

Tough day for Britain

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Paul Drinkhall, the only British man in the ITTF Pro Tour Grand Finals men's event, failed in his bid to overcome former world champion Wang Hao.

It was a tough ask for the young national champion but for a time he looked as if he might provide the upset the home fans craved at the ExCel Centre.

He won the first game 11-7 looking sharp and even a step ahead of his class opponent. But from then on it was a familiar story. He went down in the next four games looking a shadow of the player who earlier given had given us hope.

There's no doubt that Wang Hao is still a player able to win world events, when all said and done he is still world No 2.

Having won both the World Cup and World Championship titles, he still needs an Olympic Gold medal in order to earn a *Grand Slam*, which would place him within the league of such legendary players as [Jan-Ove Waldner](#) and [Liu Guoliang](#).

Earlier Darius Knight, brought in at the last minute to replace the Russian Alexander Shibaev who couldn't get a visa in time, failed to impress in the preliminary rounds of the under 21 men's events.

Knight's recent improved form was put to the test by his three Eastern opponents and the Londoner was found wanting.

All three opponents were well above his current ranking of 245 but this was a chance that Knight failed to take.

He lost 4-1 to KIM Min Seok, not unexpected with the Korean ranked at 28. Then it was CHEN Feng (158) again 4-1 and only against the Taipei player HUNG Tzu-Heiang (206) that he showed the form that we know Knight can provide.

He briefly provided the 350 spectators with something to cheer about by taking the first two games. This was Knight at his best. But from then on it was all downhill for the 21 year old losing the next four games to go out of the competition 4-2.

Our only interest in the women's singles event Joanne Parker, had perhaps the toughest match of all. Taking on the world No 1 Ding Ning is a daunting task.

She had little to lose though and her defensive style for a time seemed to unsettle the Chinese player. But after the initial probing Ning, who has a left handed top spin to die for, took the plucky Joanna apart winning 11-8, 11-1, 11-5, 11-9.

Later today the home crowd will have the men's doubles partnership of British No 1 Andrew Baggeley and England No 1 Liam Pitchford to look forward too.

It could be a real cracker with the British pair taking on the Chinese world No 1 Ma Ling and world No 3 Zhang Jike.

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