



Kawai, Baker and Cathcart the big winners of day one at Liverpool

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Ryota Kawai and Rachel Baker were the big winners on the opening day of the new Grand Prix season as they picked up both Band 1 and Band 2 titles.

The duo performed admirably throughout the duration of the hours Saturday had to offer, with play eventually coming to an end after 12 gruelling hours of play, in which time Owen Cathcart also picked up two titles.

MEN'S BAND 1

Ryota Kawai shocked the rest of the field as he ran rampant to claim the big male title of the day.

Quietly going about his business throughout the day, he truly gained the attention of the hall with a 3-2 victory over Adam Nutland in an excellent encounter between two of the competition's strongest players.

He battled to victory over Gavin Maguire 3-1 to earn his place in the final, where his opponent would be Sean Doherty. Doherty had defeated Ashley Robinson and Calum Main amongst others to make the showpiece event of the day.

However, Kawai rarely looked threatened in the final, surging to a three straight victory with his incredible power and accuracy to wrap up a memorable day for the man representing London Academy.



WOMEN'S BAND 1

Having come off the court after the final, Rachel Baker said "I'm shaking, I'm not used to getting this far."

Yet, it was the second time she'd reached a final in the day, and the second time she'd posed for photos as the winner.

After winning the Band 2 trophy in the morning, Baker upped her game to defeat Natalie Slater in the final, winning by a 3-1 margin late into the evening.

After finishing runner up in her group following defeat to Megan Phillip, who suffered a shock defeat to Kate Cheer in the same group. Baker defeated Gosia Modu on her way to the final, where she encountered Slater. Slater had picked up a narrow victory over Zoe Cheesman and then secured a great win over Phillips to reach the final two.

But Slater couldn't stop Baker in the final, who was at her explosive best on both flanks to out-power Slater and take the crown.

MEN'S BAND 2

Unseeded Ryota Kawai claimed his first of two band triumphs as he got his season up and running with victory in Band 2.

His straight sets victory over Will Bayley was the last of a number of convincing displays on his way to victory, having previously defeated Ryan Farrell, Patrick Green and Jannik Larsen 3-0.

Meanwhile, Paralympian Bayley put in a typically entertaining display, drawing in the crowds for his incredible five game victory over Abhijay Mishra before defeating Michael Fraser more comfortably, 3-0. He then squared off against 2012 Paralympic hero Dave Wetherill, who he battled his way through by three games to one.

But Bayley had no answers to Kawai, who stormed to another 3-0 win, 11-7, 11-6, 11-3.

WOMEN'S BAND 2

Rachel Baker produced a stunning fightback to win the opening Women's Band 2 of the season.

2-0 down to Zoe Cheesman, Baker forced her way back into the match with a tirade of outstanding attacks that saw her take the match. The comeback was more incredible given that Cheesman, the top seed, had defeated her 3-0 in the group stages.

Baker also came from behind to defeat Cherith Graham in the semi-final, eventually winning 3-1, whilst Cheesman beat youngster Kate Cheer in five.

With a two game lead, Cheesman looked in control, but Baker upped the ante and played some impressive stuff on both flanks, eventually earning a deserved Band crown.

MEN'S BAND 3

Joseph Clark won the final event of the day as he defeated Dave Wetherill well after 8 PM.

The Cleveland junior responded perfectly to his Band 4 final defeat with a late victory, a fine reward for his composure and concentration in challenging conditions.

A fine afternoon session for Wetherill saw him defeat the top two seeds Kin Fung Chan and Shandor Czuczor on his way to the final, whilst Clark picked up an impressive victory over Sam Do.

And it got all the sweeter for Clark when he managed to squeeze past Wetherill in five, coming from 2-1 behind to seal the crown.

WOMEN'S BAND 3

Jane Cohen exerted her revenge on Tulay Dundar by defeating her in the Band 3 final.

Having lost to Dundar in the Band 4 showpiece, Cohen picked up a hard-fought 3-1 victory over her rival of the day, giving her the perfect start to the season.

Cohen and Dundar both came through their groups on top, however Dundar was caught out by Welsh sensation Anna Hursey, the young, hugely promising prospect who on this evidence is destined for a great career in the sport. Dundar recovered, and beat Helen Rutherford to make the final, whilst Jane Cohen beat Soffi Jenkins 3-0.

With momentum and motivation on her side, Cohen crucially took the first game 19-17 before seeing out the match by claiming the next two games 11-7.

MEN'S BAND 4

Ireland's Alan Walsh caused a shock as he won the Band 4 title.

Walsh, unseeded and playing Band 5 in the afternoon stormed to the final before defeating promising youngster Joseph Clark 3-1.

After gaining qualification through Group 9, Walsh defeated Dariusz Gulbicki 3-0 before squeezing past Charlie Fitzgerald in five to make the semi-final. It was in the last four that he faced Keir Morton, churning out a victory from behind to set up a final clash with Clark, who defeated the Hull duo of Rob Owen and Reece Lo before crucially turning round a two game deficit to defeat Tommy Cooper in the semi-final.

However, Clark's battling qualities couldn't get him through Walsh, whose better consistency and direction away from the table saw him secure a 3-1 victory and the Band 4 title.

WOMEN'S BAND 4

Tulay Dundar was the victor in Women's Band 4 as she started her season in style.

The energetic Turk put in a gritty display to overcome her opponents, beating Yorkshire's Jane Cohen in the final 3-1.

Cohen levelled the final at 1-1 as she claimed the second set, but Dundar was not to be denied, taking the final two games 11-9 to take the title.

Beforehand, both had won their groups, whilst Dundar and Cohen then defeated Helen Rutherford and Christina Wright respectively.

It wasn't of course, the last time they met in the day...

MEN'S BAND 5

A stunning day for Owen Cathcart culminated in him reigning supreme in Band 5.

If he wasn't satisfied enough with winning Band 6, Cathcart went one better in Band 5 with a 3-2 final victory over Lee Dorning.

Wins over the likes of Band 5 and 6 semi-finalist Fraser Riley set the tone for Cathcart ahead of the final, whilst Dorning defeated fellow youngster Lewis Palmer amongst others.

The final was a demanding, explosive encounter. Dorning led the match 2-1 after the first three games went to deuce. However, a total reverse in the fourth saw Cathcart nil his opponent, before taking the match deuce in the fifth.

MEN'S BAND 6

Cathcart had started the day in style as he beat a competitive field to win Band 6.

Cathcart beat fellow Irishman Connor Gallagher 3-0 in a tight final after a string of incredibly tough matches throughout the knockout stages.

The opening game, which went in favour of Cathcart 14-12, set the tone for the match, however Cathcart found his way through each end, taking the match 3-0.

Men's Band 1

Ryota Kawai (MI) 3-0 Sean Doherty

11-6 11-4 11-4

Women's Band 1

Rachel Baker (LA) 3-1 Natalie Slater (ST)

11-8 9-11 11-9 11-4

Men's Band 2

Ryota Kawai (MI) 3-0 Will Bayley (YS)

11-7 11-6 11-3

Women's Band 2

Rachel Baker (LA) 3-2 Zoe Cheesman (Y)

6-11 8-11 11-6 11-9 11-5

Women's Band 3

Jane Cohen (Y) 3-0 Tulay Dundar (TUR)

19-17 11-7 11-7

Men's Band 4

Alan Walsh (IRL) 4-1 Joseph Clark (CV)

9-11 11-9 11-9 11-9

Women's Band 4

Tulay Dundar (Tur) 3-1 Jane Cohen (Y)

11-8 7-11 11-9 11-9

Men's Band 5

Owen Cathcart (IRL) 3-2 Lee Dorning (WA)

11-9 13-15 13-15 11-0 12-10

Men's Band 6

Owen Cathcart (IRL) 3-0 Connor Gallagher (IRL)

14-12 11-9 11-7

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