



Daily News

Issue #5, Fri 19th Dec

Day FIVE: Darwish & Gaultier in the final

He's been on great form all week, and tonight was no exception as Karim Darwish followed up last night's sensational victory over Amr Shabana with a hard-fought win over Nick Matthew to reach the final of the richest squash event ever.

The second semi saw second seed Gregory Gaultier save game balls in the first two games against David Palmer before completing a straight-games win to take him into his second Saudi International final.

For both finalists it will be their sixth final of the season, but this time there's a cheque for \$37,400 awaiting the winner ...

,Semi-Finals:

Final at 20.00 tonight

- [7] Karim Darwish (Egy) bt [8] Nick Matthew (Eng)
14/12, 11/3, 11/13, 11/6 (71m)
- [2] Gregory Gaultier (Fra) bt [5] David Palmer (Aus)
13/11, 15/13, 11/7 (56m)



"The first game was crucial, I had a couple of chances but couldn't take them, then I slowed up in the second when I had a drop in energy and he caught me out with drops and when I started moving forward he threw in a few good flicks.



"It's a dream come true this week, getting to number one and getting to the final of a \$250k event.

"When he made two mistakes at the end of the third to give me that game I remember thinking that they were the first unforced errors he'd made, he was playing that well.

"I've played well all week but that was a really tough match, Nick played well and the support of the crowd was great.

"At 5-all in the fourth I felt I was in with a sniff of a chance, I could feel the momentum changing, but then I lost three quick points and it was back with him.

"I just need to focus and be ready for the final ...".

"Karim fully deserved it today, but I played pretty well. If he'd been just a touch off I could easily have won that.."

Karim Darwish



Nick Matthew



"I was giving him a few years start tonight, and I was just a fraction behind his pace. I had game balls in the first two and couldn't take them and it's always going to be tough from 2/0 down.



"He's a tough man, big and strong and he has so much experience and gives you no cheap points. You have to fight for each rally and that's what I did tonight.

"It was nice to hear the crowd chanting my name tonight - I've been here a few times and done some coaching clinics here, I really appreciate all the support

"I pushed a lot when I was down in the first two, I had to play my best squash at game ball down and luckily I was really fast and found my shots at the right time.

"I gave it my best shot and that's how it goes, it just wasn't my night."

"I know the crowd will support Karim tomorrow, but I'm here to win. I'll go on and focus on my game and my squash, it won't bother me. I beat him 3/0 in the Macau final a couple of weeks ago, but he's playing much better this week so it should be a good match"

David Palmer



Gregory Gaultier





Daily News

Issue #4, Thu 18th Dec

- [8] **Nick Matthew** (Eng) bt [4] Ramy Ashour (Egy)
11/9, 9/11, 11/3, 11/6 (56m)
- [7] **Karim Darwish** (Egy) bt [1] Amr Shabana (Egy)
6/11, 11/9, 11/5, 11/6 (50m)
- [2] **Gregory Gaultier** (Fra) bt [6] Thierry Lincou (Fra)
11/9, 11/7, 11/5 (50m)
- [5] **David Palmer** (Aus) bt [3] James Willstrop (Eng)
12/10, 11/8, 4/11, 12/10 (50m)

Day FOUR: Upsets galore in Saudi Quarters

The top eight seeds made the quarters, but from the first match tonight that's where the predictability stopped as three of the matches saw the lower-seeded player progress to the semi-finals.



First up, Nick Matthew beat world champion Ramy Ashour, and then Karim Darwish not only dethroned Amr Shabana as Saudi International champion, but he almost certainly took his world number one ranking too ...



Gregory Gaultier was in no mood for an upset though, as he beat compatriot Thierry Lincou in straight games.

The last match saw James Willstrop take on David Palmer - the average time of their last five encounters was 92 minutes, but on a cold night in Al Khobar it was Palmer who won a match that, in his own words, turned into a shootout with scrambling rallies and dropshots galore ...

Today's Matches, Semi-Finals, from 18.00:

- [7] Karim Darwish (Egy) v [8] Nick Matthew (Eng)
- [2] Gregory Gaultier (Fra) v [5] David Palmer (Aus)



"It was a tough match, Thierry played well in the first, but I started to get used to it, got warmer and warmer and started to find my shots.



"I'm more relieved than anything else, it was tough conditions on there, and that's not the best way to play but you just have to do what you need to do.

"Once I'd won the first it was easier, I was finding a good length and feeling confident."

Gregory Gaultier

"He usually has the shots and I have to try to get the edge by wearing him down over four or five games, but on there it's so hard to get the ball going it just came down to a shootout. Whoever went short first probably had an 80% chance of winning the rally and to beat a shot player like James on that type of court is a big bonus."

David Palmer



"That's my best win since the layoff, for sure, I'm very pleased with that.

"I had to stay focused and concentrate on every shot, every rally, one bad shot or if you relax 1% he can hit a winner.

"I'll enjoy it for an hour, then refocus for tomorrow, another big match, against an Egyptian again, and with another big crowd supporting them ..."

Nick Matthew

"It's always hard to play Shabana, he's got so much confidence, so many shots. Everything went for him in the first, but I came better in the second and played really well from then on.

"It's a dream come true - not only to beat Shabana but I worked out the rankings before the match and I knew that making the semis if he didn't was enough to put me at world number one in January.

Karim Darwish





Daily News

Issue #3, Wed 17th Dec



Today's Matches, Quarter-Finals, from 18.00:

- [4] Ramy Ashour (Egy) v [8] Nick Matthew (Eng)
- [1] Amr Shabana (Egy) v [7] Karim Darwish (Egy)
- [2] Gregory Gaultier (Fra) v [6] Thierry Lincou (Fra)
- [3] James Willstrop (Eng) v [5] David Palmer (Aus)

"I was a bit slow to start, a little 'rabbit in the headlights', but from mid-game I put some good spurts in, took the first and got a good lead in the second and there was no looking back after that."

James Willstrop



"I was disappointed not to win it in four, having those match balls, but I'm happy with the win and looking forward to another big match with James tomorrow ..."

David Palmer



"We played at a high pace for the whole match and he maintained the pace for the whole match, I was surprised he didn't break."

Gregory Gaultier



"I went two up, relaxed a bit, but he really went for it in the third, going for his shots. I was behind and had to try to get him moving again and be more patient."

Thierry Lincou

Yesterday's Results: Round Two, Bottom Half:

- [3] James Willstrop (Eng) bt Daryl Selby (Eng)
11/9, 11/6, 11/7 (39m)
- [5] David Palmer (Aus) bt [9] Wael El Hindi (Egy)
11/6, 11/7, 3/11, 12/14, 11/2 (80m)
- [2] Gregory Gaultier (Fra) bt Cameron Pilley (Aus)
11/4, 5/11, 11/7, 11/5 (52m)
- [6] Thierry Lincou (Fra) bt [13] Lee Beachill (Eng)
11/8, 11/3, 11/9 (25m)

Day THREE, Tue 16th Dec: Round Two, Part Two

After triple Egyptian success last night, it was the turn of England and France to claim two quarter-final places.

James Willstrop won a comfortable enough victory against compatriot Daryl Selby to join Nick Matthew in the last eight. He will face **David Palmer**, after the Australian won a typically rumbustious battle with Wael El Hindi to deny Egypt a fourth quarter-finalist.

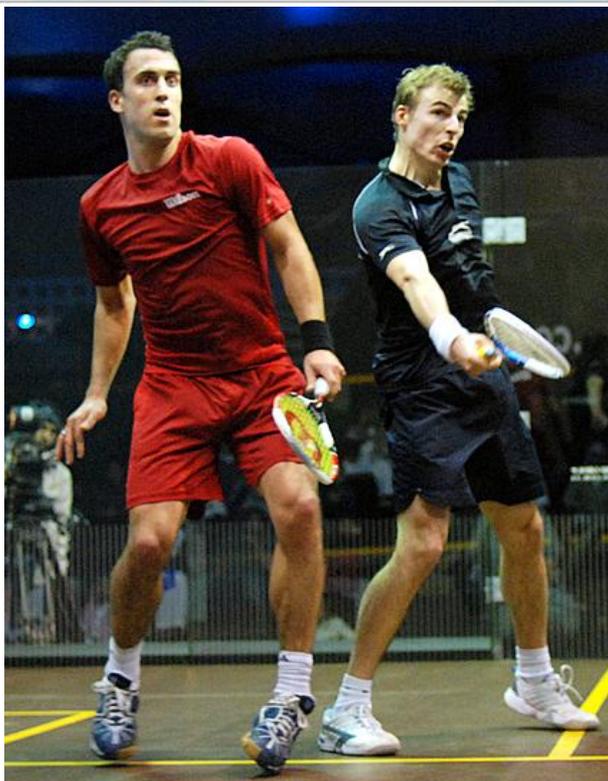
The last two matches saw Frenchmen **Gregory Gaultier** and **Thierry Lincou** set up an all-French meeting in the last eight as they beat Cameron Pilley and Lee Beachill respectively.





Daily News

Issue #2, Tue 16th Dec



Today's Matches:

- 18.00 [3] James Willstrop (Eng) v Daryl Selby (Eng)
- 18.45 [5] David Palmer (Aus) v [9] Wael El Hindi (Egy)
- 19.30 [2] Gregory Gaultier (Fra) v Cameron Pilley (Aus)
- 20.15 [6] Thierry Lincou (Fra) v [13] Lee Beachill (Eng)



"To be honest I feel like I lost that at the moment - at 2-0 I thought I had it won, then missed those match balls."

"All credit to him for coming back - I played really well for two games and felt in complete control, then he came out attacking in the third and completely changed the game."

It's a pity someone had to lose a match like that, but I'll take it!"

Nick Matthew



"He's very confident, not afraid to play his shots and plays the big points well - that's why he's world champion I guess!"

"I was pleased to be able to challenge him for three close games, but he just had too much ammunition for me today ..."

Ong Beng Hee

Day TWO, Mon 15th Dec: Top Three in Top Half

With the seedings based on the October rankings, the world's top three players - all Egyptian - are all in the top half of the draw and are competing for one place in the final.

First up was world number two **Karim Darwish**, who looked in very good form as he despatched one of yesterday's 'giant-killers' Alister Walker. Then two-time defending champion and world number one **Amr Shabana** met Borja Golan, the in-form Spaniard. Shabana wasn't on top form for the whole match, and although Golan pushed him close Shabana went through to set up an all-Egyptian quarter-final.



Two Englishmen met next, **Nick Matthew** and Peter Barker, seeded 8 and 12 but Barker is currently one place ahead in the rankings, at number 9. The match was as close as the rankings suggested as Barker pulled back a two-game deficit before falling 15/13 in a tense decider.

Finally it was world champion **Ramy Ashour**, runner-up in last year's 'winner takes all' final, against top Malaysian Ong Beng Hee. They provided great entertainment for the crowd in a fast, attacking match, but in the end Ashour had too much firepower and goes through to meet Matthew.

Yesterday's Results: Round Two, Top Half:

- Karim Darwish** (Egy) bt Alister Walker (Eng)
11/4, 11/4, 11/7 (35m)
- Amr Shabana** (Egy) bt Borja Golan (Esp)
11/9, 11/6, 2/11, 11/8 (49m)
- Nick Matthew** (Eng) bt Peter Barker (Eng)
11/7, 11/9, 8/11, 11/13, 15/13 (79m)
- Ramy Ashour** (Egy) bt Ong Beng Hee (Mas)
14/12, 11/8, 11/8 (35m)





Daily News

Issue #1, Mon 15th Dec

Today's Matches:

18.00 Karim Darwish (Egy) v Alister Walker (Eng)
 18.45 Amr Shabana (Egy) v Borja Golan (Esp)
 19.30 Nick Matthew (Eng) v Peter Barker (Eng)
 20.15 Ramy Ashour (Egy) v Ong Beng Hee (Mas)



Top Three in Top Half ...

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First up is world number two **Karim Darwish**, against one of yesterday's 'giant-killers' **Alister Walker**. Then two-time defending champion and world number one **Amr Shabana** meets **Borja Golan**, the in-form Spaniard.

Two Englishmen meet next, **Nick Matthew** and **Peter Barker**, seeded 8 and 12 but Barker is currently one place ahead in the rankings, at number 9.

Finally it's world champion **Ramy Ashour**, runner-up in last year's 'winner takes all' final, against top Malaysian **Ong Beng Hee**.

Day ONE, Sun 14th Dec:

Qualifying seems a long time ago - well, October actually - but the richest event of the year - the richest event ever - got under way in Al-Khobar today.



Thirteen matches on the inside courts from noon, then three in the evening on the glass court. Thereafter all the action takes place on the glass court until the winner receives the record \$37,400 prize on Friday evening.



Round one saw the top eight seeds all progress safely enough, **Borja Golan**, **Alister Walker**, **Daryl Selby** and **Cameron Pilley** all ousting 9-16 seeds to book their places in the last sixteen.

Round One Results:

[1] Amr Shabana (Egy) bt Shahier Razik (Can)	11/9, 13/11, 11/6 (42m)
Borja Golan (Esp) bt [15] Laurens Jan Anjema (Ned)	11/8, 11/8, 11/6 (46m)
[7] Karim Darwish (Egy) bt Omar Abdel Aziz (Egy)	11/0, 11/1, 11/5 (21m)
Alister Walker (Eng) bt [14] Adrian Grant (Eng)	11/6, 2/11, 13/11, 11/8 (51m)
[4] Ramy Ashour (Egy) bt Omar Mosaad (Egy)	5/11, 11/8, 11/4, 11/8 (42m)
[10] Ong Beng Hee (Mas) bt Joey Barrington (Eng)	11/9, 11/7, 6/11, 5/11, 11/7 (69m)
[8] Nick Matthew (Eng) bt Aamir Atlas Khan (Pak)	7/11, 11/4, 12/10, 11/8 (56m)
[12] Peter Barker (Eng) bt Davide Bianchetti (Ita)	11/5, 9/11, 11/2, 11/7 (58m)
[9] Wael El Hindi (Egy) bt Miguel Angel Rodriguez (Col)	11/5, 11/5, 13/11 (41m)
[5] David Palmer (Aus) bt Naif Abureqah (Ksa)	11/2, 11/5, 11/6 (25m)
Daryl Selby (Eng) bt [11] Azlan Iskandar (Mas)	11/6, 11/3, 11/2 (27m)
[3] James Willstrop (Eng) bt Jonathan Kemp (Eng)	11/6, 11/5, 11/7 (22m)
[13] Lee Beachill (Eng) bt Amr Swelim (Egy)	9/11, 11/7, 11/6, 11/5 (40m)
[6] Thierry Lincou (Fra) bt Mohammed Abbas (Egy)	7/11, 11/9, 11/4, 11/7 (54m)
Cameron Pilley (Aus) bt [16] Olli Tuominen (Fin)	12/10, 11/6, 11/9 (39m)
[2] Gregory Gaultier (Fra) bt Stewart Boswell (Aus)	11/4, 11/7, 4/11, 11/9 (63m)

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