

# Yonex Dutch Open 2014

Report by David v. Schwerin, October 2014

## **Trip**

The tournament venue is located in Almere, which is a 40 minute trip from Amsterdam by train. All umpires were requested to arrange this transfer from Schiphol airport to Almere Poort by themselves. The transfer is quite convenient, the train station is right within Schiphol airport, tickets are around 8 euros per trip. The hall is situated a short walk from Almere Poort. Only problem was on the way back on Sunday as the train traffic was stopped due to construction work and the first leg of the trip had to be done by bus to the next available train station.

## **Accommodation**

All umpires were booked into the official tournament hotel at the NH Hotel in Naarden. The hotel itself was very nice, unfortunately it is around 20 minutes by car from the hall. A shuttle bus was available on an hourly basis.

## **Organisation, Match Control and Volunteers**

The organization and match control of the tournament in general was very smooth and appeared as a well-oiled machine.

## **Courts and Hall**

The Almere Topsportscenter, although built in the middle of nowhere, is a superb arena that could host also larger badminton events. Perfect venue for a tournament like this, even though the spectator stands are almost too big for a Grand Prix tournament, drawing hardly any big crowd to Almere.

The hall and the courts were equipped professionally and met the standard of a Grand Prix Event. All courts had the tablets and scoring system in use and from quarter finals on microphones were in use on both courts.

## **Tournament Start and Tournament Progress**

The tournament started with qualifiers on Tuesday. However, for the qualifying rounds only local Dutch umpires were officiating; international umpires were requested to arrive before the first briefing on Tuesday night at 21:00 in order to be available for duties from the first round onwards on Wednesday.

Both Wednesday and Thursday were organized in 3 shifts with 12 umpires on duty at each shift, every umpire officiating 2 shifts per day. Play started in the morning at 9:00 and ended around 10:00. Until quarterfinals 5 courts were in use and the standard rotating system was used for the duties.

Friday was quarterfinals with only 2 shifts and 2 courts starting in the afternoon and Saturday/Sunday was played in one shift each, reducing the number of courts to 2 and 1.

### **Scoring**

The Dutch Open were part of the testing phase for the 5x11 scoring system. It was the first time for me to umpire under this system, but the new vocabulary is quickly adapted after a few matches, even though there are a few things that sound strange at the beginning and break the automated flow of announcements one has become used to. Especially e.g. the "Player A leads 2 games to 1" after the third game can be quite cumbersome if it's a doubles, the names are long and the "wrong" party won the game as the current version of the software won't show the name of leading players at that point if they have not won the third game. But if the new system should get introduced these things will be adapted in a smooth way of course. All in all these are also good challenges to keep the umpire alert at all time and not fall back into automatisms.

Personally I have to say that while I was in favor of the 5x11 before I have to revise my opinion after this tournament. While it does make some of the fast matches even faster indeed, the matches are less exciting than I originally expected. There is hardly any suspense worth watching before the fourth game, there is no build up to a climax. Often the stronger side deliberately drops a game or two if they don't get into the match immediately.

Also, 10:10 situations occur way too often and are quite the anti-climax - a setting mode like we have at 20:20 might make it a bit more exciting.

### **Court Officials**

Referees were BWF referees from Croatia and Peru. Foreign umpires traveled from Switzerland, Sweden, USA, France, Belgium, Germany, Czech Republic, Denmark and Austria. A mixed group of 20 umpires of all levels.

The line judge team also consisted of an experienced international team, ensuring a consistent high level of performance and cooperation on the lines.

### **Duties & highlights**

I had a total of 25 duties, including 4 quarter finals, 2 semi finals (SJ) and the umpire duty for the women's doubles finals.

Apart from the women's doubles finals - which was an especially great game to umpire due to participation of local Dutch players and the attention and crowds that come with it - my personal highlight was the men's doubles quarter finals between a Taiwanese pair and an Indonesian pair. Not expecting to stand a chance against the stronger Indonesian pair the two brothers Lin from Chinese Taipei put on a perfect show for the spectators and making it one of the funniest matches I have umpired so far with 4 players and 8 court officials leaving the court with big smiles and standing ovations from the spectators!

### **Players Level**

The level of players was higher than the standard European Circuit, but due to the fact that the Denmark and French Open followed suit the weeks after there were hardly any big names to see. The Indonesians, Japanese and Chinese Taipei sent only B teams, bringing a bit of Asian flair into the tournament; same counts for the European powerhouses who also refrained from sending the top players.

### **Spectators**

Number of spectators was rather limited which was a pity in this great arena. Fortunately there were Dutch players in the semi finals and finals, drawing at least a half-decent crowd on the weekend. But still, half of the stands were empty.

### **Sightseeing**

Amsterdam City is not too far away (40-45 minutes) by train from the hall or by bus and then metro from the hotel, but the only day a trip would really make sense without hassle is Friday morning and this would require to leave early in the morning to be back for briefing at 13:00. Otherwise, for first-timers I highly recommend to take a flight earlier in the morning on Tuesday, take a train into the city from Schiphol, deposit the luggage at Central and enjoy the day in the city before taking the ride to Almere. Unfortunately I did not realize that before hand.

From organizer's side there is neither sightseeing nor any other extra-curricular activity arranged.

The old-town of Naarden is in walking distance of the hotel (30-40 minutes stroll) and can be a quite nice thing to do and see on Friday and Saturday morning. The town is quite neat charming with a few small cafes and restaurants, being like a star-shaped island in between the canals the whole center can easily be covered on foot on half a day.

### **Catering**

Dinner vouchers for every day were available for free to be used at the canteen of the hall, which had a selection of 2-3 different dishes every night, free drinks and desserts. Apart from that there were two restaurants in the hall, one of which was an Asian wok place that offered a quite good quick meals for 7-8 euros.

There was small daily allowance for umpires accumulating to a total of 85 euros for the whole week.

The hotel offered a restaurant with a very nice breakfast and kitchen/bar open all through the day until late night.

### **Summary**

From a professional side all in all a good, high level tournament to go to as an umpire with lots of duties to do, even though it's a pity that the qualifying day is only for local umpires.

Personally I was quite happy with the amount of duties and also the matches awarded on the weekend.

Off-court unfortunately you are on your own. Unlike at many other tournaments the hosts have no activity, joint dinner or sightseeing planned on the one of the free half-days or evenings.