

= 2004 European Open (snooker) =

The 2004 European Open was the 2004 edition of the European Open snooker tournament , held from 1 to 6 March 2004 , at the Hilton Conference Centre , Portomaso , Malta . It was the final year the event was known as European Open , as the event was renamed to Malta Cup in next year . Stephen Maguire defeated Jimmy White by nine frames to three (9 ? 3) in the final to claim his first ranking @-@ event title , transforming him from " talented underachiever into a world @-@ ranking event winner " , according to The Times . In the semi @-@ finals Maguire defeated Stephen Lee and White beat Tony Drago . The tournament was the fifth of eight WPBSA ranking events in the 2003 / 2004 season , following the Welsh Open and preceding the Irish Masters .

= = Tournament summary = =

Prior to the 1988 / 1989 season no ranking tournament had been continuously staged outside of the United Kingdom (although the World Championship had been held twice in Australia) . The snooker governing body , the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (WPBSA) , decided to include overseas events and the first two locations chosen were Canada and Europe . The European Open was first held in 1989 in Deauville , France , and was suspended for 1997 / 1998 and 2000 / 2001 . It moved to the Hilton Conference Centre , Portomaso , Malta for the first time in 2004 and was renamed the Malta Cup the following season .

The 2004 tournament was the fifth of eight WPBSA ranking events in the 2003 / 2004 season , following the Welsh Open and preceding the Irish Masters . Held in January , the Welsh Open was won by Ronnie O 'Sullivan , who defeated Steve Davis by nine frames to eight (9 ? 8) in the final . The defending European Open champion was also O 'Sullivan , who defeated Stephen Hendry 9 ? 6 in last year 's final . Paul Hunter , who had defeated O 'Sullivan in the final of the non @-@ ranking Masters in February , entered the tournament " playing the best snooker of his career " , according to Phil Yates of The Times .

= = = Qualifying = = =

The qualifying stage was played between players ranked 17 and those ranked lower for one of 16 places in the final stage . The matches were best @-@ of @-@ 9 frames until the semi @-@ finals . In March 2004 Maltese player Tony Drago defeated Adrian Gunnell 5 ? 2 in a match held over from the qualifying stage in November .

= = = Round 1 = = =

The qualifiers went through to face members of the top 16 . In this round , Davis came from 2 ? 4 down to beat Joe Swail 5 ? 4 , in a match where both players missed chances . In the deciding frame , Davis won on the pink ball after Swail had missed the brown . After the match , Davis said it was a historic day as he had never won a match in the country . Stephen Lee received a walkover to the next round after his opponent Robin Hull withdrew due to medical reasons . World number 41 Stephen Maguire made a break of 89 in the final frame of his match against Peter Ebdon to win 5 ? 4 , and world number three O 'Sullivan opened his match against Marco Fu with a century break of 110 and went on to win 5 ? 1 . Chris Small , who suffers from the spinal condition ankylosing spondylitis , whitewashed UK champion Matthew Stevens 5 ? 0 , in a match lasting almost three hours and which saw Stevens lose two frames on the black ball . Neil Robertson defeated Ken Doherty 5 ? 3 , and Joe Perry beat David Roe by the same scoreline . In the last match of the day , David Gray beat Fergal O 'Brien 5 ? 3 .

World number one Mark Williams was defeated 1 ? 5 by Anthony Hamilton , who made a break of 133 . Williams refused to answer questions at the post @-@ match press conference , explaining : " I 'm not saying anything because if I do I could be in trouble so I 'm keeping my mouth shut . " Hunter and Hendry made high breaks of 49 and 55 in defeating Brian Morgan and Jimmy Michie 5 ?

1 , respectively . After the match Hendry ? the world number two and a seven @-@ time world champion said " I feel like going to apologise to each fan one by one because it was such a bad match " . John Higgins whitewashed Barry Pinches 5 ? 0 , compiling a 132 break in the last frame in a match where Pinches made a high break of 33 . Jimmy White overcame James Wattana 5 ? 4 having trailed 2 ? 3 . Graeme Dott defeated Drew Henry 5 @-@ 3 and Quinten Hann beat Simon Bedford 5 ? 0 . In the last game of the day , Drago beat Alan McManus 5 ? 4 .

= = = Round 2 = = =

In round two O 'Sullivan defeated Small 5 ? 1 , coming from behind to win in each of the first three frames with breaks of 58 , 81 , and 46 . A break of 112 completed the victory , after which O 'Sullivan said his opponent had made him work . In the fifth frame O 'Sullivan continued playing despite needing snookers , later explaining , " I wanted to keep playing because I was enjoying it so much " . White made breaks of 72 , 52 , 69 , 51 , and 65 in defeating Hendry 5 ? 3 , after which Hendry said his performance was " horrendous " , and White said his refusal to go out the night before contributed to his performance . In the sixth frame White led by 41 points before missing an easy red , allowing Hendry to win on the black with a 55 break to level at 3 ? 3 . White dominated the next two frames for the victory . Higgins , without a tournament victory for over two years , whitewashed Dott 5 ? 0 with breaks of 82 , 81 , 57 , and 52 , and said it was the " best [he had] felt for ages " . Drago defeated Hunter 5 ? 2 to reach the quarter @-@ finals of a ranking events for the first time since 1998 , in a low @-@ quality match where Drago made one break over 50 . Lee defeated Davis 5 ? 3 in a four @-@ hour match , and Higgins completed a second whitewash when he beat Dott 5 ? 0 , bringing his career record against Dott to 9 ? 1 . Maguire defeated Perry 5 ? 4 to reach his first ranking quarter @-@ final , and Hann beat Hamilton 5 ? 1 to claim the final place in the next round .

= = = Quarter @-@ finals = = =

In the quarter @-@ finals Lee defeated O 'Sullivan 5 ? 4 in a match that lasted 3 hours and 32 minutes . O 'Sullivan came from 2 ? 3 down to lead 4 ? 3 before Lee leveled the match . In the final frame O 'Sullivan led 36 ? 0 , before Lee made a 46 break and fluked a snooker that enabled him to claim victory . O 'Sullivan said his performance was very poor , while Lee said he was quietly confident . White defeated Robertson 5 ? 3 to reach his third semi @-@ final of the season . White led 4 ? 1 and was 56 points ahead in the sixth but missed a straightforward green , allowing Robertson to win on the black with a 67 break . Robertson took the next frame before a risky long pot in the eighth allowed White to win the match . White ? who last won a ranking title 12 years ago prior at this event ? said , " Everyone knows I 've been in front so many times in the past and tossed it away so I was having nightmares out there " . Drago quickly won the first four frames of his match against Hann , conceding the fifth , before completing a 5 ? 1 victory , after which he said the crowd support helped him . Maguire caused an upset when he beat Higgins 5 ? 3 , a match that saw Maguire lose the first two frames before winning the next four . After the match Maguire he said he had " starting to think about winning it now " .

= = = Semi @-@ finals = = =

The semi @-@ finals were best @-@ of @-@ 11 frames . White reached his first final in four years when he defeated Drago 6 ? 4 . Leading 4 ? 1 White made a break of 104 to win the sixth frame , before missing a straightforward red to allow his opponent to win the seventh with an 84 break . Drago won the next two in 15 minutes with breaks of 44 and 109 ? completing the latter in four minutes ? before an 86 break gave White the victory , after which White said , " Playing Tony here , I got a taste of what players have against me at the Masters when the crowd are all on my side but they were fair and I enjoyed every minute of it . "

In the other semi @-@ final Maguire beat Lee 6 ? 4 in an error @-@ strewn match which lasted

four hours . After winning the first two frames Maguire lost the next three , but " kept his cool " to seal the victory . Maguire said the match was a " battle " and that he was surprised at how badly his opponents had played in the tournament , while Lee said he " just blew up " and that , " When you ? re as poor as that you get into such a state of mind that you can ? t think straight " .

= = = Final = = =

The match was White 's 23rd appearance in a final and his first since the 2000 British Open . In the best @-@ of @-@ 17 final Maguire defeated White 9 ? 3 to win his first ranking title at the age of 22 , earning £ 48 @,@ 000 in prize money . The victory , according to The Times , transformed Maguire from " talented underachiever into a world @-@ ranking event winner " ; according to BBC Sport his victory was a surprise .

In the afternoon session Maguire made two sizeable breaks and one of 137 to lead 3 ? 0 . He won the next frame and compiled a century in the fifth . The sixth frame was awarded to Maguire , when White violated the three @-@ miss rule . Snookered in the jaws of a corner pocket , White twice attempted to hit the pack of five reds off a side cushion and missed . On his third attempt he adopted a slow roll to the pack and again missed . In the evening session , trailing 0 ? 6 , White won his first frame before the next four were shared , the last of which included a break of 125 by White . At 8 ? 2 a break of 57 gave Maguire the victory .

After his victory Maguire acknowledged the influence of Terry Griffiths who had been working with him on the mental side of the game : " He 's been on the phone just telling me to keep calm and that I can do it if I believe in myself " . Maguire said he always knew he was good enough to win a tournament and that he would aim for a top @-@ 16 finish for the season . White said , " Stephen outplayed me in safety , potting and position so he deserved to win " and , " He gave me a good bashing . I 'm pleased for him because he 's a nice lad but I 'm disappointed because I didn 't compete " .

= = Main draw = =

Key