U21 GC Worlds – Day 4

Today was sunny and warm with less wind. Play didn’t start until about 8.50 due to issues with the draw. After several variants were rejected, we ended up with

Josh Freeth v Lachy Hughes

George Coulter v Angus Coulter

Nadine El Menoufi v Edward Wilson

Edmund Fordyce v Felix Webby

The quarter finals were played as best of three and were all good quality matches. Josh was too consistent and won 7-4, 7-4 to set up a semi-final against George who had a comfortable 7-3, 7-1 win against his younger brother, Angus, who has played exceptionally well in his first major event.

The bottom half saw a really good match between Nadine and Edward. Nadine’s positional play always kept Edward under pressure, but he responded with a series of big clearances and good hoops to win 7-5, 7-5.

The final quarter saw Felix take a quick 4-0 lead only for Edmund to equalise at 5-5. Edmund missed a fairly easy hoop 11 to allow Felix a 6-5 lead and Felix eventually made hoop 13 from 4 yards to take the first. The second game followed a similar pattern. Felix quickly went 3-0 ahead only for Edmund to square it at 5-5. With Felix 3 feet straight in front of 11, but with Edmund also having a ball in good position, Edmund played a power clearance from the North boundary, which rush-peeled Felix through 11. Felix managed to jaws hoop 12 and Edmund’s 2 yard jump hit the crown and Felix took the game and match 7-5.

The semi-finals were played best of 5. The first to finish was Felix Webby and Edward Wilson. Felix produce one of the finest shooting displays I have seen, achieving a critical distance well in excess of 20 yards. Felix’s 6 yard quarter ball clearances were exceptional. Edward played good croquet, but the final score of 7-5, 7-5, 7-4 to Felix was a fair reflection on the quality of his play. I highlighted in my preview that Edward was arguably the most improved player in the world. Given how little GC he plays, his performance has been massively impressive. I believe we will see a lot more of him in future years on the AC circuit.

The other semi saw George take a 2-0 lead 7-4, 7-5 before Josh started to dominate in the third which he won 7-4. The fourth was a nailbiter with George up 2-0, Josh equalising 2-2 and then missing a short angled hoop 5 to allow George to take a 3-2 lead. They reached hoop 9 at 4-4 and George ran it up towards hoop 10. From here, Josh’s play was outstanding and he managed to level at 5-5 without giving George a chance at hoop 10. George played a perfect approach to hoop 11 and Josh blocked himself from the clearance with his first ball in. With no other shot available, Josh ran 11 from 1 yard south of the north boundary behind hoop 10 – one of the most impressive shots under pressure I have seen. Josh took good control of hoop 12 and George was faced with a 3 yard jump shot over a block. A great shot by George levelled at 6-6. Josh took 5 yard position at 13 and George also played to 5-6 yard position with both his balls. Josh was unable to get his second ball to 13 due to being hampered by rover and was forced to take on hoop 13 from 5 yards. He failed this shot and George took better position which was eventually enough for him to win 7-6 and take a place in the world final. Prior to this match, Josh was on a streak of 26 consecutive game wins. His loss in the semi-final only reflects on what a strong performance George gave. Josh has been a wonderful world champion for the past two years and his support and encouragement of fellow Kiwis reflects very well on this young man.

The Plate also suffered delays due to the management, but has started as what I believe is a flexible swiss with the remarkably low number of 4 games minimum.

I believe tomorrow’s final starts at 11am. It should be a good match.

Chris