

Drinkhall and Knight safely into round two

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Posted On: January 27, 2011



England no. one Paul Drinkhall and England no. four Darius Knight made it safely into the second round of the Under 21 Men's Singles. But, there was disappointment for Liam Pitchford, Damien Nicholls, Lewis Gray, Craig Howieson, David McBeath, Chris Doran, Sam Walker and Alim Hirji who all lost. Four English players – McBeath, Gray, Walker and Nicholls were beaten by top-class Korean opposition.

Drinkhall took a while to get into his stride against Guernsey's top player – stylish left-hander Garry Dodd, a superb winner against Richard Andrews in the Qualifying Groups. Drinkhall lost the first end 11-9 and trailed 7-4 in the second. Alarm bells must have been ringing loud and clear !. Especially as Dodd had hardly put a foot wrong. However, Drinkhall suddenly moved up a gear..... make that five gears. Paul took the second game 11-7 and moved into a 7-0 lead in the third game. Drinkhall eventually ran out a 9-11, 11-7, 11-1, 11-1 winner.

Darius Knight gave an all-action performance against Diogo Carvalho (Portugal / World ranked no. 657). Oozing confidence and power from both wings "Daz" ran out a very impressive winner 11-7, 11-6, 11-4 winner.

Liam Pitchford, so impressive this morning in qualifying in the Mens Singles couldn't find the same level of performance here. He was beaten narrowly by Sweden's Harald Andersson 6-11, 10-12, 11-4, 9-11 (ranked no. 387 globally) a player he had never played before. Liam will be disappointed as he led for much of the fourth game and will have relished his chances in the decider.

Matt Ware put up a brave fight against the very experienced World no. 173 Ma Liang (Singapore) but he was always behind in the fourth end, losing 8-11, 13-11, 7-11, 6-11.

The free-flowing David McBeath went down fighting against World no. 196 Mattias Karlsson (Sweden). He pulled out all the stops to win the second end 14-12, but he couldn't quite maintain the pace in the third and fourth ends. Karlsson won 11-8, 12-14, 11-8, 11-7.

Chris Doran's game against Phillip Floritz (Germany) was typical Doran. Chris threw everything he had at the World no. 342 Floritz, who like Doran is the most consistent of opponents. Floritz sneaked the second end 13-11 and Chris's challenge never reached the same heights in the third end. Game 11-8, 13-11, 11-4 to Floritz.

Lewis Gray played the third seed – World no. 66 – Lee Sang Su (Korea). He put up a very creditable showing before losing 7-11, 6-11, 6-11.

Ditto Sam Walker. He Had to play top seed – World no. 38 – Jung Young Sik (Korea). He did incredibly well for two ends, before his opponent's lethal forehand proved unstoppable. Jung Younk Sik progressed to what will hopefully be a Quarter –Final meeting with Paul Drinkhall winning 11-8, 11-8, 11-1.

Damien Nicholls also faced Korean opposition, in the face of 2009 Champion – Seo Hyun Deok. As hard as he tried he couldn't knock the World no. 83 out of his stride. Deok went through 11-6, 11-7, 11-4.

Alim Hirji was the fourth English player to face Korean opposition, in his case the formidable World no. 59 Kim Min Seok. Alim's forehand carries considerable weight so we wonder what he made of his opponent's rapier-like strokes. Kim won 11-3, 11-6, 11-5.

Scottish no. two Craig Howieson missed out against World no. 346 – Jeremy Petiot. He made a poor start but fought back well before losing 0-11, 7-11, 7-11.

Steve Kerns

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