

Haywards Heath & District Table Tennis League

58th Annual Closed Tournament

The League's annual championships were held on Sunday 15 March at Warden Park School. It must be said at the outset that the day was superbly organised by Lyle Cyster who by persistent cajoling and coaxing had ensured that there was a full entry for all the events. He was ably assisted on the day by Alan White from Sussex County TTA who also umpired some of the finals. Lyle also provided a range of light snacks to keep up the energy levels.

Thanks also to all those who helped with setting up, umpiring and putting away.

Handicap Championship

The day started at 9.00 with the handicap competition, a chance for lower league players to test their skills against the top players with a chance of winning. Of the 14 Premier players in an entry of 32, only 7 reached the last 16 knockout stage. As it happened, 6 of those ended in the top half of the draw so the 7 First and Second Division players in the bottom half had a good chance of progressing.

In the top half there were 4 five set matches and Cathy Seiderer gave Andrew Sharland a close contest before losing in the fourth.

The first semi-final was an all Premier clash between Michael Bridger (+1) and Tomas Pomej with Tom winning a thrilling five setter 9-11, 11-5, 13-11, 6-11, 11-6. The other semi was also a gripping five sets with Jim Allum (+4) prevailing 11-7 over Annabel Bridger in the fifth.

The final therefore pitched Premier against Division Two. Tom's power was too much for Jim who despite an 8 point start could not repeat his earlier form and lost in three.

The Juniors who entered the Handicap all acquitted themselves well, with Annabel reaching the semi-finals and Keigo Burnham winning his group and progressing to the quarter finals.

Veteran Singles

The Vets was next although the age limit of 40 seemed a bit low to some of us more, er, seasoned players. Perhaps we should also have a Vintage Singles competition?

With a slightly disappointing entry of only 9 players this was played on a straight knockout basis. The first semi-final was between Andrew Sharland and Mounis Abosedira which Andrew won in three to set up a final against Dennis Hayden who overcame Fred Bodeau 11-6 in the fifth set of a closely fought game.

The final went to four sets (11-8, 11-6, 11-13, 11-8) with Andrew retaining the title he won last year.

Junior Championship

The Junior competition ran concurrently with the Vets and saw 16 entrants compete in 4x4 groups with the top two from each group moving into the main knockout event and the bottom two into a Consolation knockout. Entries were up on last year and demonstrate the continued expansion and improvement of our Junior section.

The Group qualifiers were Bertrand Siu, Alex Bryant, Ben Worley, Keigo Burnham, Luke Gallagher, Luke Allum, Charlie Hough and Annabel Bridger. Into the Consolation were Kate Bridger, Riccardo Bagaini, Tommy Worley, Daniel Blain, Tom Smith, Ben Anthony, Johnny Griffiths and Alanna Blain.

The semi-finals of the main event pitched our top 4 Juniors against each other, Bertrand Siu being made to work hard by Charlie Hough, before winning in four sets, with Ben Worley beating Luke Gallagher in the other. In the final, although Bertrand took the first set 16-14 Ben came through to win 3-1 in a hard, close fought match.

In the Consolation competition Kate Bridger and Tom Smith contested one semi-final and Johnny Griffiths played Tommy Worley in the other. In the first match, Tom took the first set 11-8 and narrowly lost the next two 10-12 and 11-13 before going down 5-11 in the fourth. In the second semi, Tommy Worley beat Ben Anthony in straight sets. In the final, there were four very close sets all of which could have gone either way but Kate managed to hold on, winning 12-10, 11-9, 9-11, 13-11.

All the Juniors played to the best of their ability and were a credit to themselves and to the unceasing work of Brian and Lyle and our coaches Marc Burman and Tomas Pomej. The future of our league is looking good!

Championship Singles

The main event commenced with 24 competitors, including 12 Premier players and 5 of our top Juniors. Not surprisingly, these players dominated the group stages but Cathy Seiderer did very well to take Tomas Pomej to five sets. Three Juniors reached the first knockout round where Bertrand Siu edged a high quality five set match against Luke Gallagher and Fred Bodeau came from 2-1 down to scrape past Ben Worley 11-8 in the fifth. The top four seeds from the groups re-joined the draw for the quarter finals which went largely to form although Michael Bridger scored a notable straight sets victory over Andrew Sharland. There was also a ding-dong battle between doubles partners and league teammates, Tomas and Fred, with Tomas winning 11-8 in the fifth.

In the semis, Marc Burman beat Tomas and Rory Scott came from behind to beat Michael 3-1. The final produced another thrilling encounter between the top two seeds with regular applause from the spectators for some breathtaking rallies. On the day, Marc proved too strong for Rory, winning 16-14, 11-9, 4-11, 11-6.

The bottom two players from the group stages competed for the Consolation cup. There were some notable performances including a five set quarter final victory for Mounis Abosedira over Bob Hoare. In the semi-finals, John Burnham beat Lynne

Trussell in straight sets while in the other Charlie Hough played a terrific match against Bob Hoare, winning 11-9 in the fifth. With the final played almost straightaway, Charlie was soon two sets up and although John came back strongly to level the match there was no stopping Charlie as he took the fifth set 11-6 to lift the cup.

Doubles

With so many close games the Doubles, scheduled to start at 5.40, did not get underway until gone 7pm. Three groups of three pairs played a group round with the top two seeds going straight into the semi-finals, to be joined by the winners of two play off matches between the four next best pairs. In the semis Marc Burman and Luke Gallagher overcame Ben Worley and Matthew Caddy in three sets. The other was evenly contested with experienced doubles partners Tomas Pomej and Fred Bodeau just falling to Rory Scott and Michael Bridger 13-15, 9-11, 11-9, 8-11.

The final was a top quality affair with some amazing rallies and four of the sets ending 11-9. In the end it was Marc and Luke who came through in the fifth with the match not finishing until 9.30.

All in all, a very successful day enjoyed by all and, once again, huge thanks are due to Lyle for all his hard work.

The trophies for these events, along with those for the league and other cup competitions will be presented at our presentation evening on Saturday, 25 April at The United Services Club.