

Austrian Open Vienna 2011

Haus der Begegnung Rudolfsheim in Vienna was the venue that hosted approximately 300 male and female players, from a total of 15 different nations, all of whom came together to take part in the largest steel darts tournament in Austrian history. Aside from competing for the title, honour, and of course prize money, the players were also striving to win qualification to the Winmau World Masters, a WDF Major tournament.



In addition to the "red-white-red" elite there were also players with PDC World Championship experience and indeed five reigning national champions.

There were already some spectacular darts to be seen in the doubles round-robin competition on Saturday and indeed there were no major surprises in the run up to the last sixteen. Then the real action began as first top duel got underway in which the defending champions, Ali Ghafouri / Rene Jorgensen, took on and finally defeated Torben and Vladimir Andersen from Denmark. Vladimir represented Denmark several times last year, including in the PDC World Cup.

The quarterfinals however was the end of the road for the defending champions, as too for the No. 2 seeds Josef Kraus / Hannes Schnier. The first semi-final saw the last remaining local heroes Martin Kurecka / Erich Stadler emerge victorious after a sensational 2-1 battle against the top seeds Seifert / Hoheneder. With that they also prevented an all-German final as the second semi-final saw the German pair, Genkertepe / Schug, comfortably defeat Rucska / Vass from Slovakia.

The final was best of 3 sets / 5 legs, and indeed it was anybody's game from the very start. Having started the first set the Germans managed to edge ahead by winning 3:2, only to find Kurecka / Stadler do exactly the same in the second set. In the first leg of the 3rd set the two Austrians succeeded in attaining the only and decisive break with a nice 17-darter. Martin Kurecka and Erich Stadler then followed up on their lead, taking the next two legs and thus winning the men's double event 2-1 in sets against Yalcin Genkertepe and Hendrik Schug.



In the women's doubles the victory went to our Hungarian neighbours: Veronika Ihász and Nikolett Wachter had to fight hard to scrape through their quarter- and semifinals, winning both matches 2-1 against the home teams Shauer / Holten, and then Kuntner / Rottmann. The final game however saw a clearer victory on stage against the Danes Janni Larsen / Mette Funch. Although Larsen / Funch had only lost a single set in the run up to the final they were no longer able to carry their excellent performance right through to the end, and hence the title went to the stronger Hungarian team.

On Sunday the fight began in the individual competitions for the "real" title at the Austrian Open Vienna 2011 and the Winmau World Masters 2011 qualification.



Hansen, was drawing attention to himself on board 10 by eliminating the winner of the Austrian Open Vienna from the previous year, Josef Kraus.

After the all-Austrian final last year, the last remaining local heroes were unfortunately defeated in the quarterfinals. Last year's finalist and "Wunderboy" Rowby-John Rodriguez lost his quarterfinal to Michal Ondo from Slovakia, while Martin Kurecka conceded by the narrowest of margins to Kraus-Bezwingen Hansen. In the mean time Boris Krcmar had to play his first deciding set, which he successfully managed to steal from young Krisztian Kaufmann from Hungary. Michal Kocik (CZ) was another surprise semi-finalist, having defeated Jozsef Rucska (HUN) in the previous round.

Kocik then finally managed to overthrow Michal Ondo to secure his place in the final. Ondo had to admit defeat with 0:2, but can be proud of his excellent 3rd place performance. Tournament favorite Krcmar left no margin for errors with a gala performance against Niels Jorgen Hansen, who we also congratulate on his 3rd place achievement.

In the grand finale the audience couldn't believe their eyes: while "David" Michal Kocik was taking no prisoners, "Goliath" Boris Krcmar never really managed to get into his game. The first set went to the Czech and indeed in the second set Kocik had some excellent darts that almost wrapped it up for him. Krcmar was not going out without a fight however and managed to turn things around and win the second set 3-2. But with a 15-darter and 149 finish Kocik finally got the decisive break and left no further room for doubt that the title of the Austrian Open Vienna 2011 was deservedly heading towards the Czech Republic. Congratulations once again to Michal Kocik!



The women's competition also saw two potential finalist contenders eliminated at an early stage. Janni Larsen did not have the luck-of-the-draw and was defeated by the previous year's finalist, Nagyova Katarina (SVK) 0:3; while the equally strong Dane, Hanne Joensen, secured her place in the next round by defeating Viktoria Kiss from Hungary. Multiple Austrian champion, Barbara Kuntner, also celebrated a victory against one of the doubles champions Veronica Ihász, before finally submitting to Tove Lauridsen (DEN).

Last year's third-place winner Zsófia Köntös extinguished the last remaining German hopes by defeating Christina Buchwald in straight sets. Likewise, Katarina Nagyova secured a 2-0 victory over Hanne Joensen. Austria's current No. 1, Uschi binder, and the reigning national champion, Claudia Rottmann, also had to admit defeat in this round.

The host country was still represented in the semi-finals however thanks to Jasmine Schauer, who proudly took the red-white-red colours on through to the final after emerging victorious from a sensational 2:1 match against Zsófia Köntös. There she met Katarina Nagyova, who also had to withstand a nerve-wracking 2-1 battle against Tove Lauridsen, the last surviving member of the strong Danish women.

It promised therefore to an exciting final and the audience were by no means disappointed. After almost an hour however the Slovak raised her hands in the air and claimed victory! Katarina Nagyova returned to Slovakia the proud champion of the Austrian Open Vienna 2011!

The youth sector enjoyed record attendance this year and indeed for the first time separate youth competitions for boys and girls were held.



In spite of the many German guests the boys' competition had an all-Austrian final between, not surprisingly, Rowby-John Rodriguez and Michael Tegl. Rowby quickly went 3-1 ahead in the best-of-seven match, before Michi made an excellent comeback to level things off. With a fantastic 167 finish he forced both players into a deciding leg, which he also dominated. But alas with match darts in his hand, the 14-year-old Lower Austrian suffered a brief lapse in concentration and allowed Rowby to take advantage and defend his title from last year after all.

In the girls' competition it was the 17-year-old German Steffi Haller who managed a 3-1 victory in the final against the 11-year-old Austrian, Sophie Seiner, and thus also qualified for the Winmau 2011.



The prize-giving ceremony took place just after 20:00, bringing the largest steel dart event in the country to its official end. We would once again like to congratulate all the winners on their excellent performance, and our thanks also go out to Haus de Begegnung for their excellent hospitality on both tournament days. And of course our sincere gratitude is extended to the many helpers in the gray "Staff" polo shirts, the tournament directors and everyone else who helped, because without them this tournament would never have been possible!

From the Austrian Open Vienna 2011, Philip Karall
Photos: Cornelia Baier and Thomas Nikitscher
Translation: Ray Laverty