

Unfortunate-Lee

Zii Jia crashes out with Aaron-Wooi Yik in semi-finals

By K.M. BOOPATHY

PETALING JAYA: It was heart-break for Lee Zii Jia who came agonisingly close to upstaging Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen of Denmark in the Indonesia Open semi-finals.

Zii Jia saved five match points only to see Axelsen deliver a killer blow in the third game for a 19-21, 21-11, 23-21 win in a gripping semi-final that lasted 70 minutes at the Istora Senayan Stadium in Jakarta yesterday.

In men's doubles, Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik could not rise to the occasion and suffered a 21-18, 21-13 loss in the their semi-final clash against Liu Yuchen-Ou Xuanyi of China in just 38 minutes.

Zii Jia, however, looked well poised for a deserving win when he led 12-8 in the third game.

But the Dane proved why he is the Olympic champion when he

SEMI-FINAL RESULTS

Men's singles: Viktor Axelsen (Den) bt Lee Zii Jia 19-21, 21-11, 23-21.

Men's doubles: Liu Yuchen-Ou Xuanyi (Chn) bt Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik 21-18, 21-13.

Women's singles: Wang Zhiyi (Chn) bt He Bingjiao (Chn) 21-15, 21-10; Tai Tzu Ying (Tai) bt Chen Yufei (Chn) 10-21, 26-24, 21-12.

Women's doubles: Nami Matsuyama-Chiharu Chida (Jpn) bt Jongkolphan Kititharakul-Rawinda Prajongjai (Tha) 21-15, 21-14.

Mixed doubles: Wang Yilyu-Huang Dongping (Chn) bt Zheng Siwei-Huang Yaoliang (Chn) 21-6, 21-14; Yuta Watanabe-Arisa Higashino (Jpn) bt Seo Seung-jae-Chae Yu-jung (Kor) 21-18, 17-21, 21-15.

scored seven points on the trot to change the momentum in his favour.

Shaken by the surge, the Malaysian world No. 5 was tottering at 16-20 but produced a brilliant fightback to draw level.

Zii Jia saved another match point at 21-10 before the cool Dane used his experience to end the contest at 23-21 and book his final berth.

Having already won the Indonesia Masters at the same

venue last week, Axelsen will be the firm favourite to win back-to-back titles today.

"I think Axelsen is in very good form right now and almost no one can beat him," said Zii Jia.

"Axelsen is mentally very strong and solid.

"His focus on the court is 100% and that's why opponents find it difficult to beat him and he is beating everyone by below 10.

"I didn't think too much and tried to put all my effort and focus into this match.

"I had a good game today but at some points, I had to play catch up."

Zii Jia is happy to have done a decent job in Indonesia where he reached the quarter-finals of the Indonesia Masters before going one step higher in the Indonesia Open.

Meanwhile, Aaron was at a loss for words after failing to raise his performance in the

semi-finals yesterday.

A disappointed Wooi Yik said: "I played a very bad game and made a lot of unforced errors today. I tried to be patient but everytime we reach the semi-finals, I will be in a rush to finish off the game and make many mistakes."

Wooi Yik added that it was a good lesson for them and they will come back stronger from this setback.

The pair were affected by food poisoning and lost in the quarter-finals of the Indonesia Masters.

"We haven't played this pair before. Their front court play is very consistent and made it hard for us to attack," said Wooi Yik.

"It's not about whether Aaron played badly as I can also play badly sometimes.

"We just have to cover each other and I think we can come back stronger."