

Haywards Heath & District Table Tennis League

59th Annual Closed Tournament

This year's tournament was held on Sunday, 20 March 2016 at Warden Park Academy. After an initial delay getting into the hall we were able to get started only 20 minutes late thanks to a great team effort in setting up.

Handicap Championship

As usual the day started with the handicap competition which allowed the lower division players to test their skills against higher ranking players and have a chance of winning silverware. There was a full entry of 32 and some of the handicaps, especially for Division Two players against Premier players, left little margin for error.

Six Premier players (from 11) and five each from Divisions 1 & 2 (from 8 & 12 entrants) progressed to the knockout stages where, again, handicaps played a big part as only 1 Premier player got through to the quarter finals (and that was from an all-Premier clash).

The first semi-final was an all first division match as Marcin took on Sam Monk (+1) with the latter winning in straight sets. The other semi saw First Division Vincent L'Estrange take on one of our very promising juniors from Division Two, Tommy Worley, who started with an advantage of 3 points. On this occasion the first division player won but it won't be too long before that handicap has to be reversed.

The final was therefore between long standing first division rivals whose league matches are often close affairs. It proved so again as the match see-sawed either way with the Chairman (who started with a 1 point advantage) winning 2-11, 11-8, 11-7, 8-11, 11-9. A draw might have been a fair result.

Veteran Singles

With no handicaps to handicap the top players in this competition premier players progressed without difficulty against lower league opponents.

The semi-finals were both four sets, Andrew Sharland beating Fred Bodeau 11-5, 8-11, 11-9, 11-6 and Dennis Hayden beating David Champneys 11-8, 11-8, 11-13, 11-4. In a thrilling five set final Dennis was unable to stop Andrew winning for the third year in succession 9-11, 14-12, 11-8, 9-11, 11-3. Well done Andrew.

Junior Championship

The Junior competition ran concurrently with the Vets with a 16 player format in four groups designed so that 8 reach the main knockout with the other 8 moving into a Consolation knockout. The standard of play was exceptional; we should be really proud of our junior section.

The Group qualifiers were Luke Gallagher, Tommy Worley, Kate Bridger, Charlie Hough, Bertrand Siu, Tom Smith, Patrick Neil and Ben Worley. Into the Consolation were Claudia Hough Ryan Taylor, Annabel Bridger, Emily Dunsby and Oliver Neil.

Our top four juniors made it into the semi-finals of the main event, Luke beating Charlie 11-4, 11-5, 10-12, 11-5 and Ben beating Bertrand in straight sets. The final saw some great table tennis and Luke prevented Ben from winning consecutive titles by winning 11-2, 11-6, 11-7.

In the Consolation competition Ryan Taylor and Oliver Neil contested a quality final, Oliver winning 13-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-7. I am sure we'll see more of these two in the next few years.

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, Tomas Pomej and Dennis Hayden. The future of our league is looking good!

Championship Singles

The main event had 24 competitors, with 17 Premier players, including 4 of our top Juniors, and, not surprisingly, these players dominated the group stages. Five setter highlights were Sam Monk losing narrowly to Eric Smith; a ping-pong ding-dong between Peter Caddy and Phil Harvey; Bertrand Siu coming from behind to beat Lynne Trussell; Charlie Hough twice coming from behind before falling to Andrew Sharland; Fred Bodeau beating Matthew Caddy 12-10 in the fifth before losing 8-11 in the fifth to Ben Worley and Dennis Hayden coming from 2 down to beat Bob Watson.

The knockout stages went largely to form with the pick of the quarter finals being Luke Gallagher's close 5 set victory against Michael Bridger. The four seeded players reached the semi-finals where Marc Burman beat David Champneys in 3 sets. The other semi was an absorbing affair as Emma Torkington and Luke won alternate sets before Emma stepped up a gear to win the fifth.

The final therefore pitted the 'old' campaigner against the young pretender and what a match it was. Marc had to call on all his experience to counter the youthful exuberance of Emma to take the crown, 11-9, 11-5, 8-11, 11-8. A great exhibition for the mere mortals watching. This was Marc's seventh championship – a great achievement.

The bottom two players from the group stages competed for the Consolation cup. The first semi-final was a five set battle between Lynne Trussell and Charlie Hough with the former winning 11-8, 6-11, 6-11, 11-9, 11-5. Sam Monk, who kindly stepped in at the last minute to replace a drop-out, reached the other semi but could not make headway against Bob Watson, who won in straight sets.

The premier v first division final was won by Lynne 11-4, 11-4, 11-5.

Doubles

Entries for the doubles were slightly down on last year so it was run with two groups of 3 with the winners of each group contesting the final.

In the first group scratch pairing Charlie Hough and Emma Torkington (kindly stepping in at the very last minute to cover an injury drop out) proved too strong for the others although they did have a pulsating five setter against Ben Worley and Luke Gallagher, winning 9-11,11-9,14-12, 7-11, 11-6. In the second group Marc Burman and Lynne Trussell beat both Peter Dunsby & Robin Anthony and Andrew Sharland & Eric Smith to progress.

In the final the juniors proved too strong, Charlie and Emma winning 11-7, 11-7, 11-8

All in all, a very successful day with thanks to all participants, those who helped set up and put away and those who willingly volunteered to umpire matches. Thanks, too, to Phil Harvey for collating the scores and making sure the right players were on the right tables with the right opponents.

The biggest thanks though to Lyle Cyster for his superb organisation, making sure that we had sufficient entrants for a viable tournament, arranging the handicapping, the draws, printing the score sheets and for being there on the day to oversee a smooth operation. Lyle also provided a range of light snacks to keep up the energy levels.

Thank you, Lyle.

The trophies for these events, along with those for the league and other cup competitions will be presented at our presentation evening on Saturday, 16 April at St Francis Social Club, Haywards Heath (tickets still available).