

PRESS RELEASE – 28 February 2013

EVENT REPORT: 2013 GB9 MIDLANDS CLASSIC

The sixth season of the GB 9 Ball Tour has kicked off with a bigger bang than ever before, with Great Britain's Phil Burford overcoming Germany's Ralf Souquet in the final of this year's Midland Classic.

It was apparent both before and during the competition weekend that this is to be a very different tour from last season. Dozens of players from previous years and within British shores have renewed their affiliation with the tour, but that's about all that remains the same. Representatives from Germany, Italy, Spain and Denmark to name but a few have all come over to Great Britain to sample the tour for themselves, and it's fair to say they'll be taking many happy memories from their first experience of GB9 back home with them. The tournament has also been held for the first time in the magnificent Park Inn by Radisson hotel in Telford, Shropshire – a venue well situated for many of the tours' regulars and connected well to major airports. The main event has transformed into the more conventional double elimination format in the main event with a Challenge Cup event being held for those players not making the money stages in the main event. The players are now no longer competing for medals to take home with them. Instead, each event will have a permanent trophy for the players to try and get their names on along with a beautiful salver for both finalists of the main event along with the winner of each tournament's Challenge Cup event. All in all, the tour has taken on a new and refreshing structure which it is hoped appeals to past and present players, young and old players and, most importantly, both professional and amateur competitors looking for the best challenge possible.

Phil Burford is perhaps one of the hottest young prospects British cue sports has ever had. After winning his first GB9 main event two years earlier, and many EuroTour and international appearances to boot since then, players the world over know just what lies ahead when they come up against such a naturally gifted cueist. The road to the final for Burford began in his trademark comfortable fashion, opening his account for 2013 with a 9-2 victory over Jamie Bryan. This saw him through to a potentially tricky match against Reading hotshot Phil Wildman. Again, however, Burford took the match by the scruff of the neck and eased his way to a 9-4 win. With this, he secured his spot in the single elimination last 32 stage where he was to meet one of the best known faces of yesteryear in 9-ball in the form of Tommy Donlon. Making his much awaited return to the tour, it's fair to say that coming up against Burford wouldn't have been high on his list of priorities. Indeed, a second consecutive 9-4 victory ensured Burford's safe passage through to a clash with Birkenhead's Adam Shaw. Here he faced his toughest challenge yet, but still managed to win through 9 racks to 6 and make his way into the quarter finals. Here, he achieved what is believed to be a first in GB9's history. His opponent was none other than Karl Boyes – on paper, arguably his toughest opponent so far. However, in winning the match 9-3, he managed to successfully achieve a perfect record of 6 run outs from his 6 break offs. No further testament is surely necessary to his raw talent and surely there was no better



confidence booster required to see him into his second successive GB9 semi-final and a mouth-watering clash against Wolverhampton's Kevin Uzzell – one of the toughest match players in Great Britain, back on the tour after a 12 month sabbatical. After taking a quick-fire 6-1 lead, many thought the match to be all but over. Uzzell, not knowing when he's beaten, then proceeded to win five racks on the bounce to bring the scoreline level a 6-a-piece. Luckily for Burford, he had a couple more tricks up his sleeve as he proceeded to win three of the next four racks and put him into the Midlands Classic final once again and one win away from regaining the title he won back in 2011.



Many were wondering prior to the tournament just how Ralf Souquet might fare on his GB9 debut. Playing on alien tables and amongst players and faces both old and new, it was unclear whether his steely determination and infallible nature would. Ever the professional, he proved his doubters totally wrong with a steady, sometimes deadly, display of pool that the German is renowned for. His opening match saw him up against another international participant in Poland's Filip Krawczyk, a match which saw him come away victorious by 9 racks to 5. His next match saw him meet

Penzance's Dominic Clemens in a potentially tricky encounter between two methodical and meticulous players. Souquet once again came away the winner, however, and a 9-3 win saw Souquet through to a match against long time GB9 player and recently crowned Universities Pool Council 9-Ball champion Benji Buckley. The student from Derby gave it his all, but it wasn't enough to take down the Kaiser with Souquet again winning through, this time by 9 racks to 5. This put Souquet one match away from a place in the single elimination stages and, in his qualifying match, met one of Great Britain's finest in Mark Gray. For the first time in four matches Souquet was undone – a 9-3 reverse put Gray through to the last 32 and forced Souquet to drop down to the losers qualifying round. He then came up against another Mark in the qualifying round, this time Morley's Mark Lunn, but stepped things up a gear to ensure he joined Gray in the last 32 after all with a hard fought 9-6 victory over the Yorkshireman. Chris Buckmaster, one of the tour's most seasoned players, was awaiting Souquet in the last 32, but he was disposed of by 9 racks to 3 and ensured Souquet's safe passage through to the last 16. This last 16 battle turned out to be against another Yorkshireman, as per two rounds previous, this time in the form of Wakefield's Chris Hall. For the third time in the competition, Souquet found himself on the right side of a 9-5 scoreline, dismissing Hall and lining himself up with a tasty quarter final tie against a fellow former World Champion in Daryl Peach. Both the winner and the score stayed the same as his previous match, however – 9-5, again with Souquet victorious, setting up a semi-final against perhaps the best British based player yet to win a GB9 main event in Raj Hundal. This match went the distance with Souquet knocking in three break-and-runs to secure his spot in his first GB9 final.

No more than two racks separated the two finalists until Souquet managed to win the fifteenth rack to take a 9-6 lead. Many at this point felt that, just two racks from winning a GB9 title at his very first attempt, he wouldn't let the lead slip. He was pegged back to 10-9, however, and then Burford wrapped up the twentieth rack to send the match into a decider much to the delight of the dozens of spectators in the matchroom. After breaking off in the final rack, Burford opted to hook Souquet on the 3-ball but left it hanging over the corner bag. An audacious two rail escape saw Souquet come within a whisker of sinking the 3-ball in a move that would have surely seen him take the title. He gave cue ball in hand to Burford who duly cleared the table to win his second Midlands Classic title by 11 racks to 10, becoming the first

player to win the title twice. The result provisionally puts Burford as British number 2 and nobody would bet against him dethroning Imran Majid at the top of the rankings in the near future if he were to keep his current form up.

In the newly formatted Challenge Cup competition, Arfan Dad and Bruno Muratore battled it out to take home the final piece of silverware up for grabs during the weekend. On his way to the final, Dad defeated Massimo Laucci 6-0, followed by Alan Conway 6-2, and then a 6-4 win in each of his next three matches against Benji Buckley, Liam Waterworth and Jez Graham saw him through to the final. Muratore's path to the final began with a 6-0 defeat of Robin Cripps, followed by wins against Andy Lester 6-2, Pierfrancesco Garzia 6-2, Neil Raybone 6-3 and Adam Benn Smith 6-2 to second his spot in the final. It was Arfan that walked away a 6-5 winner in the final to take back the winners salver back home to Keighley in North Yorkshire, and a decent run for both players to hopefully draw inspiration to replicate this in the main draw in April's Paul Medati Trophy.



GB9 will return for the [Paul Medati Trophy](#) on 12 April 2013 once again at the Park Inn Hotel, Telford, UK

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