

PAN AM CHAMPS Finals – Same old, same gold

20/10/2014



The names of the runners-up may have changed but the gold medals at the 19th [Pan American Badminton Championships](#) all went to exactly the same people they went to last autumn in the Dominican Republic. For hosts Canada, the news was especially good as their three repeat champions bode very well for the home team when they host the even more prestigious 2015 Pan Am Games at this venue next year.



The day began not only with the closest match among the five finals but with a continuation of

the most impressive streak. Olympic semi-finalist **Alex Bruce**, in addition to winning this title last year with **Toby Ng** (pictured right), now actually has a string of Pan Am titles stretching back to the 2011 Pan Am Games in Guadalajara, albeit comprising two different disciplines and no fewer than four partners.

Alas, while the inexplicably unseeded Bruce and Ng had actually won their 2013 final repeat in the first round against Howard Shu and Eva Lee, Phillip Chew was to find out for the first of two times on Sunday that being the #1 seed means nothing until you win the title.

“We were up against the top seeded team from USA, but we have beaten them the year before, which gives us a slight edge,” said Toby Ng on [his Facebook page](#). “The first game went fairly well which we won, but although we were up quite a bit in the second game, we lost a few points which made us a bit nervous, and unfortunately it ended up costing us the game. However, we bounced back in the 3rd and kept things fairly level until the very end, where we pulled off a few points to take the match!

“It’s nice to win again, especially at home, but I do owe it to many people who helped along the way.”



Next up was Michelle Li adding a second Pan Am Championship to her now impressive collection of titles. She has topped the continent three times if you count the Pan Am Games gold in 2011, four if you count her women’s doubles gold the same year. She got the better of **Rachel Honderich** (pictured left with **Michelle Li**), who was her partner in the deciding match of the mixed team final earlier in the week.

Next up was the longest match of the day, the men’s singles final won by Cuba’s **Osleni Guerrero** (pictured bottom). Before beating Bjorn Seguin in three games, Guerrero won his rematch of the 2011 Pan Am Games final earlier in the tournament. In Saturday’s semi-final, he beat Guadalajara gold medallist Kevin Cordon, who also happens to be the only active player apart from Lin Dan who has an unbeaten record against the current World Champion.

As for 2013 men’s singles runner-up Sattawat Pongnairat, he didn’t get another shot at Guerrero but he did get his taste of silver in the men’s doubles final. Once again it was Phillip Chew losing out to one of the Ng brothers. This time it was **Derrick Ng**, playing with **Adrian Liu**

(pictured below).

They had lost to the Chew in the semi-finals of the last Pan Am Games when the American was playing with a former World Champion. This time, the Canadians spent much less time on court than they had in the victory during the mixed team final and they took the gold in just 25 minutes.



“This is the first time winning an international tournament at home in Canada,” said Derrick Ng. “We’ve been playing for quite a few years now and it’s so satisfying to know our hard work has kept us consistently at the top of our region.

“We still have a long road ahead of us especially with Olympics on the horizon and with so many great teams ahead of us, but at least we have something to be proud of in the meantime. This makes 3 titles in a row – but in 2012 I won mixed and doubles so 4 Pan Am individual titles in past 3 years.”

The one success for the United States team in four attempts on Sunday came with the success of **Eva Lee and Paula Lynn Obanana** (pictured below). They were also the only top seeds in doubles to come out on top.

They too won a 2013 final rematch a day early, leaving last year’s runners-up Phyllis Chan gutted that she couldn’t contest a final this year in front of a Canadian crowd, something her partner Alex Bruce still had the opportunity to do in the mixed doubles. Lee and Obanana beat Brazil’s Vicente sisters in straight games to retain their title.



“We have played the Brazilian girls like 3 or 4 times now and we kinda know that aside from the fact that they are younger, they are not easy to beat right away since they always give a fight,” said Obanana. “We just have to stay focussed and stick to our game plan.

“Badminton is a sport were we always have tournaments every week , so its so hard to celebrate a lot when you have big or great victories. You can’t cool down. In a few days we will be in another tournament and we need to be ready for that. And on and on.”

Indeed, of the 15 players active on Sunday in Markham, only Osleni Guerrero has the next week off. The remaining 14 have 3 days to get down to Orlando, Florida for the start of the USA International Challenge, except for Michelle Li, who has less than that to make it to Paris for her first round match at the French Open.

Final results

XD: Toby Ng / Alex Bruce (CAN) beat Phillip Chew / Jamie Subandhi (USA) [1] 21-16, 19-21, 21-18

WS: Michelle Li (CAN) [1] beat Rachel Honderich (CAN) 21-13 21-16

MS: Osleni Guerrero [1] beat Bjorn Seguin (USA) [5] 19-21, 21-14, 21-13

WD: Eva Lee / Paula Lynn Obanana (USA) [1] beat Lohaynny Vicente / Luana Vicente (BRA) 23-21, 21-14

MD: Adrian Liu / Derrick Ng (CAN) beat Phillip Chew / Sattawat Pongnairat (USA) [1] 21-15, 21-13
