India Orders Female Badminton Players to Wear Skirts

MUMBAI, KOMPAS.com - Skirt selection could be as crucial as shot selection for the female shuttlers when they hit the court for this month’s India Super Series in New Delhi. 1360-1632-1-PB.pdf

Taking a cue from tennis, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) has introduced a new dress code, which comes into effect from May 1 and requires all female players to wear skirts or dresses in Grand Prix tournaments and above “to ensure attractive presentation of badminton”.

Players may continue to wear shorts if they wish to but it has be underneath a skirt, as some shuttlers already do. Those affected by the new regulation would include Saina Nehwal, top seed in the April 26-May 1 Indian Super Series, even though the world number three is not losing sleep over the issue.

“I think its okay. Playing in skirts is not an issue,” Nehwal told Reuters in a text message. While the BWF hopes the move will bring more fans to the sport and rope in more sponsors, everybody is not convinced it’s the right way forward.
Jwala Gutta, India’s badminton glamour girl, has no qualms about playing in a skirt but does not support the governing body’s idea of making it compulsory.

“I have no problems because I wear skirts on and off the court. I think they are just trying to glamourise the sport,” said the doubles specialist.

“But I don’t think it’s the right way. You can’t pressurise anybody to wear anything. What kind of clothes a person wears is totally up to them. It’s totally a personal choice,” said the 2010 Commonwealth Games gold medallist.

Gutta, 27, stopped short of calling the move wrong but had some advice for the BWF too. “You can’t force anyone to become more glamourous. Probably, they can ask the sponsors to design better clothing like the tennis girls wear,” she quipped.

“They should make nice dresses like what (Maria) Sharapova wears and so we can wear such clothes. I am ready to try and I am sure lots of girls will be ready to try too.”

The new dress code also met opposition from shuttlers in Indonesia where two-time mixed doubles world champion Lilyana Natsir said she wore skirts and dresses only on special occasions but never in tournaments.

“Skirts hamper my movement when I play,” 25-year old Natsir, who has started sporting a skirt during training but with shorts underneath it, was quoted by a local newspaper.