

Home hopes Higgins and Maguire advance in BetVictor

John Higgins remains in the BetVictor Scottish Open, but it had to use all his experience to squeeze through to the next round after edging Chinese talent Cao Yupeng.

The Scot started well, winning the first two frames against 32-year-old Yupeng who reached the last 16 of the world championship in his first season on the circuit.

But his younger opponent rallied, winning the next three and Higgins rode his luck on occasions. In the second frame, Higgins (pictured) got lucky when the cue ball flirted with the middle pocket after a cut on a red, but he marched on regardless.

Post-match, a relieved Higgins said: "I am delighted to win but I played poorly there and I managed to win the match, but there are plenty of times you play well in these tournament and you sometimes lose. I will take that all day, playing badly and winning.

Reflecting on the game, Higgins said he had a chance to go 3-0 ahead but the match changed and he admitted: "I really should have lost that game.

"It has given me a bit of confidence, pulling the game out and in the last frame, however, he missed a bad pink and if he gets it he has won the match."

Higgins admitted that he played better in his first match at Meadowbank but he added: "Struggled a little there but, listen, every one you take it and hopefully your confidence rises and rises. There is a long, long way to go here."

Frame three proved difficult for the experienced Scot, and

that is where the pressure mounted. Yupeng did have early problems with snookers, being asked to play again on one occasion, but the Scot missed a black into the bottom left pocket with the scoreline at 45-39 and the audience groaned. Yupeng capitalised by recording a frame-winning break of 27 for a 66-45 win.

Frame four was once again cagey, both men making small breaks, but Yupeng, ranked No 58, again hit foul problems, being asked to play again on three occasions, but he put that aside to take the frame and level at 2-2.

And the man from Guangzhou constructed a solid break of 40 to take control of the next, putting Higgins, the runner-up last year, under real pressure at 3-2 down, but he responded.

Higgins then rattled up a break of 70, with 59 points left on the table. Yupeng attempted to snooker the Wishaw ace and claw back the deficit, but he called a halt with the scoreline 70-25 to set up a last frame decider.

The Scot, ranked No 6, hit early foul trouble when he missed a long red near the bottom right hand cushion after being snookered behind a yellow and Yupeng moved to a 27-0 advantage in the decider.

He was on a break of 23 when he missed a black into the middle bag, attempting to cut it back from below the pocket, then Higgins missed a red to the opposite pocket.

However, the Wishaw man was back at the table soon after but he missed a red into the bottom left pocket and his opponent didn't.

Yupeng then missed a pink allowing Higgins back in and he accumulated a break of 55, finishing by leaving the cue ball behind the black and the last red in baulk.

Minutes later, his rival shook hands and Higgins left the

arena beaming after a 4-3 win. It had been a close shave.

Glaswegian Stephen Maguire accumulated four breaks of 50-plus, including one of 105 in the opening frame, to beat Ashley Hugill 4-1 in the BetVictor Scottish Open at Meadowbank, and then declared that he was unhappy with his latest results but added: "Here's hoping I get a decent run this week."

The 41-year-old rattled in a 105 break for a 106-9 win in the opening frame of his best of seven match against the Yorkshireman who turned professional five years ago.

A break of 50 followed for a 72-63 win, Maguire coming from well behind, then a 79 was crafted for a 79-56 win to move to a 3-0 lead and the Scot seemed to be in an ideal position to shut out the Yorkshireman.

But Hugill refused to give up and he hit back to take the fourth frame 73-0 but Maguire closed out his opponent with a 60 break in the final frame for a 71-29 score.

Maguire, who turned professional in 1998, and is No 25 in the world, said he played OK at the start of the match, nicking a couple of frames, but admitted that his 28-year-old opponent could have capitalised on chances.

He added: "It is always nice to clear up. He was bound to come back at me. He was taking his time and doing my head in but I managed to hold it together and get over the line.

"Listen, it is not about playing quick it is about not being slow and I don't know the guy but there is no need to be that slow."

Maguire was asked about his form and he said: "I don't know, my results have been terrible. I have played worse and won matches. I can still play obviously and it is a hard game.

"You are sitting there and if somebody is playing well then there nothing you can do. You need to sit and watch it and

take it and that is what I have been doing for the last couple of months.

“If I get three or four matches under my belt and start feeling good then who knows what will happen.”

He was asked if living less than 50 miles away was an advantage and he said: “Honestly, I don’t know. I am going home and I have still got the kids school run, still got the night time drama, the Tai-Kwon-Do to take my boy and I am doing all that as well. Usually, in a hotel, you have nothing to do with all that so it is 50-50.”

Earlier, Welshman Ryan Day triumphed 10-7 in the British Open in Milton Keynes in early October, stunning red-hot favourite, Mark Allen, to win the biggest title of his career, held a 3-1 lead over Lyu Haotian in one of the first matches of Day 3 of the BetVictor Scottish Open snooker at Meadowbank, but the talented 25-year-old Chinese player hit back to take the fifth.

Haotian, who reached the quarter-final of the 2012 International Championship when he was only 14, which remains a record for a ranking event, went 20 points behind in the sixth to the 42-year-old from Pontycymer, Mid Glamorgan.

But Day, normally a prolific break builder who has compiled over 400 century breaks in his career, missed a black into the bottom right bag and Haotian replied with a break of eight.

Back came the man nicknamed Dynamite, a three-time ranking event winner, and ranked No 15 in the world, and, after a short bout of safety play, he kept his cool to work the cue ball around the pack of reds to pick up the black and move steadily towards victory.

A red into the bottom pocket followed by a blue into the middle took him to 62 points with only 51 left on the table and he comfortably cleaned up the colours for the deciding

fourth frame to complete the match-winning break of 70.

The affable Welshman (pictured) said: "I was 3-1 up and lost the fifth frame to go 3-2 with only two frames left in the match so there is always concern in these short matches. You have to get to four before the other guy and, luckily, in the last I got over the line.

"I felt I scored OK when I got in the balls but my long game was not quite on and that is something to work on later this afternoon.

"We come back tomorrow and we go again. My form has been OK but the win at the British Open came out of the blue a little bit but I am feeling relaxed and playing and looking forward to coming to events and playing well."

He added: "There is a long way to go here but you have got to be in it to win it and, so far, we are still in. The venue is really good actually but it is a lovely place to come and play. It is a few years since I've been here but the city itself is lovely and if I manage to get a bit of time there are so many things to go and see and look and it is one of the prettiest cities in the UK."

Moving off the table and onto football, Day was naturally disappointed at the 3-0 Group B World Cup defeat by England in the World Cup Qatar on Monday night.

He said: "It was always going to be a difficult one to beat sides like England. As a nation we are probably more disappointed at the first two games (USA, a 1-1 draw and Iran, a 2-0 defeat) but we are only a small country and we are playing against teams with far greater resources, the lads did amazingly well to get to the World Cup. Hopefully, it is not 64 years before we get there again."

Later, Fraser Patrick from Glasgow lost 4-3 to Sam Craigie in a tense, seven-frame battle, despite fighting back from 1-0

down to lead 2-1.