

# My World Championship Diary

Rod Gilmour looks back at events off court in Doha



Ramy Ashour is greeted by a spectator as he rides into the auditorium on the back of a Hell's Angel's motorbike

**The packed auditorium** at the Khalifa Complex was already creating a buzz ahead of the final – and then came the sound of motorbike engines! Had the event and the two finalists been hijacked by the Doha branch of the Hell's Angels, for on the back of two bikes came Ramy Ashour and Mohamed El Shorbagy into the arena? At least there was enough petrol in the players' tanks for a quite riveting final. \*Watch Ashour and Shorbagy's motorbike entrance on our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/pages/squashplayermag](http://www.facebook.com/pages/squashplayermag).

**Robert Edwards, forever** known as 'the Voice of Squash', might have indulged in too much Doha sun, judging by a

sequence of player gaffes in Doha. He announced Chris Ryder as residing in Guernsey, after getting him mixed up with Chris Simpson, before proceeding to read out the latter's career stats. Then, attempting to apologise to Ryder, he went up to bemused compatriot Robbie Temple!

**By reaching the final**, Ramy Ashour finished 2012 with an astonishing record. The Egyptian had made the last stage of every PSA tournament he had entered during the year – the first player to do so since Pakistan great Jansher Khan in 1994. Ashour's 2012 tally comprised five titles – El Gouna, Australia, U.S., Hong Kong and World Championship – from seven events, the missing pair being the North American and British Opens.

**Being close friends** on tour, defending champion Nick Matthew knew the threat posed by Zac Alexander, but he must have been pleasantly surprised to find out before their second-round clash that the Australian had prepared for a defeat by checking out of the tournament hotel. This came to light when the pair ended up sharing a taxi to the venue by mistake. Matthew said: "It was a no-win situation for him and I knew I had to do something before it got ugly!"

**Speaking of cars**, Squash Player tried to eke out some 'players on tour' stories from the early-round losers. It yielded a memorable one from Shaun Le Roux. The wacky South African hired a car in Doha and proceeded to sleep rough in it for a couple of nights to save on hotel costs. It was a long way from when the Lego addict won his first PSA title and proceeded to buy enough Lego to build a lifesize human. Oddly, it still sits over his bed at home!

**There was a** heated AGM of the Professional Squash Association in Doha before the World Championship. No doubt spurred on by US-based rival Pro Squash Tour (who had been making waves on web forums), it is understood that the PSA's accounts were printed out and circulated to update members on the association's current financial situation.

**There was drama** at the inn for then-world no.1 James Willstrop before his semi-final. Heated phone conversations were heard between the Qatari Squash Federation, Willstrop and the PSA over hotel accommodation. The crux was Willstrop sharing with girlfriend Vanessa Atkinson when rules stipulate players share rooms in tournament hotels.