

# Darius and Paul win last gasp thriller

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Paul Drinkhall and Darius Knight advanced to the Quarter-Finals of the Mens Doubles with a superb last-gasp win over Gionis Panagiosis (ranked no. 42) and Konstantinos Papageorgiou (160) (Greece) a pairing with vastly superior Singles ratings to the English National Champions. The match fluctuated one way and then the other before Paul and Darius finally clinched victory 6-11, 11-8, 7-11, 11-2, 11-9, 6-11, 11-9. Their reward for this excellent success? They face the top seeds – the all-action pairing of Jun Mizutani and Seiya Kishikawa (Japan), current leaders of the Mens Doubles in the ITTF Pro-tour. Mizutani, now ranked no. 11 globally is arguably the most improved player in World table tennis.

Liam Pitchford's adventure into the elite World of Pro Tour table tennis is over. He battled bravely but missed out 9-11, 4-11, 6-11, 11-3, 9-11 against hard-hitting Korean player Juy Young Sik (Korea), World ranked no. 262) in the Under 21 Boys Singles.

Jo Parker also exited proceedings; she also faced Korean opposition, Hyun Jung Moon (no. 76) and Jo missed out 5-11, 6-11, 8-11, 6-11 in the Under 21 Girls Singles.

"Old-friend" Elena Timina (who played for Grove) in the middle 1990s clearly hasn't lost any of her defensive skills. Ranked no. 111 globally she came out on top in a furious battle thwarting the flowing attack of Daniela Dodean (Romania) 4-11, 11-6, 11-9, 14-12, 11-8 in the Ladies Singles.

An even bigger shock followed with the hard-hitting Renata Stribikova (Cze) ranked no. 73 scoring a sensational victory over Japan's top-ranked player – World no. 22 Sayaka Hirano, who is fifth-rated in the ITTF Pro-Tour standings. Renata won a thriller 13-11, 10-12, 11-6, 11-6, 6-11, 11-9, the biggest shock of the morning.

There was a first glimpse for many people of the Ladies top seed, World no. four Liu Shiwen (China), the newly crowned Ladies World Cup Champion. She looked majestic as she placed her wrong-footing backhands to every inch of the table against Simone Haan (Luxembourg). The top seed coasted through 11-2, 11-6, 11-3, 11-3.

Image: Darius Knight/Paul Drinkhall, courtesy tabletennisphotos.com

By Steve Kerns

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