



Are you watching, Matthew Syed?

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Spectators at the Bristol & District Table Tennis Association's 11th closed Hard Bat event on Saturday 24 March, in which only the identical bats provided on the day were allowed to be used, could be forgiven for thinking that they were watching defensive play akin to the likes of Matthew Syed in his heyday – or better!

Following all the preliminary group stage matches that separated players into either the John Mycroft Boucher Main competition or the James Hamilton Plate competition on the day, the final Main match between last year's champion, Dave Reeves, and last year's semi-finalist, Dan Ives, was a treat that nobody present ever expected to witness when they arrived early that morning.

We have seen many great finals in this competition over the years (some of which can still be viewed on YouTube, as too will this one very soon), but the one played out today was just sublime. The attacking style of Ives was an absolute pleasure to watch, but as the match went into a third and deciding set to the delight of the onlookers, the defensive strokes emanating from Reeves' bat from a great many feet away from the table were almost miraculous at times and a joy to behold.

Ken Simmons, who this year is playing in his 68th consecutive year in our league, made the presentations, during which he spoke to the audience with almost a tear in his eye and declared that in all his years of playing and watching our sport, this was by far the best game he had ever seen. The crowd was in total agreement and gave him and the final protagonists a standing ovation. For the record, Dave won the match 21-10, 19-21, 21-19.

In the Plate final, which both participants had never even come close to reaching in previous years, Raymond Hall defeated Nathan Proud (21-23, 21-8, 25-23).

In July 2019 the B&DTTA will be holding its centenary celebrations in recognition of being re-formed in 1919, following our inception in October 1902. Please look out for the open "centenary tournament" particulars on the Table Tennis England calendar in due course to be held around that time.

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