

Mixed Doubles First Round

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Posted On: March 03, 2012



Day two at the English Senior National Championships started with a bang after a number of amazing and dramatic five-game thrillers lit up the Saturday morning at Ponds Forge.

One of the most dramatic was the shoot-out between Mark and Sarah Short and Liam McTiernan and Yolanda King for the right to play Liam Pitchford and Lauren Spink in round two.

McTiernan and King began brightly and took the first game of the day but the Short pair fought back immediately, claiming the next two games to lead 2-1. The youngsters McTiernan/King then came back once more to level the match at 2-2 and take it to a deciding game.

In the decider it was neck-and-neck up to 7-7 where Short/Short raced ahead to claim three match points at 10-7. However, it was not over there as McTiernan/King fought back to level at 10-10 after they had excellently used a time-out.

Unfortunately, it didn't prove enough in the end as Short/Short won the following two points to take the match and advance to the second round where they gave Pitchford/Spink a fright.

They took the first game 13-11 to put the cat amongst the pigeons before Pitchford/Spink raced back to lead 2-1 with 11-7 and 11-4 second and third games. Just when you thought the young pair would take it from there, back came Short/Short again to level 2-2 with a tense fourth game where they led 8-4 before being pegged back to 8-8.

They won it 11-9 to give themselves some hope of a big shock although in the end they were denied the glory as Pitchford/Spink took the fifth game 11-5.

In another dramatic first round game Lewis Gray and Chloe Whyte won a narrow five-game thriller against the experienced Andrew Trott and Sue Collier. Gray/Whyte had game points in game one only to let Trott/Collier back in to steal it 12-10.

The youngsters then retaliated and won game two 11-4 before seemingly cruising in the third game 10-5 up they lost seven successive points which gave Collier/Trott a 12-10 game and 2-1 lead. Collier/Trott's experience was manoeuvring their younger opponents around the table in a classic encounter.

Gray/Whyte took the fourth game 11-9 to force the decider which again went down to the wire as the pairs were locked at 6-6 at one point. In the end Gray/Whyte came through 11-7 to win their place in round two.

There they will face Damien Nicholls/Emma Vickers who impressively beat the cadet pairing of Helshan Weerasinghe and Tin-Tin Ho 3-0.

The best comeback of the morning went to Mark Simpson and Karen Shepherd who trailed Kev Dolder and Janay Gibson 2-0 before fighting back to 2-2 and then taking a tense decider 11-9.

Other pairs to progress from round one were Chris Doran and Hannah Hicks, David Meads, Sarra Wang, Emran Hussain and Emma Torkington, Danny Reed and Jessica Dawson, Chris Bartram and Sanja Clements, Matt Ware and Karina Le Fevre, Gavin Evans and Emily Bates and Sam Walker and Tressa Armitage.

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