

Parker and Sibley so close to victory

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There was glory in defeat for England's top lady pairing – Kelly Sibley and Jo Parker who exited the Ladies Doubles, but, only after seven games of fluctuating and at times action-packed table tennis. Paired against European Ladies Singles Champion – Wu Jiaduo (Germany) (World Ranked no. 26) and Kristin Silbereisen (80) this was the trickiest of tests and the English girls matched their opponents all the way before losing out in the seventh end. Kelly in particular attacked furiously and very successfully after Jo's chopped returns had occasionally caused Wu Jiaduo to return loosely. Kelly and Jo eventually missed out 4-11, 11-6, 11-9, 6-11, 3-11, 11-8, 3-11.

Paul Drinkhall, top seed in the Under 21 Boys Singles is safely through to the second round. After losing the first game Paul hit back strongly to beat Harmeet Desai (India) (World ranked no. 847) 6-11, 11-2, 11-9, 11-9, 11-7.

It is the end of the road for the gallant Hannah Hicks who met her match in the Under 21 Girls Singles against Oh Ah Reum (Korea) (World no. 252). Hannah's great adventure ended in a 9-11, 5-5, 5-11, 5-11 defeat.

It is the end of the road for Wales' Naomi Owen as well in the Under 21 Girls singles, but, it took seven games for Laura Matzke (Germany) (higher ranked globally at no. 223) to see her off. A determined Naomi led 3-1 and eventually missed out in the seventh end 11-7, 11-9, 7-11, 11-4, 6-11, 8-11, 5-11.

There was defeat for Kelly Sibley as well in the Under 21 Girls Singles. She faced a tricky opponent in Karin Sako (from Sao Paolo and of Japanese descent) who has slipped down the World rankings to no. 440 after a break from the game for study purposes, but, who is fast approaching her best form. Kelly battled bravely but missed out 10-12, 11-3, 6-11, 10-12, 13-11, 9-11.

You don't expect to see a Chinese pairing exit the Ladies Doubles at the first time of asking but that was the fate that of Lu Xiaodan (40) and Wen Jia (63). They had the misfortune to meet Hong Kong Superstars Jiang Huajun (10) and Tie Yana (13), the top seeds. The Hong Kong girls scarcely put a foot wrong as they triumphed 11-8, 11-8, 11-9, 11-7.

Image: Kelly Sibley/Joanna Parker, courtesy tabletennisphotos.com

By Steve Kerns

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