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Breaking through Gunawan, Bach win U.S.'s first world badminton title

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ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) -- Tony Gunawan and Howard Bach won the United States' first world title in badminton Sunday night at the World Badminton Championships.

The pair, seeded 13th in men's doubles, rallied in the final game for a 15-11, 10-15, 15-11 victory over No. 2 Candra Wijaya and Sigit Budiarto of Indonesia, who were seeking their first world title since 1997.

Also winning world championships were Olympic gold medalist Taufik Hidayat of Indonesia in men's singles, China's Xie Xingfang in women's singles and Indonesia's mixed-doubles pair of Nova Widiyanto and Lilyana Natsir.

Gunawan and Bach held a 5-1 lead in the third game of their final before Wijaya and Budiarto moved ahead 11-9.

But after the Americans regained service, Gunawan -- who won the 2000 Olympic gold medal with Wijaya for Indonesia -- tied the score with an overhead line drive.

Gunawan scored three points with overhead shots during the rally, which ended when Budiarto hit Bach's overhead smash behind his own back and into the net.

Gunawan earned his second world championship. He teamed with Halim Haryanto to win the 2001 title for Indonesia.



Tony Gunawan and teammate Howard Bach, seeded 13th, beat No. 2 Candra Wijaya and Sigit Budiarto 15-11, 10-15, 15-11.

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Hidayat, seeded sixth, routed top-seeded Lin Dan of China, 15-3, 15-7. Hidayat built a 13-0 lead in the first game before overcoming a 7-3 deficit in the second game.

In women's singles, second-seeded Xie defeated the defending Olympic and world champion, top-seeded teammate Zhang Ning, 11-8, 9-11, 11-3.

"I congratulate her," Zhang said through a translator. "She's very smart and she never hesitated."

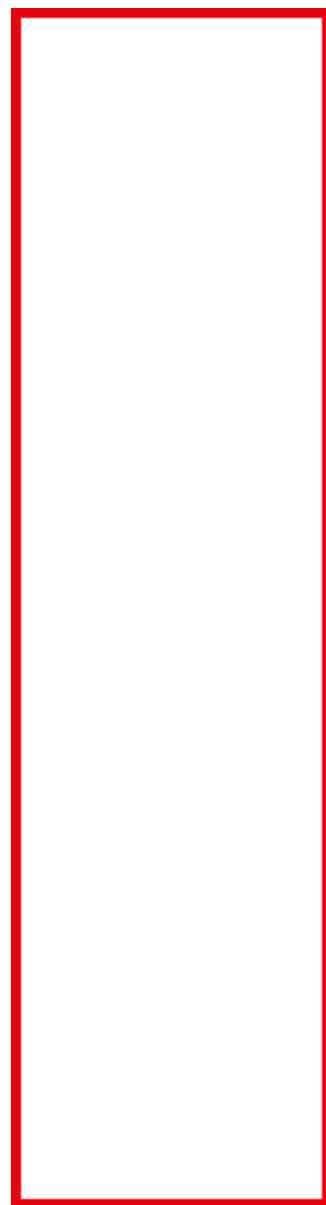
Xie said through a translator that she based her aggressive style on the air conditioning that affected the shuttlecock's flight.

"In the first game, the wind was behind me and I attacked very hard," Xie said. "In the second game, we changed courts and the wind was against me, so Ning had better control. In the third game, I controlled the bird very well."

China has won five of the past six women's singles titles since 1995. The World Badminton Championships have been held every two years.

Widianto and Natsir, seeded fourth, gave Indonesia its first mixed-doubles world championship since 1980 by rallying for a 13-15, 15-8, 15-2 victory over No. 11 Xie Zhongbo and Zhang Yawen from China.

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