

The Young Ones

While Nick Matthew gears up for a record-equalling title bid in Manchester, England's young hopefuls will be attempting to make an impression as Rod Gilmour explains

After the eye-opening litmus test of the World Championship, the National Championship will be another step forward for England's next crop of male talent, especially those who have tasted the PSA Tour for the first time this year.

England Squash and Racketball's coaches had viewed the World Championship in Manchester in two parts. There was the frenetic opening weekend of qualifying finals – "you get the ones who want to taste it and the ones who want to win it," national coach Chris Robertson said on the eve of squash's showpiece event – where 20 English players were on show. Then came the tilt of a senior home player going for glory.

Pleasingly, half the English contingent in qualifying – 10 – were under 20. On the evidence of Manchester and speaking to a number of coaches up and down the country, there is a small band who have emerged as names to watch down the line.

According to Robertson, there were some notable performances in qualifying, including players there to grasp international experience on home soil – such as George Parker, at 17 the

youngest of the up and coming stars, who recently reached the British Junior Open U19 semi-finals.

Raw, complicated and athletic, Leicestershire-based Parker quit college last summer in his bid to pursue a professional career. He was beaten in the first round of qualifying at the Worlds, but his potential has been duly noted by ESR, who placed him on their senior development programme.

Parker's words are refreshing from someone so young. "I think I do a lot of things better than other players," he says. "Some players are quite robotic in their play, but I'm a bit different on the mental side and with my shots.

"I definitely need more structure and discipline in my game, and now that I'm full time, hopefully I can reach those points. I certainly would like to get into the main draw at the Nationals."

Another who has the same aspirations is Richie Fallows, who has reached one quarter-final and three first rounds on the PSA Tour since the World Junior Championship, but who admits he is still learning the basics as a Tour pro.

Fallows says Robertson has been a

"calming" influence (especially during the pressure-cooker environment of qualifying at the Worlds) as he continues to learn the ropes.

Fallows and Parker played a tempestuous match at the British Junior Open – a match won by the latter – and the rivalry already looks an enticing one.

"I think we will succeed," believes Fallows. "We have that will to win and have the same personality in that way. If we work hard, I can see the day when we can all reach the top 10. If you keep thinking it when you're training, then the belief is there."

Further up the chain lie players in their early 20s who have experienced the PSA Tour for a few years. Two names come to mind – Adrian Waller and Joe Lee – and Jonah Barrington has been aware of their rise up the English ranks.

"There is some likelihood that England will succeed with the present batch of young players," said the four-time British Open champion. "It is possibly the best group we've had for quite a while.

"There is some consolidation taking place, with players like Adrian and Joe coming through."

FOUR TO WATCH

Chris Robertson, England's national coach, picks out a quartet of young players for the future

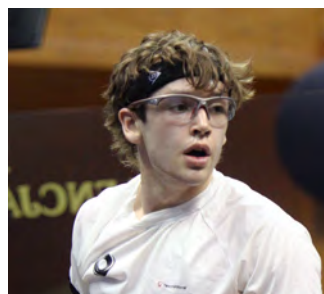
George Parker, 17

George is proficient defensively, but is making some good strides with his attacking game. He is learning quickly about the blend between the two games. He is very physical and uses it to control the middle of the court. His mindset to learn is improving, but he does need to show more discipline in his concentration and behaviour when in match situations.



Angus Gillams, 18

His mobility, fitness and physicality is very intimidating to play against. Matched with his improving shot selections and technical ability, Angus has made some excellent strides over the last six months. He counterattacks well and if he continues to be clinical and structured when given an opportunity, then Angus will enter the senior ranks well equipped.



Richie Fallows, 18

Richie continues to be a very passionate and fierce competitor. He drives the ball powerfully and looks to counter when an opening exists. His mobility and athleticism is a massive asset, though discipline can be inconsistent. Richie has some room for developing his short game and defence but stands an excellent chance of being a real force.



Lyell Fuller, 18

Lyell continues to play very mature and structured squash. His straight lines short and long are excellent, allowing him to control the pace and middle of the court. Lyell's mindset, on and off the court, is extremely progressive. His physicality is a little behind others around him. However, this has forced Lyell to successfully develop other areas of his game.

