

## **STAR SELBY STUNS HIGGINS**

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**John Higgins, one of the favourites for the 888.com World Snooker Championship, has crashed out at the first round at the Crucible.**

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The Wizard of Wishaw went down 10-4 to Mark Selby in one of the most shocking first-round scorelines in the tournament's history.

Higgins has been snooker's most impressive player this season having won two of the biggest titles, the Grand Prix and the SAGA Insurance Masters.

He was also a finalist in Malta and China and was rated second favourite after Ronnie O'Sullivan to go on to take snooker's biggest prize.

His defeat to Leicester's world No 38 Selby may not quite rank alongside Tony Knowles' 10-1 hammering of Steve Davis in 1982 or Stephen Hendry's 10-7 reverse against Stuart Bingham in 2000, but it is a major surprise to see Higgins heading back up to Scotland just two days into the tournament.

Selby's first impact on the professional circuit was at the 2002 China Open when he beat Hendry and O'Sullivan on his way to the semi-finals and he went on to reach the Scottish Open final the following year.

He has showed few signs since then that he could upset one of the sport's star players on snooker's biggest stage, especially having lost 10-5 to Higgins at the same stage last year.

But the Leicester City fan produced his best performance in recent seasons to progress to a last 16 clash with Mark Williams or Anthony Hamilton.

Higgins, the 1998 world champion whose hopes of regaining the world No 1 spot have now evaporated, trailed 6-3 overnight but reduced his arrears in the first frame of tonight's session with a break of 58.

Selby responded with a brilliant 123 then went 8-4 up with a 58 after Higgins had broken down on 20.

Frame 13 proved pivotal as Selby was in first with 59 then Higgins

had a chance to steal it only to miss a tricky final yellow on 34. Selby wrapped it up to go five up with six to play at the mid-session interval.

The 22-year-old showed no signs of nerves as he closed out victory in style with a superb 110.