

All England Badminton 2001



*After Winning
the Championship*

PULLELA GOPICHAND sprang one of the biggest surprises in the world's oldest tournament by becoming the first Indian in more than 20 years to win the Yonex All-England Open Championships.

The 10th seed was slight favourite to beat Chen Hong but, by delivering such an emphatic 15-12, 15-6 victory after taxing wins over Olympic champion Ji Xinpeng and world No 1 Peter Gade, Gopichand's achievement will be long remembered.

His triumph at Birmingham's National Indoor Arena was also more reminiscent of Wembley 1980 than anyone would have expected. The 27-year-old's success emulated that of Prakash Padukone, who has not only coached Gopichand at the Padukone academy in Bangalore, but implanted a few of his own characteristics as well. There were similarities in the fluid movement and the deft net game and even in the comparable absence of a big smash, although Gopichand is more attacking than the master.

After the Chinese player was called for a foul serve at 12-10, a resilient Gopichand snatched nine successive points from a disconcerted opponent and the sequence proved decisive

