

The 2015 London Open - Main

The London Open has a proud and rich history.

First played in 1989, when it was won by Welsh international Kelly Reardon, it has over the years attracted some of the greats of the game, and previous winners include such luminaries as Darren Collison, John Wylie, Ian Kettel, Neil Raybone, Rob Hill, Neil Toms, Jack Pople, Nigel Clarke, and Steve Petty, not to mention defending champ Joe Prince.

Back in the '90s top players travelled far and wide to compete in county opens, but with more and more lucrative tours opening up in the new millennium, such events lost their appeal. That the 2015 London Open attracted an incredible 105 runners from around the country, by far the biggest turn-out for many years, is testament to the tournament's prestige, and in Giuseppe D'Imperio, it had a champion worthy of that honour.

The action kicked off at 11 in the morning, and by the time the tournament had reached the quarter-final stage some heavyweights had already exited the event.

In one of the biggest shocks of the day, 2015 World Championship runner-up Nigel Clarke had been knocked out by the unpredictable Peter Panayiotou. Wayne Fryer, whose record in the game needs no introduction, had come out second best in his match with another hugely experienced London superstar, Andrew Breen - a match which, unsurprisingly, went the distance. Twice former World Junior Champion Frank Costello had made it through to the last-sixteen before bowing out to defending champ Joe Prince, who had in the previous round seen off Pete Thomas in a repeat of last year's final. Bristol's Shane Thompson, another of the pre-tournament favourites, was sent packing by 2013 London Open winner Jamie Fay.

Others had survived real scares before sealing their quarter-final berths: former winner and bookies' favourite Steve Petty, the 2015 national amateur champion was taken to a deciding frame in the very first round by Paul Cook, while champion-in-waiting Giuseppe D'Imperio had to come from 0-4 behind to see off Craig Mallinder. He would later admit that that was a turning point for him.

In the end, the quarter-final line-up was one to savour, and the tournament was still very much up for grabs:

- No doubt rattled by his narrow escape in the previous round, Giuseppe raised his game to end Joe Prince's reign as champion.
- Sussex's Morray Dolan, one of the best-known figures on the pool circuit and a multiple tournament winner over many, many years, held off the challenge of London's Tony Gear.
- Jamie Fay continued to play like a man possessed, following his impressive win over Shane Thompson by taking out his old friend and rival, Steve Petty.
- Andrew Breen then came through yet another final-frame marathon to see off London team-mate Jack Pople, a former Masters and European champion and twice London Open winner.

The semi-finals gave us two contrasting matches, each of an extremely high quality but for very different reasons:

- In one, Andrew Breen turned back the clock to produce some of the most outstanding pool played in the entire day. In beating Jamie Fay 5-0, he was just unstoppable and barely missed a ball. Jamie had no answers as the Breen Machine wrapped up the win in super-fast time.
- Over on the other table, meanwhile, Morray and Giuseppe were involved in a real marathon that went all the way to a deciding frame, and that final frame was a marathon in itself, a real cagey affair. Finally, Giuseppe took control and came home a 5-4 winner.

In the final, Andy wasn't quite able to replicate his astonishing form from the previous round, and Giuseppe always had the edge, emerging a 5-1 winner and the 2015 London Open champion.

All in all it was a fantastic day, and thanks need to go to everyone who helped make it so.

Nigel Smith and his staff at Spots & Stripes kept everyone's glasses full and Nigel was also on hand throughout to help Darren O'Byrne and Andrew Breen run the top table and sort out the live streaming, while Clair Watts was kept busy in her role as tournament referee, ably supported by Jeremy Ruffer. It was a real team effort and everyone associated with it should take pride.

A special thanks must also go to our sponsors the SES Group, Railway Management Services and Spots and Stripes whose support was instrumental in enabling us to put on this year's event.

We're all very excited now about how we can not only follow this success, but actually improve on it, in 2016. But until then, all that remains for us to do is once again congratulate the 2015 London Open champion, Giuseppe D'Imperio, who we know will carry the honour of being the holder of such a prestigious title with the grace, humility and good sportsmanship that one expects of a true champion.

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