

Big guns reach mixed semis

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The semi-final line-up is full of the top seeds in the mixed doubles event as day two at the English National Championships continues to impress with excellent table tennis.

Top seeds Paul Drinkhall and Joanna Parker negotiated their second round match with David Meads and Sarra Wang without too much trouble despite dropping the first game 14-12. They came back in style to win 3-1 (12-14, 11-2, 11-6, 11-5).

In the quarter-finals they faced Damien Nicholls and Emma Vickers who had seen off the fight of Lewis Gray and Chloe Whyte 3-1 in their second round encounter. They took both the first two games by an 11-9 score before Gray/Whyte pulled one back 11-6 and then led 8-3 in the fourth before Nicholls/Vickers stepped up their game to win the fourth 12-10 and the match 3-1.

Unfortunately, they were no match for Drinkhall/Parker who proved their number one seeded by reaching the semi-finals with a relatively comfortable 3-0 (12-10, 11-7, 11-6) win.

The top seeds will meet Chris Doran and Hannah Hicks. They came through the tightest of the quarter-finals against Danny Reed and Jessica Dawson. In that game Reed/Dawson raced into a 2-0 lead with consecutive 11-6 games but Doran and Hicks fought back to level 2-2 with an 11-4 game followed up by an 11-8.

In the decider it came right down to the wire with Dawson/Reed calling time-out 7-6 down. Eventually that didn't pay off as Doran/Hicks held their nerve to take the final game 11-9 and the match 3-2.

Kelly Sibley and Darius Knight also made the semi-finals as the second seeds when they beat Sam Walker and Tressa Armitage (3-1) and Gavin Evans and Emily Bates (3-0) in the quarter-finals. Evans/Bates were close in all three games but couldn't win the key points when required. Knight's explosive forehand again proving crucial as they took the consecutive games 11-8, 14-12, 11-9 respectively.

Facing them in the semi-finals will be Liam Pitchford and Lauren Spink. Pitchford/Spink beat Karina Le Fevre and Matt Ware 3-1 in their quarter-final after the latter pair had beaten Chris Bartram and Sanja Clements to progress.

The score was 3-1 (11-6, 11-7, 8-11, 11-5).

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