

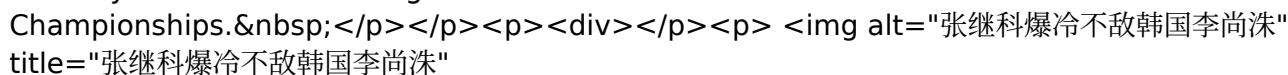
张继科爆冷不敌韩国李尚洙

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China's Grand Slam winning table tennis player Zhang Jike has suffered a shock defeat to South Korea's Lee Sang-su at the World Table Tennis Championships 2017 in Dusseldorf, Germany.

Two-time winner Zhang crashed out to his South Korean rival 4-1 in the third round, the earliest exit for the 29-year-old since his singles debut at the World

Championships.



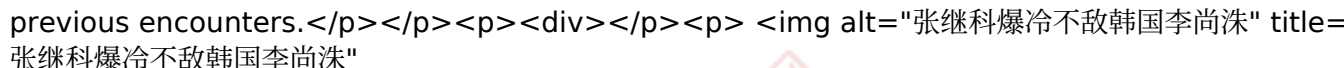
src="https://www.ruihongw.com/file/upload/202105/06/142427422.webp" style="height: 400px; width: 600px;"/> Zhang Jike, Chinese table tennis player, prepares to serve at the World Table Tennis Championships. /VCG

Photo

Zhang had a chance in the fifth game, fighting back from 3-6 down to pull ahead 10-7, but Lee Sang-su managed to level the score at 10-10 and went on to seal his first win in his fourth meeting with Zhang.

Lee Sang-su told media after his victory that he believes "Zhang Jike's level has dropped lately", but added that he still had to play very well to win.

Reflecting on the defeat, Zhang said his opponent was "very aggressive", while admitting that he was not in good condition. He admitted he was "rather passive" in the match, while his rival's shots were "more fierce" than in previous encounters.



src="https://www.ruihongw.com/file/upload/202105/06/142427212.webp" style="height: 400px; width: 600px;"/> Head coach Liu Guoliang speaks to Zhang Jike amid a match with South Korea's Lee Sang-su. /VCG

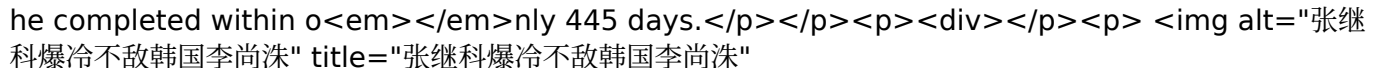
Photo

Zhang has suffered from injuries since winning a silver at the Rio Olympics in 2016. He withdrew from the China Super League in 2016, and also missed the Qatar Open earlier this year.

But he refused to attribute his defeat to his injuries. "My injury earlier in the year had no impact," Zhang insisted.

Liu Guoliang, head coach of China's National Men's Team, later said that Zhang had tried his best, adding that he has suffered too much pressure and played "too reservedly."

Zhang was the fourth male player in the history of table tennis to achieve a career Grand Slam, which he completed within only 445 days.



src="https://www.ruihongw.com/file/upload/202105/06/142427472.webp" style="height: 408px; width: 600px;"/> Fans of Zhang Jike watch the match. /VCG

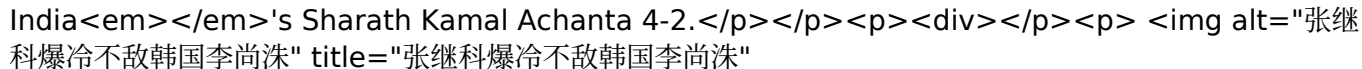
Photo

The other four Chinese players went through to the last 16.

Defending champion Ma Long, who defeated Zhang in the Rio Olympics final, met little trouble in beating Romania's Ovidiu Ionescu 4-1.

World No. 2 Fan Zhendong breezed past Russia's Alexander Shibaev 4-1, and world No.3 Xu Xin removed the last man standing from outside Europe and Asia, defeating Hugo Calderano of Brazil 4-1.

Lin Gaoyuan, the lowest-ranked among the five Chinese men who started the competition, edged past India's Sharath Kamal Achanta 4-2.



src="https://www.ruihongw.com/file/upload/202105/06/142427522.webp" style="height: 411px; width: 600px;"/> Ma Long, Chinese table tennis player, competes against Romanian Ovidiu Ionescu during the men's singles third round. /VCG

Photo

Zhang's exit means another country is guaranteed to gain a podium place for the first time since Timo Boll beat Chen Qi of China on the way to a German bronze in the men's singles in

2011.

No non-Chinese player has won either the men's or women's singles titles since Austrian Werner Schlager triumphed in 2003.

