

# Ygor Coelho: Samba badminton from Brazilian slum to world's acclaim

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Ygor Coelho. (AFP Photo)

NANJING: If it was not for badminton, the Brazilian Ygor Coelho says that he would have ended up like some of his friends from their Rio favela -- caught up in drugs or dead.

Instead, the 21-year-old with a beaming smile is making a name for himself as South America's best badminton player and an example for others growing up in tough

circumstances.

Coelho was defeated in the last 16 of the World Championships on Thursday in Nanjing, but not before his story grabbed attention and won him many admirers in China.

Exhibiting fleet, samba-like footwork, Coelho -- ranked 39 in the world -- sprang a shock in beating 11th-seeded HS Prannoy of India on Wednesday.

Coelho's run came to an emphatic end with a comprehensive 21-11, 21-7 defeat to Taiwan's Chou Tien-chen, but that did nothing to wipe the big grin off his face.

At times, Coelho has to pinch himself that all of this -- the crowd chanting his name, the media interest, playing sport for money -- is real.

Even speaking English, a necessity when taking part in top-level international competition, is something that he never thought possible.

Asked by AFP what he would be doing now if it were not for badminton, Coelho said: "It's a hard question, but for sure badminton has changed my life.

"I've learnt English, I travel around the world, I have good experiences, friends all over the world.

"I've learnt a lot from badminton."

Coelho has since left the Chacrinha slum of his boyhood on Rio's western outskirts, instead training and living in France and Denmark.

But his tough upbringing in a community blighted by drug violence remains a major part of his identity.

Coelho started playing badminton -- a sport hardly associated with football-mad

Brazil -- at three thanks to his father, Sebastiao Dias de Oliveira, a PE teacher and badminton coach.

"My father created a social project in badminton in the favela to help people not go in the bad way, not do drugs, this kind of stuff," said Coelho.

"My friends went into that kind of life and some of them died.

"Me doing this here, I am like a hero to some of them (at the project) and they are trying to follow the same way as me."

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/sports/badminton/ygor-coelho-samba-badminton-from-brazilian-slum-to-worlds-acclaim/articleshow/65242894.cms>