

Nationals Q&A: Paul Drinkhall

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2011 was a top year for Paul Drinkhall with three titles to his name including his third Men's Singles trophy. He missed out on a clean-sweep of titles when he was beaten by Liam Pitchford in the under-21s final.

This year his focus will once again be on the Men's Singles and Doubles while he looks to equal a record with Joanna Parker in the Mixed Doubles.

Name: Paul Drinkhall

Age: 22

Home town/County: Loftus, Cleveland

What are you expecting from yourself for this year's championships?

I want to retain my singles and mixed doubles titles and also add the men's doubles to them, with the aim of getting a spot for the GB team at London 2012.

Is success the only option?

The aim this year is to be at the Olympics in London, obviously success is always on my mind and would help achieve my goal of being at the Olympics.

How important are the next couple of months for you?

The next couple of months are very important, as we all know that having the chance to compete in a home Olympics is a once in a lifetime opportunity. However, my career will stretch longer than 2012 and I will also be looking to other big events such as the Olympics in 2016!

Do you get nervous ahead of an event such as this?

I do get nervous before all events and matches, however, I try to use my nerves to help me be successful, feeling nervous is a great feeling if you know how to handle them.

It's a great competition to play against your peers. Who are you most looking forward to facing and why?

This year I'm looking forward to meeting Liam Pitchford as I lost to him last year in the under 21 event, we won't meet unless we both get to the final so if we do it will be a great match.

What does it take to win a title at these championships?

It takes a lot of hard work to win a title at any championships, At the Nationals it's very hard as most players know each others games so well that you have to try and get a mental edge, and take the fight to all your opponents!

Finally, with all the English players improving over the last year, does that create increased pressure on yourself or do they spur you on?

With other players improving it just spurs me on, I know myself that I have improved, also I know my strengths, and I feel that I am in a good place to win these titles.

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