

Analysis

Ian McKenzie reflects on the significance of the 2012 Men's World Championship in Qatar

What were the significant events of the 2012 Men's World Championship in Qatar and where are we now? One over-riding impression an observer was left with was the speed of the modern professional game. The other was the coming of age of Mohamed El Shorbagy, just 21 at the time of the tournament. Nothing I saw would undermine the view that he has arrived at the top of the game and will be there to stay.

So what will Shorbagy do now? Here he beat Karim Darwish, one of his heroes, and James Willstrop, then world no.1. Willstrop tried everything against him and it gives me no satisfaction to say he was too slow. Can he come back from here to find clinging lines, more floated balls (yes, floated balls against lethal volleyers) and use the vital shot he still underplays – the lob? He cannot take that big frame down and up continually or desperately scramble at the front of the court against these speedsters. He should then – although it may seem rash to say – curb his wonderful attacking instincts.

Against Ramy Ashour in the final, El Shorbagy could have won – and where

would we be then? He was, after all, 7-8 in the decider and he had played 112 minutes against the world no.1 the day before. It would have taken a bit of getting used to, but it would not have been undeserved.

Nick Matthew impressed here. It was not the result he wanted and he does not possess the variety in attack of some of the other top players, but his speed and movement (even at 32) were superb. He patrolled the short line, seeking the volley, and his straight counter shots short are even more potent. This will be a desperate problem for Willstrop in the forthcoming British National Championships when he seeks points short.

Greg Gaultier is still brilliant, but he is also still flawed, and still battling with the referees and himself. Time is running out for him, but with the appearance of the

21-year-old Shorbagy, that can be said of others too.

This event would have been a disappointment for Darwish and perhaps the last chance of another title for Amr Shabana. There is a pack of young Egyptians maturing behind them and Omar Mosaad is a genuine world no.8.

Outside of the Egyptians, it is difficult to see any other threatening talent. For England, Chris Simpson had a good run and took his chances, while for Australia, Zac Alexander is certainly a fine striker of the ball. If he can become a dedicated athlete, he has a future.

Here's my personal snapshot of the standings after the tournament, with ages at the time and disregarding the injured players: 1 Ramy Ashour (25); 2 Nick Matthew (32); 3 James Willstrop (29); 4 Gregory Gaultier (29); 5 Mohamed El Shorbagy (21); 6 Karim Darwish (31); 7 Amr Shabana (33); 8 Omar Mosaad (24).

There is an argument to put El Shorbagy at no.2, but this is just one event. The expectation from Qatar, though, is that is where he is heading, if not no.1. We will see in the coming months. It is all change.

Omar Mosaad, now a genuine world no.8

