

Ma Long demolishes Xu Xin in semi-final

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Ma Long blew his Chinese teammate Xu Xin out of the Echo Arena with an exhibition of wonderfully aggressive table tennis in a thoroughly one-sided affair in the all-Asian semi-final.

Vociferous throughout, Ma Long was the deserved winner and evidently desperate to claim Zhang Jike's Liebherr Men's World Cup crown from him, and also return to the world number 1 spot.

In the head-to-head record it was the 23-year-old Ma Long who led proceedings 6-4, however Xu Xin had won their most recent encounter at the 2012 China Open in Shanghai.

With both attempting to win their first Men's World Cup title, everything was to play for.

Ma Long started quickly in the first game, winning all of the long rallies and at every opportunity unleashing his impressive forehands – often to Xu Xin's backhand side which is undoubtedly the world no. 3's weakness.

With Xu Xin not looking confident, Ma Long made the most of the early opportunity to claim the opening game comfortably 11-4.

A vociferous and passionate Ma Long met every point in game two with a call and a fist pump as he quickly opened up a 6-0 lead against a dejected looking Xu Xin.

When the world number 2 secured the second game with another 11-4 Xu Xin was left to muse in his corner at the interval, seemingly with no response to Ma Long's consistent and powerful forehand attacks.

As the one-way traffic continued Ma Long won an incredible point for a 6-3 lead in game three, virtually falling to the floor, wide on the backhand side he released a powerful forehand across the table to no reply from Xu Xin.

Toward the end of the third game, with Xu Xin frequently questioning himself, it was Ma Long who won an exhibition smash versus deep defense point on his way to a third successive 11-4 game.

With one foot already in the final door it looked like there was no stopping the former world number 1.

Despite leading 8-7 in the fourth game Xu Xin was unable to hold back the tide of Ma Long's powerful forehands and agile footwork as the 23-year-old completed a comprehensive straight games victory with an 11-8 fourth end.

The Chinese star will now be favourite for the title after his last three outstanding displays at the Echo Arena with his dominant performances over the weekend making him favourite against the European Timo Boll.

Ma Long (CHN) bt Xu Xin (CHN) 4-0 (11-4, 11-4, 11-4, 11-8)

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