

Tuesday 8th March 2022

Individual Handicap Semi Final Results

Scott Horobin (5) (Woolston 'A') 2-0 Joe Gibbons (41) (Alford 'A')

Jeff Robinson (-15) (GESM 'A') 2-1 Jason Brereton (12) (St Benedicts)

Last night saw the first semi-finals of the 2021/22 season take place at Kings Club which provided two close matches with every frame played on the evening going down to the final pink or black.

Scott Horobin (5) (Woolston 'A') 2-0 Joe Gibbons (41) (Alford 'A')

Frame 1

Scott began the match the better of the two players as he worked on clawing back the handicap difference between the two players in the opening frame. Perhaps a little nervous with the huge occasion, Joe attempted a safety shot in the early exchanges but hit the pack far too thick resulting in the reds splitting open which at first glance looked like it could be a massive error but the split didn't create as many chances as Scott would have hoped with reds covering each other into multiple pockets and he was only able to score a further 16 points to leave himself 9 points behind with around half of the reds remaining.

Joe then found his feet in the frame and started to pick off a few reds himself with some handy colours to pull slightly further away in the frame but Scott responded on the last couple of reds and as they approached the colours the difference between the players was just 6 points in favour of Joe.

Scott took the yellow before Joe potted the green and brown but he left the blue in a potable position with his attempt to play safe with the remaining colours all in the open. Requiring all three, Scott took his chance and cleared the remaining colours nicely to take the first frame.

Frame 2

Scott once again managed to get in early in frame two and was disappointed not to make a higher break than 17 when he ran out of position leaving the cue ball on the side cushion resulting in him missing the black to keep the break going.

Credit to Joe, who at 1-0 down and with the pressure of his opponent catching in this frame started to pull out some fabulous pots through the mid part of the frame taking some high value colours in the process.

The frame got a little scrappy towards the last few reds with opportunities at a premium with both players providing limited chances to each other. A foul by Scott gave Joe a free ball but he couldn't capitalise on the chance provided missing the nominated brown which would have given him a good chance on pink or black had it gone in.

Scott took the last couple of reds to take the lead in the frame by 4 points as they got onto the colours. With just blue, pink and black remaining Scott led by 7 points but Joe had a chance to take the colours to win the frame. He successfully potted the blue and left himself a thin cut on the pink into the top left pocket. The pink dropped but the cue ball made its way to the middle pocket as echoes of John Virgo's famous quote 'Where's the cue ball going?' filled the room.

This left Scott with ball in hand needing just the pink to win and he potted it at first attempt to take the match 2-0 and move into the final.

Jeff Robinson (-15) (GESM 'A') 2-1 Jason Brereton (12) (St Benedicts)

(Apologies if the report for this match is missing a couple of key moments but I was refereeing the other semi-final at the time so couldn't see every shot)

Frame 1

Across the room the opening frame saw a strong start from Jason who looked to be in good touch taking some valuable reds and blues early on to create a strong lead. Jeff seemed to be struggling to get going in the match and by the mid-point in frame two Jason led by just over 40 points playing some consistent snooker and limiting Jeff's chances.

Jeff finally managed to get a foot hold in the frame and started to reduce the deficit with some important visits which meant as they began on the colours, he still had a chance to win the frame.

Jason attempted the brown with the rest knowing that if he had potted it, it would have left Jeff needing a snooker but he couldn't quite take the difficult chance. Trailing by 17 points on the brown Jeff produced a quality clearance which included a fabulous shot to get from Pink to Black and then an equally as good black down the top rail which had a lot of pressure on it to steal the first frame which in reflection was one Jason probably should have won.

Frame 2

In contrast to the first frame it was Jeff who got off to the better start in frame two and he was soon on the coattails of Jason thanks to some solid scoring early in the frame.

It would have been easy for Jason to feel the pressure knowing he probably should have been 1-0 ahead and the fact that Jeff had almost reduced the handicap at the start of this frame but he showed great character to match Jeff for the remainder of the frame as it ebbed and flowed all the way down to the last couple of reds.

Jeff then looked like he had taken his opportunity to take the frame with a break of 24 at just the right time taking the last red, black, yellow and green before potting an excellent the brown with the rest and the following blue which meant Jason required two snookers with just pink and black remaining. But there a twist in the tale as Jason managed to get both snookers in consecutive visits to the table as Jeff was unable to get out of them.

Jason then potted the pink and the black off its spot which wasn't as easy as it sounds from quite an acute angle to this time snatch the frame from Jeff and take us to a deciding frame which on the run of play was what the match deserved.

If there was ever two frames that probably should have won by the other player, then those in attendance will agree that the two frames above were a perfect example of this.

Frame 3

In similar fashion to frame 2, Jeff managed to bridge the gap in the scores relatively early in the frame but again Jason responded well when he needed to keep the scores tight.

This frame on the whole seemed scrappier than the previous two with neither player managing to take full advantage of their chances and positional play not quite leaving either player good chances on colours after reds both through a bit of bad luck and shots they would have known they could have done better with.

The middle pocket then seemed to be a nemesis for Jason as he missed a free ball selecting the brown into the middle bag which you would have expected him to pot with a number of colours around in the open between bulk line and blue spot and then he unlucky to go in off a few shots later after getting out of a snooker but the white trickled into the same middle pocket he had missed the free ball into

As the frame got into its latter stages both players got a little fortunate with safety shots and we went through a spell on the last couple of reds and early colours where neither was able to convert any long pots they attempted.

The frame and match in the end went the way of Jeff who in taking the pink secured the match 2-1 in what was a really good contested for those watching and one that could have gone either way.

Summary

Commiserations to Joe and Jason who whilst will understandably be disappointed should be proud in making the semi-finals. Joe has an excellent record in the league this season and will be hoping to go one further in the team handicap semi-final with his team Alford 'A'. As for Jason this is his first season in the Warrington Snooker League and to get this far is a great achievement, he will be looking to go even better in years to come.

Congratulations to both Scott and Jeff. They should provide an excellent final in a best of 5 match which is scheduled for Monday 11th April (Venue TBC). Both will be wanting to win for different reasons. As mentioned in a post last week, Scott's Dad won this competition in 1997/98 and Scott would love to emulate him this season following his passing earlier this year. At the age of 64, Jeff believes he may be the eldest player to compete in a Warrington Snooker League individual final (will have to check this to be sure) and will hoping to go one further and take the title.

It's a final not to be missed either way.

Many thanks

Pat Wisedale