

A yen for revenge

Pearly-Thinaah may get rematch with Japanese pair in home meet

By R. KIRUBASHINI

PETALING JAYA: Women's doubles pair Pearly Tan-M. Thinaah could face a rematch against Yuki Fukushima-Sayaka Hirota in the quarter-finals of the Malaysian Open from June 28-July 3.

The world ranked No. 4 Japanese pair denied Pearly-Thinaah a place in the last eight of the recent Indonesian Open in Jakarta.

The loss was a bitter pill to swallow as the 10th ranked Malaysians had been on a good run and had reached back-to-back semi-finals in the Thailand Open last month and the Indonesian Masters.

But they have a great opportunity to exact revenge in their home tournament after both were placed in the same half of the draw again.

Pearly, though, does not want to look too far ahead and just wants to focus on the opening two rounds first.

They open their campaign against China's Liu Xuanxuan-Xia Yuting whom they had beaten in the Thailand Open in their only encoun-



Tough cookies: Yuki Fukushima (left) and Sayaka Hirota of Japan in-action against their compatriots Nami Matsuyama-Chiharu Shida in the Indonesian Open final. Fukushima-Hirota lost 21-18, 14-21, 17-21. — AP

ter so far.

A win again will set up a clash against either Thailand's eighth ranked Jongkolphan Kititharakul-Rawinda Prajongjai or another Chinese pair, Zhang Shuxian-Zheng Yu.

Pearly feels that the first two rounds will be no walk in the park.

"We need to win our opening two matches first before thinking about the Japanese pair. It's not going to be easy," said Pearly.

The other pairs in the fray are Vivian Hoo-Lim Chiew Sien (No. 35), Anna Cheong-Teoh Mei Xing (No. 44) and Valeree Siow-Low Yeen Yuan (No. 73).

All three pairs have uphill battles in the second round.

Independent pair Vivian-Chiew Sien open their campaign against Indonesia's Febby Gani-Ribka Sugiarto and a win could pit them against Fukushima-Hirota.

Anna-Mei Xing should get past Ireland's unheralded Kate Frost-

Moya Ryan but in the second round, they face South Korea's world No. 2 Lee So-hee-Shin Seung-chan.

Yeen Yuan-Valeree, meanwhile, have a trickier opening hurdle against the higher ranked German pair, Linda Efler-Isabel Lohau (No. 24).

If they do manage to create an upset, they still face an early elimination as they will likely take on China's world No. 1 Chen Qingchen-Jia Yifan in the next round.