

WITH all the proficiency and poise of a seasoned veteran, Matty Mason, steps to the table knowing he is just one shot away from victory.

Looking to emulate the many stars that have tread the circuit before him, there is only one thing on his mind. As he shapes up to pot the black, there is a noticeably firm grip on his cue, a steely look in his eye and a calm composure unbefitting with the pressure shot he is about to take.

However, just like Neil Robertson in the World Championship Final against Graeme Dott earlier this year, Matty, who is supported by Ridgeway's Stepdown service, seems to take it all in his stride tucking the ball away into the bottom cushion.

And it was only a matter of months ago that having played the game for more than 30 years in clubs and pubs, he watched his first major World Championship Final at the Crucible in Sheffield.

Similar to Matty's taut ending to the game today at a local snooker centre in Oxford, the final was a nerve wracking experience which went on late into the evening, with all to play for. Despite Matty's understated views on Sheffield itself, he did find the Crucible a fitting venue for such a historic and great spectacle.

"It was a great final and I cheered on the Australian underdog Neil Robertson all the way to the end," said Matty.

"The Crucible was a lot smaller than I thought it would be, but there was a really nervous atmosphere as we didn't know who would win.

"We were sat fairly close to the table and had a brilliant view of the game."

Neil Robertson eventually edged out the Scottish opponent and 2004 champion in fine fashion winning 18-13 to become the first Australian to win a major snooker tournament in many years.

For Matty, it wasn't the first snooker game he had witnessed, but it was one of the most absorbing. Fortunately for him, his last game happened to coincide with a certain Ronnie O'Sullivan, who he subsequently met.

"He is such an inspirational sportsman and I have followed him throughout the tournaments for many years."

Dismantling and dusting off the chalk from his Alex Higgins signed snooker cue, Matty looks satisfied with his win as another discontented opponent walks off into the distance. It's only a matter of time before the next challenger will pit their wits against the mighty Matty Mason. ■

"It was wonderful to meet with Ronnie, one of my all time favourite players and to see him win."

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