

Chinese Li loses in bronze medal play-off at Olympic tennis

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Li Na of China returns the ball during the women's singles bronze medal match of Beijing Olympic Games tennis event against Vera Zvonareva of Russia in Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2008. (Xinhua Photo)

Li Na (R) of China shakes hands with Vera Zvonareva of Russia after the women's singles bronze medal match of Beijing Olympic Games tennis event in Beijing, China, Aug. 17, 2008. Vera Zvonareva won the match 2-0 and grabbed the bronze medal in this event.(Xinhua Photo)

Chinese Li Na lost to Russian world No. 11 Vera Zvonareva 6-0, 7-5 in the bronze medal play-off match of the Olympic tennis tournament on Sunday.

With the victory, Zvonareva improved to a 2-2 record against Li lifetime.

Li, the former world number 16, dropped the opening set at love in only 19 minutes.

Li showed some signs of recovery in the beginning of the second set, leading at 3-1 after breaking in the third game, but the Russian mounted a strong comeback to break back to level the match at 3-3.

After exchanging break again, Zvonareva claimed the last two games to win the set at 7-5 and only needed 75 minutes overall to close out the match.

Ranked No. 42 in the world, Li missed a large part of the year after undergoing right-knee surgery at the end of March, returning in mid-June. She also missed the last half of 2007 with a right-rib stress fracture.

China has never won a medal in this event. In 2004, Li Ting and Sun Tiantian won a gold medal and also the first tennis medal for China when they took Gold in the women's doubles at Athens 2004.

By winning the bronze medal, Russia has become the first NOC to win all three medals in any discipline of an Olympic tennis event since Britain did so in the 1908 women's singles.

The women's singles all-Russian final features world No. 6 Dinara Safina and No. 7 Elena Dementieva.

"Source: Xinhua"