

Baggaley reaches last 16 in Budapest

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Posted On: January 19, 2012



Olympic promise for in-form Baggaley

After the ITTF Pro Tour Grand Finals many promises were made that the English players were going to qualify by right for the Olympics in June, apparently Andrew Baggaley is a man of his word.

This may only be the first World Tour event of the season but by reaching the Hungarian Open last 16, Baggaley has made those promises look more like a reality.

He will now face China's Xu Xin tomorrow – one of four Chinese players in the top eight of the draw, showing just how much Baggaley has achieved.

In the last 32 he beat the host nation's Adam Lindner who, in the previous round, has beaten world number 30 Hyun Deok Seo (KOR).

Baggaley was on a roll though and despite losing the first game to the Hungarian, he fought back and won three consecutive games to lead 3-1 and sit on the cusp of the last 16.

However, as the day had already proved, nothing was written in ink yet. Lindner fought back and took the next two games to level, dropping only seven points in the process.

The final game was understandably tense but in the end Baggaley used his 28 years of experience to come out on top with an exhilarating 11-9 decider.

Baggaley had earlier come through a tough-looking round of 64 match with France's Emmanuel Lebesson (72) by a surprisingly easy outcome.

During the first game Baggaley looked thoroughly outclassed by the Frenchman whose power and speed swept the man from Milton Keynes away in a blistering 11-3 opener.

However, those who thought that would set the tone for the rest of the match were proved wrong as the experienced Baggaley fought back. When he won a courageous second game 12-10 it seemed like a good consolation game for him to claim but when he followed that up with an 11-8 third game to lead 2-1, all of a sudden the victory seemed a possibility.

Using all his years of experience, Baggaley fought out a tight fourth game with Lebesson with the key points again going the Englishman's way with another 12-10 scoreline.

The French youngster had no reply at this stage and, with minimum fuss, Baggaley shut the door at the first opportunity by sealing an excellent victory with an 11-5 fifth game.

This match had followed the dramatic tie between Paul Drinkhall and Sharath Kamal Achanta which ended agonisingly for the highest ranked Brit in the world.

Drinkhall took an excellent first game 11-7 and built on that with a dramatic second where he was both 7-3 and 10-6 down but amazingly won six straight points to take a surprise 2-0 lead.

When he followed that up with an 11-9 third game you thought that the 3-0 lead was enough but it was not to be.

Back charged Achanta and blasted the fourth game before fighting back from 6-1 down in the fifth to take that too. When the sixth game went to the Indian world number 79 you thought there was to be only one winner, however, Drinkhall wasn't giving up there.

An incredibly tight seventh game was neck-and-neck all the way, which eventually led to Drinkhall getting a

match point at 10-9 and another at 11-10. But, just when it seemed everything had been saved by Drinkhall, Achanta plucked back up and stole the game 13-11 in a heart-breaking loss for the Englishman. So much so that on losing match-point he threw his bat down in anger – surely never to be used again such was the force.

In the women's singles Joanna Parker and Kelly Sibley both fell to their first round opponents.

Sibley had the toughest draw against Taipei's Huang Yi-Hua (39) and lost in straight games, but Parker, who faced Sweden's Matilda Ekholm (69) put up a big fight in only eventually going down 4-2.

Both Baggaley and Drinkhall's round of 64 games can be viewed [here on the itTV archive](#) and believe me, they are both well worth a watch (even if you might want to hide by the end of Paul's loss).

Men's Singles

SK Achanta bt P Drinkhall 4-3 (7-11, 10-12, 9-11, 11-4, 11-9, 11-2, 13-11)

A Baggaley bt E Lebesson 4-1 (3-11, 12-10, 11-8, 12-10, 11-5)

A Baggaley bt A Lindner 4-3 (7-11, 11-5, 11-8, 11-9, 3-11, 4-11, 11-9)

Andrew Baggaley vs Xu Xin 1:30pm

Women's Singles

Y-H Huang bt K Sibley 4-0 (11-5, 11-1, 11-3, 11-7)

M Ekholm bt J Parker 4-2 (11-9, 11-2, 8-11, 11-8, 13-15, 11-9)

Girls Under-21s Qual

D Madarasz bt A Loveridge 3-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-3)

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