



HYP-HYP HOORAY: Lee and hypnotist Macpherson

# Happy daze as Don lifts Lee on cue

By **BRIAN RADFORD**

**SNOOKER** ace Stephen Lee trailed 7-1 in the most crucial match of his career when he stormed out of The Crucible and asked to be hypnotised to put things right.

Lee and his 'mind coach' drove immediately to their hotel on the outskirts of Sheffield to recover from a devastating semi-final onslaught from rampant Mark Williams.

In the privacy of Room 304, shattered Lee sank into an armchair, closed his eyes, and Don Macpherson, his trusted hypnotist, steadily coaxed him into a deep 30-minute trance.

Two hours later, a rejuvenated Lee returned to the table and rattled off four frames in a row to underline the power of mind over matter.

Snooker's first hypnotised professional – as exclusively revealed in the **SP** – was responding to unique behind-the-scenes assistance to propel him towards his dream of winning the top honour.

As it was, Williams rallied to win the semi 17-8, and then powered on to beat Ken Docherty 18-16 in the final.

But it was Lee's sudden and explosive recovery that surprised spectators in the auditorium and the millions of TV viewers. After all, in earlier rounds he had produced similar electrifying bursts to beat legends Steve Davis and Jimmy White, along with Marco Fu, who had already beaten favourite Ronnie O'Sullivan.

And this was the same Lee, the provisional world No.1, who had admitted going into the tournament 'demoralised' by a season of dismal performances.

So was his new-found form due entirely to being hypnotised before and during the World Championships?

"It made a world of difference," said Lee. "Don had a great calming influence. If I'd been in the same form as last year, I could have won the title.

"I felt no pressure whatsoever. Everything Don did allowed me to focus clearly. During my match with Steve Davis we returned to the hotel for some hypnosis and I returned to beat him 6-1 in the final session.

"We did the same against Jimmy White. I was 9-7 down, then dominated the final period.

"Don also came to my dressing room during every interval. He'd dash in from the audience to make sure I stayed calm. I'd have a cigarette and we'd chat and then he'd ask me to close my eyes and relax. He kept me focused."

Lee added: "Against Marco Fu there was one point when I wanted to pull away, so we put a hypnotic programme together. I told Don I wanted to buzz, so he put me in a trance and used my words – commitment, confidence, authority, determination. It worked perfectly. I won four frames in a row and Marco was reeling.

"We did the same against Mark Williams in the semi-final when I was 7-1 down. Again, I stormed back with four frames on the bounce before he won it through taking his chances.

"This was the best I've ever been mentally for any tournament. I was fresh and positive, collected prize money and went up to world No.5."

Macpherson said: "I'm proud of what Steve achieved. He knows what he must do to develop his game and I'll do everything to help him."



ON CUE: Lee at The Crucible