



Home success at Jersey Grand Prix

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There was plenty of home success at the Jersey Grand Prix over the Easter weekend.

The action at the Geoff Reed Centre started on Good Friday with the two-man team events, a discipline unique on the Grand Prix circuit to Jersey.

The Junior Team saw first success for local players with Leon Pierre and Alfie Sutherland both playing superbly to see off all the opposition. Luc Miller and Jacob Gosselin from Jersey were deserved runners-up.

The Veterans team saw the top seeds, Ireland's Rory Scott and Northampton's Vidal Graham too strong for the rest of the field. Northumberland's Geordie pairing of Rob Dodds and Steve Dickinson took the runners-up slot.

The Men's team event had a large entry with no really clear favourite. Having said that all the first round of matches ended in 3-0 wins. The popular Stacey twins, Josh and Lawrence from Guernsey, eased past Jon and Ben Allen from Wales. Jersey's Chris Morshead and Tyler Gosselin saw off Scotland's Alex Southern and Cambridgeshire's John Partington.

Experienced Irish Vet, Rory Scott, had this year teamed up with Joe Britnell from Kent. They combined well to defeat Paralympian Dave Wetherill from Cornwall and his partner Shay Graham from Northamptonshire. Jersey doubled its presence in the semi-finals as Luc Miller and Luke Greenfield defeated the RAF Team pairing of Tony Stead from Oxfordshire and Steve Preston from Devonshire.

So, the first semi was a Guernsey versus Jersey affair. The Stacey siblings went out all guns blazing but Gosselin took first blood. Josh Stacey levelled against Morshead but the Jersey duo took the doubles and then Morshead sealed the win for a 3-1 overall victory.

The other Jersey pair faced the experienced Scott and Britnell. The UK team took the first rubber with Greenfield losing to Scott in the fifth. Miller gained parity with his first singles and then with a measured doubles win and Miller's close win over Scott it set up for an all Jersey final!

Miller and Greenfield went all out attack taking the first two singles 3-1 and 3-0 respectively. The all-important doubles followed but Gosselin and Morshead could not stem the tide of their Jersey colleagues who took the Men's team title 3-0.

Saturday saw the Banded Singles where players compete in divisions according to their ranking points and ability.

Men's Band 1 was a straight shootout between Scotland's No 3 and Commonwealth Games player Niall Cameron and Adam Laws from Surrey. Cameron took the title with a 3-0 win.

Men's Band 2 was played as a round-robin with some of the tournament's top seeds trying to get bragging rights to take to the main event on Sunday. Jamal Dennison from Essex eventually emerged from the pack but it was a mighty tight affair with three of the singles in the group going to five and others with plenty of deuces. On countback it was Adam Laws from Surrey who squeezed home against Jersey's Gregorz Frankowski and Guernsey's Josh Stacey to secure the runner-up slot.

Men's Band 3 on paper looked to be the most competitive of the Banded Singles on paper. Top seed, Essex's Jamal Dennison, looked to be on a bit of a mission. He took the strong top group (which included Rory Scott, Tony Stead and Luke Greenfield) at a canter and then beat Jersey's Tyler Gosselin and Guernsey's Lawrence Stacey to reach the final.

In the bottom half of the drawer Jersey's Gregorz Frankowski showed great form and resilience to take his group as winner and then defeated fellow Islander Greenfield, and Sarnian Josh Stacey both 3-1 to set up a mouthwatering final.

Frankowski took the first two games but Dennison struck back taking the third. There then ensued a thrilling fourth game with both players forcing timeouts and Frankowski losing two match points to reach deuce. The two all-out attacking players then slugged it out with booming forehands reaching match and then game point and so it went on and on until Jersey's Frankowski forced the all-important error to take the game 20-18 to win 3-1. The match was without doubt the outstanding and high class encounter of the tournament.

Men's Band 4 was a highly competitive affair with the top seed being Rory Scott and the second seed Jersey's Luke Greenfield. However, the other players had not read the seeding script. Three time Paralympian David Wetherill from Cornwall was runner-up to Greenfield in his group but then defeated Jersey's tricky defender Jack Mills and afterwards unseated the top seed Rory Scott 3-0 to reach the final.

In the bottom half of the draw, Warwickshire's Jody Bevington beat Islanders Tyler Gosselin and then Greenfield to set up the intriguing final. Wetherill raced to a 2-0 lead but Bevington roared back to level the match. Wetherill's experience was to prove the decisive factor in the decider as he eked out errors from his opponent to finally win 11-7, 11-5, 10-12, 7-11, 11-5.

Men's Band 5 had a big entry of 21 players in six groups. All of these were hotly contested but the top two seeds Jacob Gosselin from Jersey and Darius Xavier from Kent survived as winners in their groups. Gosselin though fell to the wily veteran Steve Dickinson in the quarters. Jersey's in-form junior Alfie Sutherland however despatched James Lennard from Middlesex and then the tricky Jon Allen from Wales.

In the bottom half of the draw another talented Jersey junior Leon Pierre had similar success against John Partington from Cambridgeshire and Ben Allen from Wales to face Darius Xavier in the semi-final.

Pierre played a patient game, choosing his shots very well and as a result forced errors from his opponent to clinch his place in the final 3-1 where he met Dickinson who had proved too canny and experienced for Sutherland. Pierre took the lead only for Dickinson to level. It was real cat and mouse thereafter as the Jersey junior showed immense focus and determination to take points from his massively experienced opponent. In the end it was youth that prevailed and a fantastic and well deserved 3-1 victory for the young Jerseyman.

Men's Band 6 attracted a similar large field with Kent's Darius Xavier installed as top seed. However, it was Ben Allen from Wales who took Group 1 with Xavier the runner-up. Jersey's Tom Cotillard just missed out on the knockout round by the narrowest of margins losing to Shay Graham 14-12 in the fifth in Group 2 but fellow

Islander Leon Pierre won his group and Alfie Sutherland negotiated his group as runner-up.

Sutherland continued his good form by beating Northampton's Shay Graham and then Allen to reach the semi-final where he had to face Jon Allen from Wales. Top seed Xavier almost made the semi where Hungary's Mihaly Pinter lay in wait. Pinter put the top seed Xavier out 3-1 but Sutherland was unable to repeat his heroics against Jon Allen as the Welsh player took their semi 3-1. The final was a real nail biter with Allen recovering twice against Pinter from a game down to finally take the title 3-11, 11-8, 7-11, 11-6, 11-7.

Women's Band 1 and Women's Band 2 were both played as round-robins. Band 1 was dominated by Swetha Khatri from Middlesex. The runner-up was Jersey's junior Liliana Andrade who played some inspired shots in her matches.

Band 2 saw Khatri again the victor after the various matches but this time Jersey's Irene Bree played to her form and Jersey ranking to take the runner-up slot.

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