



Baggaley aiming to rule world again

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Andrew Baggaley starts the defence of his World Championship of Ping Pong title against Gianmarco Gallina of Italy at Alexandra Palace on Saturday.

The three-time champion is the top seed in Group A, which also includes Gavin Maguire of Ireland, who will play Baggaley if both win their opening matches – Maguire’s is against Peejay Atienza of the Philippines.

The competition starts with the double-elimination group stage on Saturday, comprising eight groups of eight players. Each player is guaranteed two matches – two wins takes them through and two defeats means elimination. Players with one win and one defeat play off in a third match to decide who progresses.

Also competing for England are Chris Doran, who was beaten by Wang in the semi-finals last year, and Matt Ware, who won the English qualifying tournament.

Joining them through this week’s last chance qualifying system are Junior national champion Ethan Walsh and Mark Mitchell, who came through last night’s ‘final last chance’ tournament at Ellenborough alongside Kazeem Adeleke, representing Nigeria.



Mark Mitchell competing at last night's last chance qualifier (picture by Michael Loveder)

Doran starts against Jonathan Mooney of Northern Ireland in Group C, and could play Walsh in the second match if both win their openers – Walsh is up against Dimitrii Popov of Russia.

Ware is in Group D and faces Czech Tomas Sadilek in his first match. Also in the same group are two-time runner-up Alexander Flemming of Germany and Northern Ireland's Zak Wilson. Mooney and Wilson both came through the Northern Irish qualifying tournament.

Mitchell takes his place in Group F, where he will play Julien Dehaes of Belgium.

The two Scottish qualifiers were Gavin Rungay and Ian Johnston. Rungay is in Group H and opens up against Mak King Ho of Hong Kong, while Johnston has been drawn to play Denmark's Benjamin Sorensen in Group E.

Paul McCreery of Northern Ireland, who went through behind Ware in the English qualifying tournament, is in Group G and plays Filip Mlynarski of Poland first up. Adeleke is also in the group and starts against Ruby Tangerman of the Netherlands.

Among the others to watch Wang Shibo of China, the 2018 winner who was beaten 3-2 in the final by Baggaley last year, and three-time champion Maxim Shmyrev of Russia. Both are in Group B.

The draw for the last 32 onwards will be made after the group stage, though group winners will be kept apart in the first knockout round.

The tournament will be televised on Sky Sports Arena and Sky Sports Mix and begins at noon on Saturday. There is a \$100,000 prize fund, with the winner taking home \$20,000.

[Click here for ticket information](#)



Kazeem Adeleke at the last chance qualifier (picture by Michael Loveder)

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