

India Open Super Series - 2013: Saina Nehwal - one line call to end it all

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The shuttle dropped on to the side court and Saina Nehwal's gaze went from the floor to the line umpire. Instead of spreading his arms wide like an eagle it went dead straight to signal that the bird had landed inside.

Saina let out a shout in disbelief. She was convinced the forehand shot by Japan's Yui Hashimoto was outside the line and that the call was wrong. The score after that point read 21-13 12-21 20-18 in Saina's favour.

Right then the laws of physics disappeared and Murphy's Law took charge as Saina went from being a point away from winning the match at 20-17 to losing four straight points, the game at 22-20 and with it exiting the Indian Open Super Series after the second round.

In the points following that one she seemed rattled. At 20-18, she tossed the shuttle at a perfect height and speed for Hashimoto to smash it right behind her. Her next shot went wide of the court to take the score to 20-20.

She lost the lead and then at match point, she hit the shuttle too long and lost. One line call and suddenly the balance of power shifted from Saina's court to the unseeded Japanese player and the Olympic bronze medallist was not one bit happy. "I don't think the line call was fair. The shuttle looked in to me but the line judge thought otherwise. After losing that point I lost my concentration and was extremely upset. I could not focus and eventually lost the match," she said.

So, her jinx at this tournament continues. She had lost in the first round in 2011, then in the second round last year and this time again in the second round. Each opponent was ranked much below her.

Hashimoto was 44 ranks below her on 46. "I don't know why this happens at the India Open all the time but this time I gave it my best and that one line call just disturbed my rhythm and I could not make a comeback. I am disappointed at the loss. I should have won the game but these things happen. I can't argue with the judge," she remarked.

Now more than ever the BWF's decision to use the video review technology system is making sense. If they had implemented it here, the situation could have been avoided and maybe Saina could have won the match. Some blame, however, could be put on Saina as well.

She won the first game effortlessly 21-13. Hashimoto looked out of her league. Many of her shots went over the court and her unforced errors were just rising. The second game turned the tables on Saina. She was dragging her feet on the net and lost many points on her backhand drops.

Hashimoto's ploy of serving high and long worked and sometimes Saina would misjudge the fall and other times she would hit the net. Though she had many chances of coming back into the game she just could not cope with her unforced errors and poor net play.

Her loss means that the match that everyone was hoping would not happen. PV Sindhu was to face Saina in the quarter-finals and all day long the buzz was that this match was definitely going to take place after Sindhu defeated China's Sun Yu in second round 9-21 21-19 21-15 at the Siri Fort Sports Complex.

Even Sindhu seemed excited about facing her compatriot and training partner at the Gopichand badminton academy in Hyderabad. "Well, I am waiting for Saina now. It is the first time I am going to play her. I think we are going to have a good match Friday. We have practised together many times but playing in a tournament is a different thing. I will try to give my best against her," said Sindhu. Sadly, all it took was one line call to end it all and again show how this court is turning out to be unlucky for Saina.
