



Baggaley finds 'The Flash' too hot in final

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Andrew Baggaley was defeated in the final of the inaugural World Ping Pong Masters as Germany's Alexander Flemming finally got his hands on a big prize on English soil.

Flemming had previously been runner-up in three World Championship finals, beaten by Baggaley in the final in each of the last two years.

But the man known as 'The Flash' turned the tables in spectacular fashion in the final, never letting Baggaley gain a foothold as he took a straight-sets victory by a 3-0 (15-12, 15-10, 15-9) and with it the \$25,000 top prize, saying in the post-match interview: it is pure happiness to beat such a great player."

Baggaley felt he had not had the chance to become "battle-hardened" during the earlier rounds and added: "It just wasn't meant to be for me today. I did the best I could but my backhand broke down.

"Full credit to Alex to win the final, he played great and was solid all the way through the tournament. Congratulations to him, he is a great champion."

The semi-finals had both gone the distance and both finalists had to come from behind to go through against Home Nations opponents.

Baggaley traded blows with Gavin Rumbay of Scotland for the first three sets, but stepped it up in the final two as he overturned a 2-1 deficit to win 3-2 (10-15, 15-11, 14-15, 15-6, 15-7).

Flemming was then forced to recover against Chris Doran in the second semi, the Englishman showing the full range of his strokeplay to open a 2-0 lead. But Flemming fought his way back to enter the final with a 3-2 (8-15, 11-15, 15-8, 15-10, 15-6) victory.

Early rounds

The competition featured 24 invited players and was held over two days in a bio-secure bubble at the Ricoh Arena in Coventry.

Back in the preliminary round, English teenager Ethan Walsh had come through in a tight match against Vlad Farcas, representing the USA taking it 2-1 (15-14, 13-15, 15-11), while Matt Ware overcame Ireland's Jason Sugrue 2-0 (15-12, 15-12).

Baggaley entered the competition in the last 16, where he defeated Walsh 3-0 (15-11, 15-8, 15-6) and that was the stage for a stunning 3-0 (15-7, 15-12, 15-14) victory for Germany's Genia Milchin over three-time WCPP champion Maxim Shmyrev of Russia.

There was also a titanic battle between Rumgay and England's Ware, which went down to a final point shootout, the Scotsman completing a comeback from 2-0 down to edge it 3-2 (11-15, 14-15, 15-3, 15-12, 15-14).

No such drama for Doran, who was a 3-0 (15-5, 15-8, 15-11) victor over Tomas Mikutis of Lithuania, while Paul McCreery of Ireland exited 3-1 (15-14, 12-15, 15-8, 15-4) to Spain's Marc Duran.

The quarter-finals saw Flemming dig deep to edge past Duran 3-2 (7-15, 15-11, 15-9, 11-15, 15-7). At the same stage, Baggaley advanced 3-0 (15-5, 15-5, 15-9) against Germany's Sabine Winter, while Rumgay ended Milchin's run with a 3-1 (15-10, 11-15, 15-8, 15-9) victory and Doran defeated Benjamin Sorensen of Denmark 3-0 (15-10, 15-13, 15-8).

Players competed under Elite Sports Person Exemptions and all players, staff and officials were tested for covid-19 on arrival at the event and remained in isolation until the results were confirmed. Those arriving from overseas were met on arrival to the UK and driven directly to the venue for testing. All players were also tested before travelling to the UK and were only allowed to board their flights after receiving a negative test result.

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