

What to Look for in Today's Matches

by Matt Lombardi



J.P. Morgan
TOURNAMENT
OF CHAMPIONS

5:00: Raneem El Welily (Egypt, age 30, rank 1) vs. Joelle King (New Zealand, age 30, rank 4). El Welily had a strong 2018, rising to no. 1 in the world, but King proved her nemesis—the Kiwi won all three of their meetings, including the final of November's Hong Kong Open, King's first-ever major-tournament title. In that match King was masterful at hitting volley drops, while El Welily began with a rare patch of inaccurate shooting and never completely recovered. Look for King to take the same aggressive approach tonight, hunting for volleys and mixing in boasts. The string of losses is bound to be in the back of El Welily's mind, and how she starts is likely to be crucial. It's likely she'll initially try to extend rallies in order to find her rhythm and get settled on court before putting her exceptional touch to work hitting winners.

5:45: Nour El Sherbini (Egypt, age 23, rank 2) vs. Nour El Tayeb (Egypt, age 25, rank 3). These friends and rivals have been competing on the world stage since childhood. In 2009 they played in the final of the World Junior Championships, an under-19 event that El Sherbini won at the astounding age of 13. Two years later they met again in the World Juniors final, with El Tayeb coming out on top. In typical Egyptian style, they both like to play at a fast pace, but beyond that their games are a study in contrast. El Sherbini is a judicious attacker. She likes to construct points with powerful, precise hitting to the back of the court, forcing loose balls that she can pounce on for winners. El Tayeb more often tries to gain advantage by wrong-footing her opponent with aggressive cross-courts, drops, and boasts. The two Nours played twice last year in major tournament finals, with El Sherbini winning here at the ToC and El Tayeb taking the Windy City Open. Both matches were seesaw five-game battles.

8:00: Mohamed ElShorbagy (Egypt, age 28, rank 1) vs. Karim Abdel Gawad (Egypt, age 27, rank 5). Over the years ToC fans have seen ElShorbagy develop from an exceptional young talent into one of the game's all-time greats. He has now held the no. 1 ranking longer than any other Egyptian player in squash history, surpassing Amr Shabana. For all his power and racquet skill, his greatest asset may be his tenacity, which was on full display in his come-from-behind quarterfinal win over Diego Elias. Elias was in great form, but ElShorbagy dug in, returned everything, and eventually wore down the young Peruvian. While ElShorbagy can be a fierce presence on court, Gawad may be the most laidback man in squash. His game resembles that of women's star Raneem El Welily: he can have lapses in concentration, but when he's focused, he's the deadliest shot-maker in the game. He was on fire in December's Black Ball Open in Cairo, where he beat ElShorbagy and this year's two other ToC semifinalists, Ali Farag and Tarek Momen, to win the tournament.

8:45: Ali Farag (Egypt, age 26, rank 2) vs. Tarek Momen (Egypt, age 30, rank 4). These two nimble, rail-thin players possess two different types of speed: Momen darts around the court in a flash, while Farag effortlessly glides, seeming to anticipate every shot before it's been hit. They're both extraordinary retrievers and creative, entertaining shot-makers. Momen pulls his opponent to the front of the court using unorthodox boasts and drops, with the aim of creating opportunities to counterattack, while Farag likes to develop a rhythm with tight, medium-paced and then break it with an attacking shot. They met in last year's ToC semis, with Momen winning in five games, and went on to play four more times subsequently. They split those matches, with both of Momen's wins coming in five.

THE ENGINEER

Wednesday

JANUARY 23, 2019



Dunlop ToC Exclusive:
Buy 1 Racquet Get 1 Free

Need a new racquet? Or two? Dunlop is offering a special buy one get one free deal on Dunlop racquets. Stop by the merch booth to get yours!

The world's best squash players have proven themselves on squash's biggest stage to reach the J.P. Morgan Tournament of Champions semifinals. The world's top-four-ranked women will vie for a place in the final, as will three out of the top four-ranked men.

TODAY'S MATCHES PRESENTED BY

**LexingtonPartners**

5 PM SESSION

[1] Raneem El Welily (EGY) v. [4] Joelle King (NZL)
[2] Nour El Sherbini (EGY) v. [3] Nour El Tayeb (EGY)

8 PM SESSION

[1] Mohamed ElShorbagy (EGY) v. [8] Karim Abdel Gawad (EGY)
[2] Ali Farag (EGY) v. [4] Tarek Momen (EGY)



MODERN LUXURY
MANHATTAN



SPEAR
PHYSICAL THERAPY

@tocsquash

tocsquash.com

#ToC19

MEN

SQUASH ENGINE

Putting the game in gear.

WOMEN

