

Egypt Ashour: I can win World Squash Open

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When Egyptian superstar Ahmed Barada lost the World Open final against Peter Nicol a decade ago, it wasn't all doom and gloom for the Cairo squash fraternity

As Barada lost his way at the start of the new decade so a new name came onto the scene. Hashim Ashour, a dazzling talent with wrist speed to match, joined the PSA tour at the age of 20 and looked sure to be a force over the coming years.

Nearly 10 years on and Ashour, who has breathtaking racquet speed, has only two tour wins and six final appearances to his name.

Meanwhile Ramy, his younger brother, is world No 3 and has won 12 times on tour.

However, Ashour showed signs that he can finally put in a string of quality performances, as well as casting aside the mind games of his brother receiving all the attention, by believing that he can reach a major final.

In the first round, Ashour was perilously close to exiting the tournament like he had done in four of the last five events. He was 2-0 down to England's Chris Simpson before staging a remarkable recovery to play Adrian Grant in round two.

Ashour's opening win was just the kickstart he needed. Fast, furious with little room for slow rallies, Grant failed to adjust to the pace, despite having game balls in each.

With a succession of cross-court flicks and rapid winners, Ashour never let up and won enough winners to keep believing in himself, eventually crossing the line after 44 minutes, 13-11, 12-10, 11-9.

Ashour said: "I know I have the game to go forward. This is my game but I don't play like this all the time. If I did I would be in the top five."

Ashour also believed that he can finally step out of the shadows of his brother as he comes towards the end of his career.

He said: "I have spent all my time coaching Ramy but now he is the one motivating me.

"Every time we play we have five-setters and he is world champion [he won the title in Manchester last year]. This is my last three years on tour. I know I have it."

Grant, the world No 10, admitted that the pace was always going to be a factor. The Londoner said: "I lost my intensity and failed to close out the last few points in each game.

Ashour thrives on adrenalin and he is a player who relies on winners. You can't switch off for one moment as you don't know what to expect from him."

Meanwhile, young Egyptian Tarek Momen scored one of his biggest wins as David Palmer was left reflecting on an 14-12, 12-10, 11-7 defeat. It was the first time the Australian had failed to reach the third round of the World open since 1998.

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