



Baggaley conquers the world again!

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Andrew Baggaley won a sudden-death match point to successfully defend his World Championship of Ping Pong title and lift the trophy for a historic fourth time tonight.

Baggaley overcame Germany's Alexander Flemming in a match which was hailed as the best ping pong contest ever, clinching the winner-take-all point and \$20,000 top prize after seeing Flemming save three match points to tie it up at 14-14 in the deciding fifth set.

The final scoreline at Alexandra Palace was 3-2 (14-15, 15-8, 14-15, 15-8, 15-14) in favour of Baggaley against his friend and training partner – both men prepared at a pre-tournament training camp in Milton Keynes.

Afterwards, Baggaley told Sky Sports he was "exhausted", adding: "This was the hardest one, definitely. It supercedes all the other ones.

"I showed probably the best composure I've ever shown. I was quite calm, actually, and physically strong.

"The consistency of the quality was so high. He's an unbelievable player, he's never beaten. He's going to win this one day, for sure."

Flemming's reaction was: "I can't feel pity or sad because it's a great final and I can't say I did anything wrong. He's a real champion, I'm proud of you, Andrew."

Earlier, Baggaley came through his semi-final against Liang Xue of China 2-0 (15-13, 15-6), while Flemming ended the run of Scotland's Gavin Rumgay also in two (15-4, 15-9)

In the quarter-finals, Rumgay had knocked out Northern Ireland's Paul McCreery 2-1 (15-13, 11-5, 15-11), Baggaley edged a tight one with China's Hu Junchao 2-0 (14-13) and Flemming saw off three-time champion Maxim Shmyrev in three. Liang won in three against compatriot Lu Shuang.

After Baggaley, the next best-performing English player, perhaps surprisingly given the presence of regulars

Chris Doran and Matt Ware in the field, was 17-year-old Ethan Walsh, who went out in the last 16 to Shmyrev. It was a creditable 15-10, 15-11 scoreline against a man who won the first three stagings of the tournament, the last of which was in 2014.



Ethan Walsh in action at Alexandra Palace (picture by Michael Loveder)

Walsh had beaten Julien Dehaes of Belgium 2-1 (12-15, 15-8, 15-8) in the last 32. His run was the more remarkable given that Walsh earlier lost his first match of the tournament to Russia's Dimitrii Popov. He kept his tournament alive by beating Northern Irish youngster Jonathan Mooney in his second group match and then got through by defeating Hong Kong's Lin Jing-Jie.

Doran had to battle to make it out of the same group when, having won his first match against Mooney, he lost his second to Popov. He lost the first game of his must-win match with Hungary's Kristof Zakar but, cheered on by a packed crowd standing at courtside – the match was the last of the first session to finish – he came back to win 2-1.

However, Doran went out in the last 32 to Lu Shuang of China, the score a tight 2-1 (15-12, 14-15, 15-12).

Ware went out in the group stage, losing to Czech player Tomas Sadilek before beating Joel Mikael of Sweden, but then losing his decider to Dmitrii Bobrov of Russia.

England's Mark Mitchell lost his first match 2-1 to Dehaes but bounced back to win his second match by the same score to Hungary's Peter Palos. However, his decisive match resulted in a 2-0 defeat to Vladislav Kutsenko of Russia.

Of the other Home Nations players, Ian Johnston of Scotland recovered from an opening loss to win his next to and reach the last 32, where he was beaten 2-0 (15-8, 15-7) by Flemming.

Zak Wilson of Northern Ireland lost his two group matches and Ireland's Gavin Maguire won once in Baggaley's group but was agonisingly knocked out by Martin Groenewold of the Netherlands in one of the closest matches of the third stage.

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