

By Oli Dickson Jefford, Sportsbeat

HEATHER Watson starred at the LTA's Rothesay Open Nottingham on Monday as she eased her way to the second round.

After coming through qualifying Watson - who is supported by LTA's Pro Access Programme - was handed a tough opening round encounter against Germany's Jule Niemeier.

Niemeier won in straight sets when the two met in the fourth round at Wimbledon last year but on this occasion the 31-year-old prevailed coming from 4-1 down in the first set to triumph 6-4 6-3 and set up a second round clash against 2022 Wimbledon semi-finalist Tatjana Maria.

Earlier in the day, Sonay Kartal's campaign came to an end with a 6-3 5-7 6-2 loss to Poland's Magdalena Frech.

Brighton's Kartal had impressed through the qualifying draw, beating 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin on her way to the main draw, joining Watson as one of four British qualifiers in total and one of six women in the main draw.

Kartal, who is on the LTA's Pro Scholarship Programme, showed all her classic grit and determination to rally from a set down to force a decider against the more experienced Frech, though the Pole responded strongly in the third set to claim victory.

In qualifying action, Dan Cox and Stuart Parker both just missed out on a place in the main draw of the men's singles event.

Cox pushed second seed Arthur Cazaux to the very limit in a hard-fought encounter, though it was ultimately the Frenchman who sealed a 6-4 3-6 7-6 (2) win.

There was also defeat in the final qualifying round for Parker, who fell 7-6 (5) 1-6 7-6 (5) in a thrilling contest to fourth seed Juncheng Shang.

Meanwhile, Arthur Fery will conclude his round one match against American Steve Johnson tomorrow after rain stopped play towards the end of the day.

Former world No.21 Johnson claimed the opening set 6-4 on Centre Court though Fery rallied to win the second set 6-3 and force a decider, with the American 2-1 up in the third when play was suspended.