



Drinkhall knocked out in thriller

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Posted On: February 18, 2017

Paul Drinkhall took his India Open quarter-final with home hero Sharath Kamal Achanta to the wire before agonisingly missing out 13-11 in a deciding seventh game, saving one match point and missing one of his own.

Both players showed top form in a superb match in front of a fervent crowd, with the score in games – and within individual games – ebbing and flowing all the way.

Achanta made a fast start, 11-4 in the first, but Drinkhall bounced back to lead 2-1 courtesy of 12-10 and 11-9 scorelines, only for the Indian ace to level up, 11-6 in the fourth.

Both timeouts were taken in the fifth, Drinkhall's at 0-3 and Achanta's at 5-4, having lost three points in a row. Drinkhall came back from 6-9 to 9-9, but Achanta took the next two points to lead 3-2.

The sixth saw the definitive rollercoaster as Drinkhall trailed 0-3, led 4-3, trailed 4-6, led 8-6 and then saw Achanta tie it up at 8-8 and again at 9-9. Two English points set up the decider.

And it was more of the same as, from 5-5, Paul took three successive points, a feat then matched by his opponent. From 8-8, points were traded as first Achanta set up a match point at 10-9, saved by Drinkhall, and then the Englishman saw his chance at 11-10 snuffed out.

Achanta was the next to engineer a match point, and this time he took it with a blistering service return to set up a semi-final against 13-year-old Japanese 'wonderkid' Tomokazu Harimoto and send the crowd wild.

Highlights

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