



Aruna Quadri escapes

TOURNAMENT'S number one seed, Aruna Quadri of Nigeria, wriggled himself out of an early shock exit in the second round of the championship yesterday which loomed over him as he rallied from behind to beat Belgian teenager, Devos Lauren, 4-3 in the men's singles of the 2019 ITTF Challenge Plus Nigeria Open.

Quadri, who marked his 31st birthday yesterday – and what an awful birthday present that would have been for Africa's best rated player – was trailing the Belgian at 2-0 (2-7) in the third set but he managed to nick a game back to put the encounter at 1-2.

However, the teenage Belgian increased the lead with another win in the fourth game to stretch his hold on the encounter to 3-1.

But a determined Quadri – no doubt inspired by the home fan support – recovered to level up at 3-3. The tide had turned! In the seventh game, the Nigerian star put the encounter beyond his European adversary – and threw the fans into wild jubiliations.

Nevertheless, table tennis buffs who saw the match were unanimous in concluding that if the way this encounter panned out is anything to go by, Quadri would need to up the ante if he is to defend his men's singles title at this meet.

Up next for the Nigerian in the round of 16 encounter is a familiar foe in Egypt's Mohamed El-Beiali.

If Quadri escaped an early shock exit, African legend of the sport, the veteran Segun Toriola and Bode Abiodun were not so lucky as they were edged out in the round of 32, yesterday.

Olufunke Oshonaike is the only surviving Nigerian in the women's singles. She faces a Herculean today as she plays against the number one seed, Slovakia's Barbora Balazova.

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Aruna's tie was a learning curve for me – Belgian star



Devos Lauren

BELGIUM'S Devos Lauren nearly broke the hearts of Lagos fans after taking homeboy and number one seed, Aruna Quadri, to full stretch in the round of 32 of the men's singles, yesterday.

Despite being satisfied with his performance against the Nigerian star at the on-going ITTF Challenge Plus Nigeria Open holding at Molade Okoya-Thomas Hall of Teslim Balogun Stadium, Lagos the Belgian teenager said:

"Aruna Quadri is a very good player. This match was just to learn from him but I played very well against him, I had a chance to progress because I was leading 2-0. But I lost the third set, which was important as he made it 2-1 and from there it was very difficult for me."

Lauren added: "I must admit that the crowd is very large and you could feel that they were all behind him. But then it is nice to play in a situation like

this."

The Rio 2016 Paralympic gold medalist admitted that he was nervous in the tie:

"You feel a little nervous when you have a chance against Aruna Quadri because you feel you can win. In the beginning I was not thinking I would win but during the game I felt I had a chance. In the long run it wasn't easy," he stated.

FIXTURES

Men

Aruna Quadri (NGR) vs Mohammed El-Beiali (EGY)
Ibrahima Diaw (SEN) vs Thiago Monteiro (BRA)
Bastian Steger (GER) vs Soumyajit Ghosh (IND)
Alexandre Robinot (FRA) vs Bojan Tokic (SLO)
Robert Gardos (AUS) vs Khalid Assar (EGY)
Steffel Mengel (GER) vs Rares Sipos (ROU)
Supanut Wisutmaythangkoon (THA) vs Ahmed Saleh (EGY)
Kilian Ort (GER) vs Cedric Nuytinck (BEL)

Women

Barbora Balazova (SVK) vs Olufunke Oshonaike (NGR)
Farah Abdel-Aziz (EGY) vs Debora Vivarelli (ITA)
Marwa Alhodaby (EGY) vs Pooja Sahasrabudhe (IND)
Reem El-Eraky (EGY) vs Yana Noskova (RUS)
Dina Meshref (EGY) vs Sreeja Akula (IND)
Ida Jazbec (CRO) vs Lisa Lung (BEL)
Sarah De Nutte (LUX) vs Yuan Wan (GER)

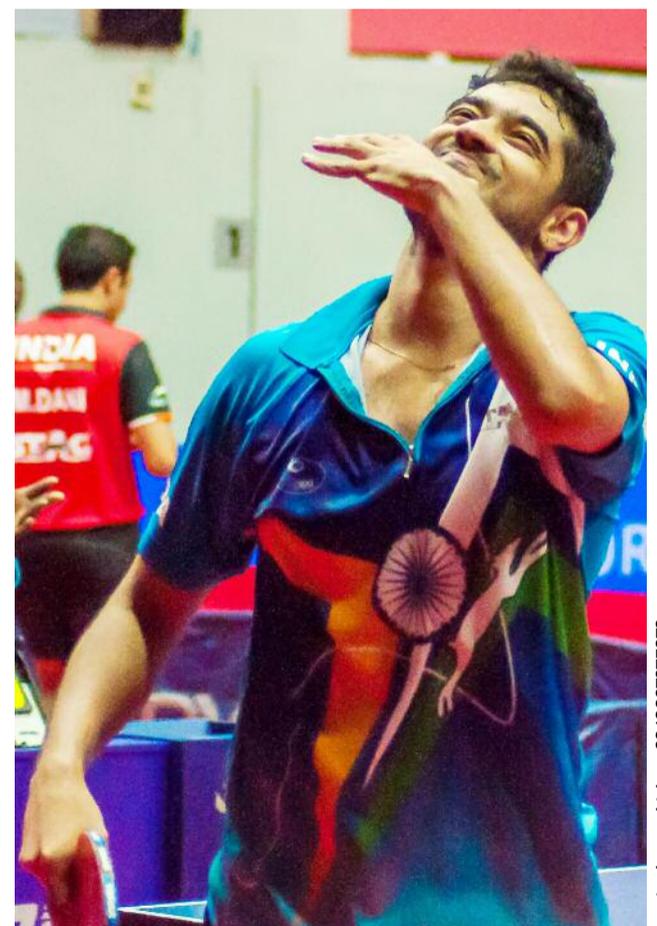
Different strokes for different folks



Garvin Rumgay (SCO)



Mohamed Shouman (EGY)



Sudhanshu Grover (IND)