

Awesome Ma Long is World Cup Champion

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Chinese superstar Ma Long won his maiden Liebherr Men's World Cup title at the Echo Arena with a fantastic performance against German number 1 Timo Boll.

Ma Long came into the match in imperious form from his double 4-0 quarter and semi-final wins over Michael Maze (DEN) and teammate Xu Xin (CHN) respectively.

In fact, after his shock 4-0 defeat to Chuang Chih-Yuan (TPE) in the group stages, the aggressive Chinese player had been unstoppable as he showed the form that took him to the ITTF Pro Tour Grand Finals title last year in London.

Boll meanwhile was unbeaten in the tournament. After wins over Jiang Tianyi (HKG) and Adrien Mattenet (FRA) in the group stages, he waltzed past expert defender Joo Se Hyuk (KOR) 4-0 before defeating three-time World Cup Champion Vladimir Samsonov (BLR) 4-2.

The match itself was full of quality from the outset with first Boll, then Ma Long, striking perfectly executed forehand winners across the table to secure early points in the first game.

When Ma Long blitzed a scorching forehand behind Boll's back it opened up a 7-4 lead that he would build upon faultlessly until the end of an 11-4 first game that left Boll wondering how he could pass the world no. 2.

A pumped-up Ma Long extended an early lead in the second game to 5-1. With the Chinese star ever more vociferous and the German forced ever quieter, the pattern of the play seemed ominous for the five-times European Champion.

German coach Jorg Roskopf watched on from the sidelines in pained expression as Boll was left to pick up the pieces on the court with an on-fire Ma Long showing no remorse to claim the second game 11-3.



Whatever the Germans spoke about in the break, it worked as a forceful Boll battled his way into a 6-3 lead in the third game. He maintained his lead for the majority of the game until Ma Long levelled at 8-8.

Asserting his authority once more, the 23-year-old then won five successive points from 6-8 down to 11-8 to create a 3-0 lead. He could start to feel the trophy in his hands.

The 31-year-old European wasn't about to let him win easily though and a magnificent point for 4-4 drew the two-time former Champion level after he executed a delightful backhand down the line past Ma Long.

However, the dominant right-hander secured his deserved title with more excellent footwork and attacking play as he swept aside his illustrious opponent with one final powerful swipe of his blade to Boll's body.

Just like in London in 2011, Ma Long is Champion again in England – soon becoming his new favourite country as he takes Zhang Jike's crown and closes in on becoming the world number 1 once more.

Ma Long (CHN) bt Timo Boll (GER) 4-0 (11-4, 11-3, 11-8, 11-9)

More information on the tournament and reports from all the quarter and semi-finals can be found on our World Cup site at etta.co.uk/mensworldcup/

By Russell Moore

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