he stood firm again.

First Meeting

It was the first time that Oh Sang Eun and Patrick Baum had met in a world ranking event with the voice of experience prevailing.

Fine Results

Winner of five Men's Singles titles on the ITTF Pro Tour prior to 2009 Japan Open, Oh Sang Eun undoubtedly enjoyed his best year in 2005 when he clinched gold in Korea, Chile and the United States of America, whilst also progressing to the semi-final stage of the Men's Singles event in Shanghai at the Volkswagen 48th World Championships.

In 2006 he won in Chinese Taipei and finished in runners up spot in the Men's Singles event at the Volkswagen Pro Tour Grand Finals before once again winning on home soil in Korea one year later.

World Ranking

The string of fine results meant he progressed to a career high of no.5 on the ITTF Men's World Rankings in May 2007 but then was dogged by a back injury, which forced a break from international play and a series of disappointing results early in 2008.

Olympic Games

However, at the Beijing Olympic Games he returned to form.

He was the one player to cause the Chinese problems giving Ma Lin a torrid examination when they met in the Men's Team event whilst in the ensuing Men's Singles competition he beat Germany's Timo Boll before once again losing to Ma Lin in the quarter-finals.

In Wakayama he underlined the fact that he is now back to approaching his best form and once again he showed a distinct liking for German left handers.

New Experience

Meanwhile, for 21 year old Patrick Baum, it was a whole new experience and following his efforts in Wakayama he is surely now destined to climb the ITTF Men's World Rankings.

Currently he stands at a career high of no.59 and when the lists are published for July 2009, surely a top 50 place beckons.

Headache for National Coach

Furthermore, he has given Richard Praise, the German National Men's Team Head Coach and his advisors more than food for thought.



Oh Sang Eun, the 2009 Japan Open Men's Singles champion. *Photo By: Tetsu Yamashita*

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The established national team of Timo Boll, Christian Süss and Dimitrij Ovtcharov, who won silver in the Men's Team event at the Beijing Olympics Games, has a strong candidate knocking on the door.

A headache for Richard Prause but it is one which many a country would desire.

Intense Competition

Also, the performance of Patrick Baum reflects the intense competition on the ITTF Pro Tour.

Patrick Baum came through his Men's Singles qualification group stage matches in first place but only just.

He had to recover from a two games to one deficit to record a seven games victory against Korea's Kim Min Seok; whilst in opposition to Japan's Jin Ueda, he needed six games to seal victory.

Self-Belief

Win a close match and you believe; it was never more true than for Patrick Baum in Wakayama; the Men's Singles silver medallist at the 2009 Japan Open.



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Webmaster: mo@ittf.com

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