

Unhappy Higgins makes third round in Scottish Open

John Higgins moved into the third round of the BetVictor Scottish Open snooker at Meadowbank with a 4-1 win over his Chinese opponent He Guoqiang, but was unhappy with his performance.

The man nicknamed the Wishaw Wizard lost the first frame 77-73 to his young opponent who capitalised on a mistake and kept his cool to clear the remaining balls for the narrow win.

Higgins dug deep and hit back in the second with a break of 50 in a score of 98-12 and he took the next 73-30 with his biggest break of the match, a total of 65.

The Lanarkshire cueman took the fourth 128-0 with another 50-plus break and closed out the match with a scoreline of 58-9 in the fifth.

He said: "I am obviously happy with the win but not with the way I played, very sticky, I take some positives from the win, but the bad stuff is really bad."

The 48-year-old, who is third on the all-time list of ranking event winners, behind Ronnie O'Sullivan and Stephen Hendry, was annoyed that his rival won the first frame after he held a comfortable lead.

He admitted: "I lost the frame and it does not put you in a good frame of mind."

Later in the match he had a chance of a maximum clearance and he said: "I played a very poor positional shot and it would have been good to do that (claim a 147) obviously in front of a home crowd.

"I need to get on with things. You hope to play yourself into the tournament but if I play like that against Ricky Walden then I can forget it. There is not much time between now and the next match. I'll possibly get on the practice table and find something."

Higgins stressed that he still wanted to win the £425,000 tournament and added: "You are competitive but it is tough sometimes. Experience will tell you just to move on."

Meanwhile, Glasgow teenager Liam Graham, who received a bye in the first round when world No 1 Ronnie O'Sullivan scratched from the tournament which carries a prize fund of over £420,000, moves on into the third round.

He lost the first two frames to Belgian teenager Ben Mertens 72-13 and 99-17 but roared back to take the next three 57-56, 46-26 and 70-69, where 19-year-old Mertens, who made the last 16 of the Welsh Open earlier this year, had a break of 61.

This is a much needed boost for the 19-year-old Scot who has a two-year tour card after his win in the European under-21 competition in March and it will give his bank balance a healthy boost coming into Christmas.

Other scores: Zhang Anda 4, Judd Trump 2; Ishpreet Singh Chadha 3, Ali Carter 4; Liam Highfield 2, Tom Ford 4; Martin O'Donnell 4, Jamie Clarke 2; Ryan Day 3, Ashley Carty 4; Aaron Hill 4, Jack Lisowski 1