

## **Against best, Ajay Jayaram finishes second best**

**Ajay Jayaram failed to breach the Chinese wall as his fight ended with a 14-21 13-21 loss to Chen Long in Korea Open final.**

**Shivani Naik | Mumbai | September 21, 2015**



On Sunday, playing his first-ever Super Series final at the SK Handball Stadium in Seoul, India's World No.32 Ajay Jayaram had a bunch of moments when his tenacious defense he picked some low shuttles and returned from sharp awkward angles — drew gasps of admiration from the Korean crowd.

But the dream week for the Mumbai boy, who trains in Bangalore and who made the biggest final of his career, ended quietly as he went down 21-14, 21-13 in 39 minutes. It's a good sign that many more Indians are climbing podiums of Super Series, juggling the giant cheque, mascot toy, medals and bouquets as runners up under the International circuit's dazzling spotlight.

In snappier, shorter rallies, Long's kills come with mighty force. Opponents can fancy their chances in longer rallies by frustrating the Chinese, and Ajay looked most assured in weaving webs over patient rallies, mixing his attack, surprising with his deceptive defense and using the forecourt and net to keep the giant guessing. At 8-9 with Ajay still attempting to stay toe to toe, the Indian would play the cleverest shots of the day — engaging Long in a net scuffle and then striding back for a wonderful drop shot from

mid court. At 13-15, the World Champion would make his irritation apparent when the Indian mixed his attack down both flanks — sprinkling in his net gems — in a long rally and forced a net error. But then Long would Hulk out and rain smashes on Ajay immediately whose own booming smash went missing on the day against the big man who opened up the lead to pocket the first.

The Indian — with the fourth best ranking among his compatriot, but only the second to make it to the finals — said, “I knew it was going to be hard going into the finals. I started off well by mixing my attack from the back and the net. But he got back more shuttles than I expected. So I found it difficult to sustain the pressure. I did have a couple of chances which I felt I couldn’t capitalise on.

“It’s been a great week for Ajay and his net and defense looked good. Overall, he went in and played some few very good rallies which showed he is capable of playing at that level. Neither his speed, nor his attack, nor defense, nor net, lacked strength. If anything, it was just the consistency what mattered today,” said Gopichand.

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