

Record-breaking Drinkhall wins Spanish Open

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Paul Drinkhall on his way to winning the Spanish Open title

An incredible display from four-time English Champion Paul Drinkhall saw the 24-year-old become the first Englishman to win an ITTF World Tour Open since Carl Prean in 1996.

The man from Loftus, Cleveland was in sublime form throughout the GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Spanish Open in Almeria as he beat Dimitrij Prokopcov (CZE, wr 82), Yuto Muramatsu (JPN, 88) and Matasaka Morizono (JPN, 80) to claim a historic achievement for an English player.

Despite being only the 23rd seed for the tournament, the English no. 2 stormed through the field to give English table tennis a major boost just months before the Commonwealth Games arrive in Glasgow later this year.

The new champion said: "I'm feeling tired but feeling amazing, it's a great achievement especially after the first match being a bit shaky. I could have gone out, but fought through it and got stronger as the tournament went on.

"It's definitely up there with anything I've achieved in my career – my first senior title. Hopefully there will be more to come. It's a big year, with going for promotion to the top level in the World Team Championships and then the Commonwealth Games."

Despite it being his first experience of a major final, Paul says he was able to keep his emotions under control so the situation was not too nerve-wracking.



Paul Drinkhall savours his success in Almeria

"It was and it wasn't," he said. "I started to focus on each point and just to win that and I didn't really think too much about what was happening or what the score was.

"Obviously it does come in to your head when you get to 10, but I tried to get it out of my head straight away and focus on the next point.

"This can give me a confidence boost towards the other tournaments and hopefully if we're in the medal matches or promotion matches I can use this experience to help."

Coach Nicky Jarvis said the achievement was made even greater by Paul having come back from an operation on his hip last summer.

He added: "He came back from the operation with a very strong mind. His preparation before every match was what it should be for a champion. He said when he beat the Czech player in the quarter-final it was the best table tennis he'd played in his life.

"He was focused and very professional, the epitome of a top sportsman."

And that even extended to Paul's post-tournament celebrations as he avoided alcohol in favour of water – though he did allow himself some ice cream!

[Click here to view more pictures of English players in action in Almeria](#)

GAC Group 2014 ITTF World Tour Spanish Open, Almeria (April 2-6, 2014)

Men's Singles:

Qualifying groups:

Group 23:

Darius Knight bt Miguel Chamorro (ESP, 697) 4-0 (11-3, 11-7, 11-6, 11-5)

Darius Knight bt Mikkel Hindersson (DEN, 258) 4-2 (11-2, 7-11, 11-9, 11-9, 8-11, 11-7)

Last 64:

Wu Chih-Chi (TPE, 139) bt Darius Knight 4-2 (11-6, 10-12, 11-4, 11-3, 10-12, 11-8)

Paul Drinkhall bt Can Akkuzu (FRA, 241) 4-3 (11-9, 3-11, 11-5, 6-11, 9-11, 11-9, 11-6)

Last 32:

Paul Drinkhall bt Mattias Karlsson (SWE, 183) 4-1 (11-7, 10-12, 11-2, 11-8, 11-8)

Last 16:

Paul Drinkhall bt Niagol Stoyanov (ITA, 160) 4-2 (14-12, 7-11, 12-10, 11-8, 7-11, 11-3)

Quarter-Final:

Paul Drinkhall bt Dimitrij Prokopcov (CZE, 82) 4-0 (11-2, 11-3, 11-2, 12-10)

Semi-Final:

Paul Drinkhall bt Yuto Muramatsu (JPN, 88) 4-1 (11-9, 11-6, 6-11, 13-11, 11-6)

Final:

Paul Drinkhall bt Masataka Morizono (JPN, 80) 4-2 (11-7, 11-9, 6-11, 11-5, 6-11, 11-8)

Women's Singles:

Qualifying Groups:

Group 4:

Joanna Drinkhall bt Paula Bueno (ESP, 316) 4-0 (11-5, 11-7, 11-9, 13-11)

Joanna Drinkhall bt Marija Galonja (SRB, 252) 4-0 (11-4, 12-10, 11-8, 11-9)

Group 7:

Yulia Prokhorova (RUS, 124) bt Hannah Hicks 4-0 (11-2, 12-10, 11-2, 11-2)

Offiong Edem (NGR, 262) bt Hannah Hicks 4-3 (14-12, 7-11, 7-11, 11-5, 12-10, 6-11, 11-5)

Group 9:

Kelly Sibley bt Sannamari Bolenius (SWE, 341) 4-2 (11-6, 12-10, 3-11, 9-11, 11-5, 11-8)

Lin Chia-Chih (TPE, 215) bt Kelly Sibley 4-3 (8-11, 11-7, 7-11, 11-7, 11-7, 6-11, 11-6)

Last 64:

Joanna Drinkhall bt Marina Matsuzawa (JPN, 68) 4-2 (3-11, 13-11, 16-14, 9-11, 11-8, 11-9)

Yuka Ishigaki (JPN, 38) bt Kelly Sibley 4-1 (11-5, 12-10, 7-11, 11-8, 11-4)

Last 32:

Liu Jia (AUT, 10) bt Joanna Drinkhall 4-0 (14-12, 11-7, 11-5, 11-5)

Men's Doubles:

Pre-rounds:

Paul Drinkhall/Darius Knight bt Alejandro Calvo/Carlos Franco (ESP) 3-0 (11-9, 13-11, 11-5)

Paul Drinkhall/Darius Knight bt Daniel Kosiba/Adam Pattantyus (HUN) 3-0 (11-7, 11-9, 11-7)

Last 16:

Li Ahmet/Bora Vang (TUR) bt Paul Drinkhall/Darius Knight 3-2 (8-11, 12-10, 11-2, 9-11, 12-10)

Women's Doubles:

Pre-rounds:

Joanna Drinkhall/Kelly Sibley bt Marija Galonja (SRB)/Iulia Necula (ROU) 3-2 (9-11, 11-8, 7-11, 11-7, 11-7)

Melek Hu/Sanem Sahin (TUR) bt Joanna Drinkhall/Kelly Sibley 3-2 (11-8, 11-7, 7-11, 9-11, 11-7)

by Russell Moore (April 6, 2014)

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