



Impressive Drinkhall adds to Boll scalp

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Paul Drinkhall turned in some eye-catching performances to send Team Rossi top of the T2 APAC league in Malaysia.

England's No 1 won four and drew one of his five individual matches as Team Rossi beat all three rival teams. Among his victims were German legend Timo Boll and Japanese wonderkid Tomokazu Harimoto.

Drinkhall started with a 3-3 draw against Japan's Jun Mizutani, world ranked No 7, as Team Rossi defeated Team Persson 20-12.

He then went on an amazing run across two fixtures with four victories in a row, beginning with a career-first win over world No 5 Boll as Team Rossi beat Team Maze 19-11, sealing the final scoreline by sinking Aleksandr Shibaev of Russia, ranked No 41. Both Drinkhall's wins were by a 4-1 margin.

And in the final fixture, which saw Team Rossi overcome Team JJ 19-9, Drinkhall was again in sensational form, defeating world No 18 Harimoto 3-2 and world No 15 Chang Chih-Yuan of Chinese Taipei 4-1.

Paul Drinkhall (ENG) vs Timo Boll (GER)

With Liu failing to recover from ankle sprain, aggravated by playing the previous day, Team Maze was given the choice to name their opponent and they chose Drinkhall.

What looked like a wise decision when Boll took the first set soon was turned on its head as Drinkhall fought back magnificently to win the next three games in great style and he enjoyed the icing on the cake by winning the Kill Zone game as well.

Drinkhall said:

This is a very important result for me as I've never beaten Timo before.

Liu being injured gave me the chance and I think I played a great match.

I've always struggled in the past against Timo, today I just played my game, relaxed, almost had nothing to lose and just went for it.

Score 4-1 (4-11, 11-7, 11-10, 11-7, 5-3*)

Paul Drinkhall (ENG) vs Aleksandr Shibaev (RUS)

Drinkhall showed no sign of fatigue when he took on Shibaev and earned the unofficial player-of-the-match with another victory.

Against Shibaev, who had a handsome win over Chuang the previous day, Drinkhall kept things tight and continued returning the ball with accuracy while always searching for winners.

The Englishman went 3-0 up but Shibaev ran away with the fourth game, but Drinkhall bounced back to win the shortened fifth game to complete back-to-back 4-1 scorelines.

Drinkhall said:

I felt my head was really good, I was pumped up but my mind was clear and I could think about tactics and I executed well, keeping the ball short and not allowing him to attack and just being aggressive all round.

Score 4-1 (11-6, 11-4, 11-5, 1-11, 7-6)

Paul Drinkhall (ENG) vs Tomokazu Harimoto (JPN)

For a second day running, Drinkhall had to stand in for Liu.

Both Drinkhall and Harimoto are known to throw everything into a match and this one proved no different. The three complete sets that Drinkhall won all saw the Englishman reach 10-6 and going on to win, although Harimoto did manage to force sudden-death points in two of them.

Drinkhall's experience pulled him through the match against the Japanese teenager, who still needs to work out how to break an opponent's rhythm.

Drinkhall said:

We both play very aggressive games which is exciting to watch.

Obviously it's quite high risk and sometimes you make easy mistakes, and I'm quite happy to come out on the right side of the score today.

Score: 3-2 (11-10, 5-11, 11-7, 11-10, 3-4)

Paul Drinkhall (ENG) vs Chuang Chih-Yuan (TPE)

Drinkhall certainly showed his tenacity as he played and won two matches for a second straight day.

Against Chuang, Drinkhall had the luxury of knowing victory was already secured for this team, but that didn't stop him from going all out to secure as many sets as possible.

After splitting the first two sets, it was Chuang who blinked first as he squandered an 8-5 lead in the third game before losing by the narrowest of margins.

Enboldened, Drinkhall would boss the fourth game before Chuang botched his serve with the clock running down and missed the opportunity to tie the score and perhaps sneak the shortened fifth game.

Drinkhall, when asked if he's tired playing two matches a day on consecutive days, said:

Yeah I am but this is what we do, we play table tennis day-in-day-out for hours, so it's what I love doing and the crowd and the team helped me through it.

Score 4-1 (11-7, 5-11, 11-10, 11-5, 4-2)

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