

## Silverback topples Harms in 11-set gripper to reach final

Tony O'Shea justified his 13/8 favourite's tag, scrambling through a tense 11-set clash to win through to the final, shocking Dutch electrician Wesley Harms into a 6-5 submission.

But Sparky, the battling Dutch sharpshooter made a whole legion of new fans with his never-say-die effort to try to make it an all-Dutch final, the 13th seeding proving unlucky on this occasion against veteran chucker O'Shea.

Remarkably the Stockport player suffered more than 10 bounce outs, which prompted a board change during the 92-minute game.

Both players missed doubles in the tense opening set of the clash as Harms fluffed double tops for 64 to move into a match lead, O'Shea blazing back with a maximum and double tops outshot to steal the advantage.

Harms wasted no time taking all three legs in the second set, hitting a 180 and clinching the match-levelling 81 checkout on bull to level.

The opening three legs of the next set went with the throwing advantage, Silverback swinging in to clinch a 2-1 match lead, capturing the fourth leg against the throw.

Sparky led 2-0 in the fourth set, O'Shea unleashing a 12-darter but missed double 18 and then double nine for a set-saving 66 checkout. Harms who had missed doubles scrambled to double one to level the match at 2-2.

Legs went with the throw in the fifth set, O'Shea taking the third against the throw with double 10. He then missed bull for a 164 set-winning finish, Harms coolly levelling with 62, finished on double 16 and holding his nerve to finish off 72 on double 16 again in the deciding fifth leg, easing into a 3-2 match lead.

In the see-saw encounter the Stockport sharpshooter took the opening two legs of the sixth set with double 16 but then miscounted for a 120 finish, recovering to exit on double two after Harms missed double 10, levelling the match for the third time.

The opening legs of the seventh set went against the advantage, Sparky taking the third with the throw, finishing 52 on double 16 after O'Shea struggled with his scoring, He defended his throw in the next, as Harms sneaked home in the deciding leg clinching double eight after Silverback failed to finish off 102.

Silverback swept through the eighth unchallenged, hitting a maximum in the third and clinching a 100 finish to level the match at 4-4.

The opening four legs of the ninth set went with the throw, Harms finishing on 90 while O'Shea replied with 103 and 121 checkouts, Silverback coolly clinching the set with a two dart 71 completed on double 16.

But the Cheshire player who seemed to blow hot and cold trailed in the next 2-0 as lacklustre scoring allowed Harms to steal the initiative and take the set 3-1 to level the match at 5-5.

Play was suspended following the set after O'Shea complained about a draught blowing across the stage – caused by air conditioning in the club. It was also agreed with both players to change the board after O'Shea had suffered 13 bounce outs.

On the return for a sudden death deciding set, both players missed doubles, the grandfather from Stockport easing to double eight. He missed a nerve-wracking six doubles in the next before scrambling to the same double after Harms missed double 12 for 98 to level.

Harms nipped in for the third with double two, O'Shea taking victory on double 10 in the fourth leg after the young Dutchman missed double tops for a match-saving 76 finish, tears welling up in his eyes as he celebrated.

Afterwards O'Shea said: "It is unbelievable, I am so overwhelmed. That young lad (Wesley) has got a great future. It was he who suggested that we change the board because I had suffered so many bounce-outs. He is a real gentleman.

"The draught affected us both. I threw two darts and one went right and the other went left," said O'Shea. Defeated Harms admitted: "It was a great game, I gave away the last set. Losing hurts a little bit because the first leg I missed darts to get that leg but I am proud I reached the semi finals."