

Darius wins his second BATTS Super League event of the Season

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England no. four Darius Knight warmed up for the second round of British League Premier division matches by winning the second BATTS Super League competition of the Season, played on Friday 26 November 2010.

As a precursor to the British League weekend this event had proved so popular that the entry was extended from 32 to 48 players, comprising 16 groups of three competitors and it was third seed Darius, the winner of the first competition of the Season who again came up trumps. Well publicised, it is a great idea to hold the tournament the day before the British League action, as it gives extra competition for those British League players who are not certain of a full weekend's play. Even the quality of spectator took some beating. Paul Drinkhall and Gavin Evans were amongst what was a record crowd of people watching.

The early talking point of the night was a marathon group which featured Ian McLean, Paul Beck and Karina Le Fevre which lasted over two hours, almost an hour longer than any other group. It was "Anglo-Scot" McLean who made it through to the top banded event with Karina finishing second.

The 16 group winners who comprised band one produced some marvellously keenly contested play, so much so that of the 15 matches that were played, only two were decided three-straight. More significantly six games were decided in the fifth end. And it was an inform Darius Knight who came up trumps. Right from the start it was obvious that Darius was on top form as he disposed of Stephen Jenkins 11-6, 11-9, 6-11, 11-5 and in the second round Darius had to pull out all the stops to get the better of Po Huang Chen. The action was ferocious, spell-binding and at times brutal as Darius edged home 9-11, 15-13, 11-4, 8-11, 12-10. Darius faced second seed Ryan Jenkins next and he scarcely put a foot wrong as he triumphed 11-7, 5-11, 11-8, 11-8. His final opponent was fourth seed Chris Doran, a most impressive 11-7, 11-7, 7-11, 11-6 semi-final winner over Gavin Rumgay. The final itself featured some at times spectacular Table Tennis as Doran fought to contain Knight from deep, interspersing it with some lightning attacks of his own. Both players looked worthy Champions but it was Darius who pulled clear in the fifth end to win 8-11, 11-8, 11-8, 2-11, 11-5.

In such a high-class event there were other games which also hit the heights.

None more so than a furious battle between Grantham Academy's up-and-coming Emran Hussain who pushed the Scottish "war-horse" Gavin Rumgay all the way before succumbing 11-9, 11-13, 13-11, 2-11, 10-12 and a battle royale between the Irish Internationals in which Colum Slevin edged out Jason Sugrue 11-5, 11-1, 5-11, 11-13, 11-8. Omkar Torgalkar, "he of the clever hands" the fifth seed had to pull out all the stops to get the better of Sebastian Laux 8-11, 11-9, 11-8, 8-11, 13-11 whilst current Irish international John Murphy fought back from 10-8 down in the fifth end to oust local star Wang Zheng 11-9, 7-11, 11-7, 7-11, 14-12. Possibly the highest sustained standard of Table Tennis ever seen at a BATTS Super League competition.

England no. 36 Ashley Willetts, claimed the band two title, the event for those players who had finished as runners-up in their initial groups. Ashley's final victim was England no. 41 Mark Simpson who he beat 5-11, 18-16, 11-5, 11-6.

Other games of note saw Karina Le Fevre fight back from 2-0 down to get the better of Lauren Spink 7-11, 6-11, 11-9, 11-4, 11-7. Karina had also scored a fine win over Scott Crawford (6-11, 11-6, 11-2, 11-8). Tony West put up a magnificent fight against Peter Cleminson. West pushed the hard-hitting Cleminson (who is returning to the Sport after a lengthy absence) all the way before missing out 11-9, 7-11, 10-12, 11-8, 10-12 and Cleminson went on to get the better of the smooth-flowing Zoltan Hosszu 12-10, 11-5, 10-12, 7-11, 11-5 before meeting his match in Ashley Willetts who ended his progress (11-6, 11-7, 11-8).

Band three perhaps defines just what a strong competition this event was. Local star Martin Kubrt came out on

top, and it is well worth mentioning that he is ranked no. 68 in England. He beat John Dennison 11-8, 11-6, 12-10 in the final having previously had to pull out all the stops to get the better of Paul Beck 10-12, 11-6, 11-5, 11-13, 11-8. No less a player than Euan Liddle was a first round faller – Euan missed out 11-7, 7-11, 4-11, 11-8, 8-11 to John Dennison.

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