

Higgins and Maguire depart as Thai star takes care of Allen

John Higgins admitted his disappointment after bowing out of the star-studded BetVictor Scottish Open to Jamie Jones, despite holding a two-frame lead.

The 34-year-old from Neath, the youngest player ever to make a maximum 147 break in competition, aged 14, was 1-0 up then 3-1 down before rallying, making the Scot sweat at Meadowbank and the world No 31 rattled off three straight frames to take the tight match 4-3 in nearly three hours.

Jones started well, rattling up a break of 43 and then extending the advantage to 64 before Higgins hit back and compiled a break of 64 to level with the Welshman. The black was re-spotted and Jones, after a bout of safety play, ended the frame with a black into the bottom pocket for a 71-64 scoreline.

Higgins, ranked No 6, was behind early in the second, 10-0 to be exact, and then Jones compiled a break of 14 for 24-0 and then extended his advantage to 52-0.

The Scot arrived at the table with six reds left and forced Jones to foul. Higgins then got into his stride, polishing off the balls to move 63-52 ahead before missing a blue while attempting a double into the middle bag.

However, he kept his cool and took his chance with a break of 11 to take the frame 74-52 and level the match and he

continued on the attack winning the third and the fourth, that to a magnificent break of 108.

Frame five proved a slog but Jones kept his cool to hit back from 53-26 down to take the frame 56-53, including converting a real pressure shot on the green.

The Welshman pulled out a break of 37 in the sixth but Higgins got back in with the reds spread and the cue ball near the black.

Jones could only sit and watch as the Wishaw Wizzard compiled a break of 60 but then missed a red to the bottom bag while using the rest. His face spoke volumes.

Higgins was then hit with a snooker behind the black and was asked to play again after missing. And he was asked to repeat the shot after failing for a second time. He was successful and the score remained tight at 45-60 but seconds later Jones was back at the table and potted the blue.

The final red followed followed by the blue with 27 points now left on the table. It was Higgins turn to watch as his opponent moved to 62-60 with a break of 17 and then he overtook the Scot with the green.

The pink then vanished and that was it 77-60 and Higgins was in a real scrap with all to play for in the final frame.

Jones moved ahead 38-0 and then Higgins broke up the reds. Jones moved in and, from 42-0, finished off his opponent with a break of 43. With the score at 85-0 Higgins said that was enough and shook hands.

Later, Higgins admitted his disappointment and said: "I had the game in the palm of my hand, 3-1 ahead and him needing snookers, and then things go against you which changes the whole dynamic.

"There were points when I felt I was hitting the ball pretty

well, but at other points was still missing balls.”

Overall, looking back at this year, he said it had been a poor won, not having won an event, the first half of 2022 was not bad, I got to a few finals, but the second half of the year had been pretty bad. I think I will leave the table behind for the next couple of weeks and try and refresh.”

An hour later, Glaswegian Stephen Maguire also made his exit, 4-2 to Kyren Wilson, who is in the world’s top eight, after a three-hour battle, despite a break of 101 in the opening frame and one of 102 in the second to lead 2-0.

But Wilson rattled off four straight frames to move on, 61-0 in the third, 61-18 in the next, 75-40 with a break of 75 in the fifth and he closed out the Scot with an 87-0 scoreline in the sixth.

Northern Irish star Mark Allen was put to the sword by Thepchaiya Un-Nooh in double quick time on an adjacent table.

The Thailand-born player posted three breaks of over 50 in the 4-1 success and he opened with 61 for a 90-0 scoreline and then 85 in a 89-55 success.

Then came a 58 in an 89-25 win for 3-0 with Allen giving himself a lifeline with an 83-0 win in the fourth, but inform Un-Nooh sent him homeward with a break of 87 in a 95-1 fifth frame success.

It was a devastating display by the man ranked only 57 in the world. Allen, No 5 in the world, admitted to have been beaten by the better player on the day.

It was a blow to the man who was runner-up to Ryan Day in the British Open. He won the Northern Ireland Open for the second straight year and continued his hot streak by winning his second Triple Crown event, beating Ding Junhui 10-7 in the final of the UK Championship to bring his ranking titles to

eight. He was no match for the 37-year-old on the day.

Later tonight (Thursday), Gary Wilson, the Northumbrian cueman who knocked favourite Ronnie O'Sullivan out of the tournament, plays Hossein Vafaei, the first Iranian professional snooker player. The match is scheduled for 8pm and Vafaei earned his place with a 4-3 win over Chinese player Yan Bingtao.

Englishman Kyren Wilson, who beat Scots player Stephen Maguire, plays 24-year-old Zhou Yuelong from China, the runner-up in three ranking events, also at 8pm