

Drinkhall hits form to trouble Wang Hao

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Paul Drinkhall fought hard against the world number 2

GREAT SHOWING BY PAUL DRINKHALL AGAINST WANG HAO

England's Paul Drinkhall (Cleveland) put up a great display in his last 16 clash against China's Wang Hao, in the men's singles of the ITTF Pro Tour Finals being held at the ExCel Arena, London.

Not intimidated by Wang, 28, the 2010 World Singles Champion, three times World Cup Champion and twice Olympic Singles Silver Medallist, Drinkhall demonstrated great flair and power with loops and re-loops on both wings and pounding backhand punches to take the first game 11-7. He carried on virtually matching Wang for speed, spin and versatility of shot, including some deft softer touches, changes of pace and fades, for most of the next three games, which he lost closely.

However, by the 5th game Wang seemed to be reading his almost every shot, and imposing his own big forehand loops and special brand of penhold backhand loops to run out the 7-11, 11-6, 11-9, 11-9, 11-1 victor.

It was an impressive performance by Drinkhall, who genuinely competed with Wang for four games. Afterwards Drinkhall commented, "I came out strong, which Wang was not expecting. I have played similar players in the past and got close so I was not overawed. I also try to mix what I am doing including changing the pace and direction. However, by the end he had got used to everything I was doing. I will now go back to the practice hall and aim to get even closer to the top players. England now has a good young men's team and I feel I coming back into form. I think we can further push the Chinese in the future".

Ken Muhr

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