

Elite Hardbat Results

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Champion Kazeem Adeleke

There was plenty of excitement at the Elite Hardbat Competition at BATTs on Sunday 14th August as a top field including two Nigerian stars battled for a share of the £500 prize pot.

The scene was set with the largest entry so far with all players using the new Fairplay rubber for the first time. Sixty-two players at the event underlines the burgeoning success of the hardbat version of the game. The excellent new rubber helped produce marvellous rallies at every level suggesting this version of the sport will grow and grow.

Dave Langham's comments were typical: "Absolutely awesome and thoroughly enjoyed it. Can't wait for the next one". Certainly the unique enthusiasm of Fred Dove, feared and loved in equal measure, produced a great turnout for the middle of August. Kuan Lim, Mark Kinlocke, Robin Honey, Philip Walker, Sonja Talbot, Martin Freeland, Moshood Awosile, Reece Placid and Arun Jogi were all tasting hardbat for the first time.

With groups of eight and everyone qualifying for a banded event, organiser Fred Dove was determined to provide value for money. Eye-catching group results included Richard Hutchinson finishing second in group 1; an amazing win for Egle Adomelyte over Kazeem Adeleke in Group 2; Alan Cherry qualifying in Group 3; Karl Bushell showing his class in winning Group 4 and Garth Kinlocke, in his first hardbat tournament, gaining runner up spot in Group 7. However, Group 8 was the most extraordinary of all with Tom Cutler winning seven out of seven and Ashley Stokes losing to Kevin James but still managing to qualify for Band 1.

The real excitement now began with the top 16 players in a straight knockout competing for £425 in the Band 1 pot. The first sensation was World no 1 Sule Olaleye losing 21-19, 21-11 to an inspired Ashley Stokes confirming yet again that nobody is a guaranteed winner in hardbat. Meanwhile, Darren Griffin took out Tony West, a finalist last time out and Chris Bartram ended Fred Dove's winning streak of seven straight wins in his group. Joe Kennedy put out Trevor Kerry and Karl Bushell excelled with a fine 23-21, 21-10 over Billy Pegg. Richard Hutchinson must have been delighted with a 21-17, 21-16 victory over Tom Cutler to reach the last eight. Paul Worrallo put a stop to Alan Cherry's fine run but not before Alan had taken the first game 21-17. The final last 16 match saw Kazeem Adeleke beat the impressive Kinlocke 21-12, 21-19.

On to some fierce quarter-finals with Stokes scoring a great win over Griffin at 21-15 in the third. Another tight game saw Bartram beat Kennedy 21-14 in the third. Karl Bushell stopped Hutchinson's fine run 21-13 in the third. Finally Adeleke beat Worrallo 21-16, 21-16.

In the semi-finals Stokes continued his fine run with a great 15 and 17 win over Bartram. Bushell's marvellous tournament was ended by Adeleke although the match went to three ends 21-15, 15-21, 21-11. The final lived up to expectations with some wonderful rallies between the two outstanding players of the day with Adeleke beating Stokes 22-20, 21-7 to take the title and £200 first prize at his first attempt.

The other results saw Egle Adomelyte beat Wayne Shaw in the band 2 final, Kevin James beat Sean Molloy in band 3 and Chris Jones won band 4. The new World rankings naturally have Kazeem Adeleke catapulted into first place and Sule Olaleye slipping down to number 4. Karl Bushell has jumped from 29 to 13 and Richard Hutchinson has reached 17 in his first tournament. Tom Cutler jumps from 52 to 28.

Finally thanks to referee Glen Johnson, and to Evangeline and Paul Collier for operating Fred's computer programme and keeping the tournament flowing. Thank you also to Robin Honey and Tim Diss for their very professional looking video and camera work.

Look out for the next event in the series – date to be announced soon. Also look out for the final from this event

which will be put on YouTube very soon.



Winner Kazeem Adeleke in action



Band 2 winner Egle Adomelyte



Band 1 runner-up Ashley Stokes



Kazeem Adeleke

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