

Emma involved in two great battles

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England no. nine lady Emma Vickers (Derbyshire) was the big English winner in the first round of Qualifying action in the Under 21 Ladies Singles Groups on the first day of the English Open. Globally ranked no. 820 Emma excelled and she beat World no. 582 – Divya Deshpande (India), fighting back strongly after losing the first game to win 8-11, 11-8, 11-9, 11-7. If that wasn't good enough Emma came close to pulling off an even more sensational victory in her second game. Displaying great resilience against the sophisticated back-spin defence of Alena Dubkova (Belarus) (ranked no. 282) Emma pushed her opponent all the way before succumbing 8-11, 11-4, 11-9, 9-11, 6-11.

There was little to separate Ashlesha Budas (India) ranked no. 745 and England no. 15 lady Emily Bates (Lincolnshire) (no. 714) on paper and their match was also closely fought before Ashlesha pulled clear in the fifth end to win 6-11, 11-6, 9-11, 11-7, 11-5.

Chloe Whyte (Cleveland) (no. 916) also faced Indian opposition and she gave a great account of herself against the higher ranked Niveditha Arumbakkam (no. 541) before succumbing in the fifth end 8-11, 11-5, 5-11, 11-7, 11-3.

South Yorkshire's very own Melissa Wright (nationally ranked no. 25) had to face World no. 402 Corine Brunet (France) but as hard as Melissa tried it was her opponent who held all the aces. Corine ran out a 11-5, 11-3, 11-6 winner.

Derbyshire's Lucy Davidson (763) faced an opponent she will be more familiar with – Guernsey's Alice Loveridge(696) – no stranger to UK events and on paper you would have expected this game to be a close one. All-action Alice, however had other ideas and ran out an excellent 11-8, 11-8, 11-7 winner.

Chris Doran (England no. 11) made his mark with a fine five game win over Johan Sondell (Sweden) 7-11, 11-9, 8-11, 11-9, 11-6, again no mean performance with Sondell globally ranked at no. 555 as compared to Chris (no. 844).

Liam Pitchford understandably went into his match against Craig Howieson (Scotland) in confident mood and he made no mistake against an opponent who has caused him difficulties in the past. Liam powered home 11-5, 7-11, 11-6, 11-6.

Image: Emma Vickers, courtesy tabletennisphotos.com

By Steve Kerns

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