

Drinkhall the Champagne

Author: Paul Stimpson

Posted On: July 04, 2011

In typical Grand Prix racing driver's celebratory style Paul Drinkhall peppers the podium and his supporters with the luvvly bubbly following his brilliant title victory at the Fusion Masters collecting a well deserved cheque for £1000. His victory was greeted with cheers and good wishes as he is soon to depart these shores to find the answer to that extra sparkle needed to compete at the highest level in the London 2012 Olympic Games next year.

A huge crowd had assembled outside the Cippenham Table Tennis club in Slough on a warm Sunday evening so that the champagne celebration could be enjoyed by everyone whilst Paul stood tall on the Podium alongside losing finalist Kazeem Adeleke who collected a cheque for £200.

Paul's pathway to the inaugural Fusion Masters title was gained by victories over Dean Cundy, David McBeath, Nial Cameron and finalist Kazeem Adeleke in the knock out rounds following the group stage. We have become accustomed to Paul's devastating dominance in our sport as he continued to impress and none more so in a pulsating 3-0 final.

The Fusion Masters weekend started on Saturday the 2nd of July at the Cippenham Table tennis club where 60 players both Male and Female fought through a preliminary group stage to qualify for the main event on Sunday. Those 32 competitors that either topped their group or finished runners up were then put into a mix of groups with the top 28 seeded players on day two. A draw was made with groups of four competitors that played on Sunday morning which were then later whittled down to the last players standing excluding the top seeded players.

The first round on Sunday following the group stage saw 12 head to head matches that were drawn out of the hat with the top four seeds, Paul Drinkhall, Gavin Evans, Matt Ware and Herbert Noah receiving byes.

As we have seen with an FA Cup style draw anything can happen. This was indeed the case with David McBeath being drawn against Damien Nicholls in the previous round with David taking a close 3-2 win. The last sixteen drawn out were as follows;





Gavin Evans v Joanna Parker – A close games result of 3-0 to Evans

David McBeath v Ryan Owen – Narrowly won by McBeath in a titanic 3-2 score.

Neil Charles v Matt Ware – Ware enjoyed a 3-0 win.

Gareth Herbert v Victor Shi – Herbert won 3 games to 1.

Dean Cundy v Paul Drinkhall – England's top ranked player won 3-0.

Euan Liddle v Kaseem Adeleke – Result going to the dynamic Nigerian 3-0.

Paul Smith v Hubert Noah – Hubert proved too strong winning 3-0.

Richard Andrews v Nial Cameron – A game that went to the wire, with Cameron winning 3-2.

More excitement grew with another out of the hat draw but this time with eight players left. The following results were as follows;

Nial Cameron took a 7-11, 11-9, 11-6, 11-5 victory against Hubert Noah.

Kasseem Adelkeke took an 11-4, 11-9, 11-6 win against Matt Ware.

Gareth Herbert had a marathon result 15-17, 11-3, 5-11, 11-9, 14-12 over Gavin Evans.....(after some debate and confusion over an edge ball that was re-played)

Paul Drinkhall coming through 11-9, 11-5, 11-8 against David McBeath.

The semi finals that soon followed were both one sided affairs with Kaseem Adeleke taking a straight games win against Gareth Herbert whilst Paul Drinkhall enjoyed a similar score over Niall Cameron.

The staged final between Paul and Kazeem was a top class affair full of brilliant rallies and exchanges. However the top seeded Drinkhall was always in the driving seat easing through his turbo charged gears to run out a worthy Champion with a 11-6, 11-7, 11-4 scoreline.

A huge debt of gratitude has to be paid to so many that have helped to organise and bring this magnificent event to fruition. Gareth Herbert together with Peter Cleminson have been inspirational in their idea and inception of this very popular new style tournament that might turn out to be an annual event. So many of their friends and family worked tirelessly throughout the two days of play.

On a final note we wish Paul Drinkhall the very best in his search to obtain top quality sparring and coaching in club Castell Goffredo near Verona in Italy in preparation for London 2012.

Photographs can be viewed and purchased within the next week at;

www.photoboxgallery.com/aldeman

As for yours truly it's been a pleasure and a privilege reporting on Grand Prix and major table tennis events in England and abroad over the last 6 years as this will be my final piece. A great way to go out on such a memorable and unique tournament!

My two heroes of TV, Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett often concluded with –

“It's a goodnight from him – and a goodnight from me”.

By Geoff Ware

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