

Kasumi Ishikawa out to go one better this time

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Kasumi Ishikawa

Day four of the English Open ITTF Pro Tour commenced with the Under 21 Singles Semi-Finals – Mens and Womens. Results went according to the World rankings although it was the highest ranked player – Kasumi Ishikawa – promoted to no. 11 in the World in the January 2011 ITTF Rankings (up from no. 20) who spent longest at the table. Kasumi, last year's Japanese Ladies Singles Champion and a Quarter-Finalist in the Ladies Singles in the 2009 World Championships required six games to get the better of World no. 83 Song Ma Eum (Korea) 11-5, 12-10, 8-11, 11-7, 9-11, 11-8.

She will be joined in the Final by World no. 39 Kang Mi Soon (Korea), who ran out a convincing 11-7 11-7, 11-9, 11-4 winner against Lee Ho Ching (Hong Kong – the World no. 84). Kasumi, the runner-up in this event in 2009 will be keen to go one better this time.

The Under 21 Mens Singles Final will be between World no. 83 Seo Hyun Deok (Korea) winner of this event in 2009 and countryman Kim Min Seok (World no. 59). The supremely athletic Seo had too much fire-power for World no. 467 – Wong Chun Ting, who had done so well to qualify for the Semi-Final and he ran out a 7-11, 13-11, 11-5, 11-5, 11-7 winner. His opponent – Kim Min Seok beat the third Korean to grace this stage (wonder if the three Koreans had breakfast together ?) – Lee Sang Su –with Kim Min running out a 11-7, 13-15, 11-5, 11-8, 11-8 winner.

The Ladies Doubles Quarter-Finals followed next. There were no upsets. Top seeds – Ding Ning / Li Ziaoxia, pronounced "Shaoshua" beat Korean pairing Kim Min Gyung / Mon Hyun Jung 11-8, 11-5, 11-8, 11-4. They will meet the Japanese stars in the Semi-Final – Kasumi Ishikawa and another player who has made giant strides in the last twelve months – World no. 14 Sayaka Hirano. Sayaka and Kasumi beat the Polish aces – Katarzyna Grzbowska and the two times Paralympic Champion Natalia Partyka 11-7, 14-12, 11-4, 11-8.

The second seeds – Guo Yan / Guo Yue – the pairing you would surely favour if singles rankings were the main criteria for doubles success – had too much firepower for team-mates – counter-attacker supreme Liu Shiwen and defensive ace Fan Ying. The World no. one and two Singles players dominated with the most comprehensive 11-4, 11-5, 11-4, 11-2 victory. They will meet Kang Mi Soon / Lee Eun Hee (Korea) in the Semi-Finals. In an altogether far closer game Kang Mi (World no. 39) and Lee Eun (World no. 42) came out on top 7-11, 12-10, 11-9, 7-11, 12-10, 11-8 against Korean team-mates Seok Ha Jung (World no. 17) and Yang Ha Eun (World no. 88).

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