

Doran – Standing As Tall As Blackpool Tower

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Chris Doran was on top of the world after his incredible Men's Open title victory at the Tees Sport Blackpool Grand Prix on Sunday the 18th of April. Wearing his yellow peril lucky shirt that has brought him so much good fortune (he has not lost a singles match wearing it) he floated like a butterfly and really did sting like a bee!

His five set title win over the hot favourite and top seeded Daniel Zwickl (ranked at 110 in the world) was just amazing and to be honest, totally unexpected. Chris's subtlety and great passive control allied with his ability to exploit openings with his offensive play on both wings and from all areas of the court was the crucial factor in securing his success in this match. Daniel Zwickl his final opponent came to this event with a proven world track record and is a player of immense talent with an extremely powerful and penetrative backhand to die for. Zwickl is currently ranked 500 places above Chris and the enormity of this success cannot be underestimated and augurs well for the progression of English players on the world stage. The final itself was a classic nip and tuck all the way encounter that was full of explosive backhand and forehand exchanges necessitating movement and returns from every area of the table. Zwickl won a comfortable first set and it looked on the cards for the expected win from the Hungarian player. Chris started to find his game stealing the second set 11-9 from an 8-9 deficit. He then raced to an 8-1 lead in the third only to see Daniel pull it back to 8-5, at which point Doran called a time out. This had the necessary effect to galvanise Chris into top gear and claim the 3rd set. Zwickl levelled with some amazing winners including his trademark backhand rockets to level at 2-2. At 3-3 in the fifth set it was anyone's game. Surprisingly from this stage in the match it was the younger Doran who pulled away into a winning 7-3 lead at which Zwickl called his time out. Daniel won the next point but from there on in it was all Doran, the yellow submarine with both fore and aft torpedoes going full on and aimed straight at the target to sink the Hungarian battleship 11-4 in that last thrilling and historic set. Chris claimed the biggest singles win of his career and pocketed his well deserved winner's cheque for £300.

Doran seeded at four for the event had to be at his very best in his semi final with 2nd seeded Gavin Rumgay and once again the yellow shirted Doran came through this close encounter. Probably the turning point in this match was at one set all and with Rumgay leading 10-7 somehow Chris forced errors from the Scotsman to level at 10-10 and went on to take that all important set 13-11 to come through a very close fourth set. Chris had earlier beaten a below par Damien Nicholls in the quarter final 3-0, following another class display over his 2nd round opponent Craig Hardie.

Daniel Zwickl had eased his way to the final with straight sets results over Wayne Mason, Matthew Dodds, Chris Main and semi finalist Matt Ware. Mike Marsden fell at the quarter final hurdle by an on-song Ware, whilst the other losing semi finalist Gavin Rumgay proved just too canny and clever for yesterday's hero Jakov Krivic. In the second round Zwickl was responsible for the exit of the unexpected last eight competitor Sam Perry (who had been brilliant in beating Shaun Marples and Chris Clinton). In what proved to be a magnificent Men's Open tournament, the day belonged to one man, the towering inferno of 6" 6' tall Northamptonshire player- Chris Doran.



The long awaited return of England Senior International Kelly Sibley at a Grand Prix Women's Open event was most pleasing as it's rare to see the top players competing in England owing to their hectic playing and training schedule. After having a battle on her hands right from the off in her first group match with Jasmine Yang her supreme class shone through in easing through the knock out rounds to reach the final. Kelly proved too strong for last eight opponent Gillian Edwards, but had to get into top gear to thwart the challenge of semi finalist Lauren Spink (who had just beaten Hang Li) with a 3-1 sets score to await her final opponent.

The major surprise in the group stage was Lindsey Reynolds losing a group match to Hang Li, but she progressed through as group runner up to meet Jasmine Lang in the preliminary round. Jasmine is a tough competitor and played extremely well to beat Lindsey in five close sets and then met 2nd seed Emma Vickers at the first round stage. Emma soon found herself 1-2 down in sets and was made to work very hard to level at 2-2. She went on to get the expected result over Jasmine to reach the semi final. There she faced Bai Xue who had won both Bands 2&3 yesterday, but the Chinese young lady had little resistance to the power packed attacking skills of Vickers going down in straight sets. So, as per seeding the final was between Emma and Kelly. The first set of the staged final was full of exciting and lightning exchanges on both wings by these two very accomplished International stars with that all important set going to Kelly 16-14. From that point on in the final Kelly started to use a variation of spin and speed in the long rallies that ensued to eventually win the match by taking the next two sets. Kelly was happy to accept the winner's cheque for £175 and run out a fairly comfortable Blackpool Women's Open Champion.

With Chris Doran still on cloud nine after his unbeaten performances in the earlier Men's Open he had to come back down to earth to compete in the Under 21 Men's event held in the afternoon. Seeded at one he was soon back into winning ways at the expense of Eddie Famberly and semi finalist Matthew Dodds to await his last opponent. With Damien Nicholls (S2) winning his group but then surprisingly losing out in the first round to an in form Richard Main and with Matt Ware (S3) also easing past Anthony Constantinou and Adam Fox, in the lower half of the draw, Doran's final opponent would be the winner of the semi final between Richard Main and Matt Ware. Although the Scottish player Richard Main did provide some resistance it was Ware who reached the final with a 3-1 sets semi final win. Doran soon asserted in the first set of the final with Ware 11-7, but the Hampshire player showed spirit to take the initiative with total power and control to outgun his fellow England International team mate in a decisive 3-1 sets victory.

The Under 21 Women's tournament was played as a five player round robin between Emma Vickers, Caroline Hallows, Bai Xue, Emily Ross and Isobel Ashley. Warm favourite Vickers lost her very first match to Isobel Ashley who played well above expectations to enjoy a five set win. With the following match results going as per seeding it was really down to the duel between Caroline Hallows and Emma Vickers to decide the title winner. Caroline took the first set over her best friend 11-9, but then Emma got back into her overdrive gear to win the next three sets, and with the group then tied with them both winning 4 matches each it was Emma who was awarded the trophy as she had beaten Caroline.

Mike Marsden was on fire and erupting, spreading volcanic ash to blind all his opponents not even allowing them to take off and reach full flight in the Restricted Singles event. His victims were Billy Pegg, Wayne Mason and Aiden Ranftler in his group, then in the knockout rounds came through against Paul Worallo, semi finalist Ernest Mpundu and finalist Jonathan Crawford. Wayne Mason and Chris Main were departed from the event by Crawford, but he got just the one set in the final with Marsden.

Tomasz Rzeszotko ran out a fairly comfortable winner of the Veteran's event beating Tony Wilson in the final. Losing semi finalists Julien Gittens and Chris Clinton made their mark on an entertaining competition.



The player of the tournament award and a £50 Tees Sport voucher was presented to Bai Xue for her brilliant performances throughout the two day's play.

Referee Dave Cochrane with his assistant Brian Jackson and supported by the boys in blue did a magnificent job in keeping the tournament running smoothly and ahead of schedule. We look forward to seeing you at the next Grand Prix event which will be held at Wolverhampton over the weekend of Saturday 15th and Sunday the 16th of May.

Full Results from Day 2 at Blackpool.

Men's Open

Chris Doran (Np) beat Daniel Zwickl (Hun)

6-11, 11-9, 11-6, 6-11, 11-4.

Women's Open.

Kelly Sibley (Wa) beat Emma Vickers (Dy)

16-14, 11-6, 11-6.

Under 21 Men's.

Matt Ware (Ha) beat Chris Doran (Np)

7-11, 11-2, 11-6, 11-6.

Under 21 Women.

Round Robin winner Emma Vickers (Dy) 2nd Caroline Hallows (Ch)

Restricted Singles.

Mike Marsden (Du) beat Jonathan Crawford (Cu)

11-5, 8-11, 11-4, 11-6.

Veteran Singles.

Thomasz Rzeszotko (WAL) beat Tony Wilson (Cv)

5-11, 11-6, 13-11, 15-13.

Images:

1. Dániel Zwickl (HUN) (pictured left with Chris Doran (Np) winner of the Men's Open.

2. Kelly Sibley (Wa) Winner of Women's Open pictured left – with Emma Vickers (Dy) runner up.

3. Bai Xue (La) recipient of the Tees Sport player of the weekend award.

By Geoff Ware

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