



Clark and Bardsley top the class of 2018

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Joe Clark won both the boys' singles and doubles titles and Charlotte Bardsley the girls' singles at the PG Mutual Cadet & Junior National Championships in Wolverhampton.

Mollie Patterson was also a two-time winner, getting her name on the girls' doubles with Kate Cheer and the mixed with James Smith.

Clark's partner in the boys' doubles was Shayan Siraj, while there were consolation singles golds for Holly Williams and Reece Chamdal.

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Boys' Singles



Joe Clark got his name on a Nationals singles trophy for the first time in his final Junior tournament, getting the better of James Smith 4-2 (11-6, 11-2, 11-8, 10-12, 5-11, 11-5).

The Cleveland player looked as if he was determined to seize the moment as he raced into that three-game lead, before Smith relaxed into his game a bit more and turned the tide.

But it was not to last as second seed Clark regained the initiative in the sixth to win the trophy, leaving Smith crestfallen at a sixth singles final defeat over the years – he does at least have another year at this level to put that right.

Clark said:

I feel good, it's my first singles national title, definitely the highlight of my career, and it's good to do it in my last ever Junior tournament domestically. I played well and did everything I needed to do.

He played well to come back to 3-2 but in that last end I just changed the position of where I was hitting the ball.

Clark had to fight hard to get the better of third seed Ethan Walsh in the last four, taking the tape at 4-2 (11-9,

5-11, 9-11, 11-5, 14-12, 12-10).

Smith was less troubled in his semi as he always looked to have the edge over Joe Cope in a 4-1 scoreline (11-4, 11-9, 11-8, 7-11, 11-7).

That fourth seed Smith was in the final was itself a minor surprise – he came through the top half of the draw in the absence of top seed Shayan Siraj, who was knocked out in the first round by chopper Sam Wilson. It was a devastating scoreline of 4-0, though the match lasted longer than that suggests. In the end the game scores were 9, 8, 10 and 5.

None of the other seeds went out in the first round, though it looked as if Cope would when his fellow north-easterner Josh Weatherby held two match points in the sixth. Cope saved those and, though he wasted three of his own from 10-5 up in the decider, he did eventually manage to cross the finish line 4-3 (10-12, 12-10, 11-5, 7-11, 9-11, 12-10, 11-8).

Wilson's triumph soon had cold water poured on it in the quarters as he was beaten 4-0 by Cope (4, 5, 8, 9). None of the other ties at that stage went past five games, though Clark was forced to a 21-19 game in his defeat of Gaurav Aravind.

Group stage



Josh Millman (picture by Michael Loveder)

Josh Millman and Josh Weatherby upset higher-ranked players to top their groups.

Millman was in Group 1 alongside Matthew Daish and he beat him in the final match by a 3-0 margin (11-3, 12-10, 11-5). Both players had already defeated Connor Whitehead.

Weatherby topped Group 6 where, having seen top seed Reece Chamdal beat Naphong Boonyaprapa in five the first match, then himself lost to Boonyaprapa 13-11 in the fifth. A more convincing win over Chamdal would have taken Cadet bronze medallist Weatherby through and he duly delivered a 3-0 (11-5, 11-7, 11-7) victory.

Top-ranked Sam Chesterman made it through Group 3 by the skin of his teeth, having been defeated by Alexander Ahl in the first match. Max Stevens' victory over Ahl opened the door again for Chesterman, and he duly defeated Stevens.

With all three matches having been won 3-1, it came down to points and Chesterman's ratio of 75-69 put him ahead of Ahl (81-78) and Stevens (73-82).

Olly Tyndall and Sam Wilson came through Group 7 in the 'correct' order, the group having been shortened from four to three players by the withdrawal of Eren Gozcu, the third-ranked player.

The other top seeds to go safely through were yesterday's Cadet champion Amirul Hussain (Group 1), Artur Veeck Caltabiano (Group 4) and George Hazell (Group 5), none of whom were taken to more than four games.

Consolation singles



Reece Chamdal (picture by Michael Loveder)

Reece Chamdal's three-game defeat of Naphong Boonyaprapa (11, 4, 3) meant the losing finalist could not emulate his brother Naphat, who won this event last year.

Both semi-finals were dealt with in four as Chamdal defeated Thomas Rayner (11-6, 15-13, 9-11, 11-3) and Boonyaprapa got past Connor Whitehead (11-4, 12-10, 8-11, 11-5).

Chamdal said:

I'm happy to come away from the tournament with an achievement, even if it wasn't the achievement I was hoping for. It was difficult to stay motivated after not getting out of the groups, but that was what I needed to do.

Girls' Singles



Charlotte Bardsley (picture by Michael Loveder)

Top seed Charlotte Bardsley made up for doubles disappointments to take the title, only dropping a game in the final, and that when 3-0 up.

Jasmin Wong was her opponent in that final, the fourth seed hoping to add to the Cadet title she won yesterday. She found Bardsley was in no mood to let her standards slip as she closed out the title in the fifth game to 'upgrade' from the Cadet trophy she won last year.

Bardsley said:

First of all, I'd like to say thanks to my coaches and parents, I'm grateful for their support. Everyone played really well and I had some tough matches.

In the doubles, I think we played well and were a bit unlucky to lose 3-2 on both occasions. I knew I had one more chance to win a title and I wanted to make it count.

Wong sunk second seed Mollie Patterson in the semis, in a high-quality six-game clash which seldom had more than a point or two in it. The final reckoning was 4-2 (11-9, 13-15, 11-8, 9-11, 13-11, 12-10) to the Cadet champion.

The other semi saw Bardsley ruthlessly end the run of unseeded Darcie Proud in four straight (3, 7, 2, 5).

Proud had reached the last four courtesy of epic 4-3 triumphs over fifth seed Kate Cheer in the first round – she won that one 11-7, 6-11, 16-14, 7-11, 9-11, 11-4, 12-10 – and third seed Megan Gidney in the quarters (11-7, 11-7, 9-11, 9-11, 11-8, 7-11, 13-11).

As well as Cheer, No 8 seed Katie Holt exited in the first round, 4-2 to Sophie Barlow (11-9, 11-8, 11-13, 5-11, 11-9, 12-10).

Gidney almost joined the ranks of those toppled but was able to get over the line in an up-and-down clash with Amelia Chan, the score 4-3 (11-7, 3-11, 8-11, 13-11, 11-6, 9-11, 11-8).

Group stage



Charlotte Marsden (picture by Michael Loveder)

Charlotte Marsden won Group 3 thanks to two victories over higher-ranked players. Marsden started with a 3-2 win over top-ranked Lois Perryman and then overcame Charlotte Weatherby in five. All three matches in the group went to a decider as Perryman then defeated Weatherby 11-13, 14-12, 6-11, 11-8, 11-9 in the closest of them.

Millie Rogove upset the ranking order in Group 2, beating Mari Baldwin 3-1 (11-7, 8-11, 11-7, 11-7) to seal her place in the main draw, having earlier had to come from behind against the group's third player, Holly Williams – Rogove winning that one 3-2 (12-10, 9-11, 7-11, 11-9, 11-7).

In Group 5, Lisa Rinnhofer overtook Gemma Kerr in a dramatic finale to the group, prevailing 13-11 in the fifth (8-11, 11-9, 5-11, 11-4, 13-11).

The top seeds made it through from Group 1 (Darcie Proud), Group 4 (Anaya Patel) and Group 6 (Bhavika Mistry), though Proud was made to work by Amy Blagbrough before taking it 3-2 (8-11, 11-5, 8-11, 11-8, 11-6). Blagbrough had earlier beaten Emily Haskell 11-9 in the fifth.

Mistry was taken to five in both her matches, coming from 2-0 down to defeat Mya Sultan 3-2 (8-11, 8-11, 11-6,

11-9, 11-3) and then overcoming Danielle Kelly 11-8, 10-12, 11-7, 9-11, 11-7.

Group 7, the four-player group, went with rank as Sophie Barlow topped the pile, ahead of Amelia Chan. The top two played out a five-setter which went with rank in Barlow's favour 11-6, 4-11, 16-14, 4-11, 11-3. Chan also won a marathon with Gracie Edwards 3-2 (11-7, 9-11, 9-11, 14-12, 13-11) to ensure her runners-up spot.

Consolation singles



Holly Williams (left) and Gemma Kerr (picture by Michael Loveder)

Holly Williams ended her Junior Nationals career with a gold medal as she came from 2-1 down to defeat Gemma Kerr 3-2 (11-6, 4-11, 3-11, 11-7, 11-5) in the final.

The semi-finals saw contrasting results – Kerr made it to the final in three straight (3, 2, 3) against Mya Sultan, while Williams prevailed in five against Lois Perryman (5-11, 11-5, 8-11, 11-8, 11-5).

Williams said:

I'm quite proud of myself because I picked my game up after not playing very well at the beginning. I was hoping to get out of my group but I'm glad to leave with a gold medal from my last Junior Nationals.

Boys' Doubles



The champions celebrate (picture by Michael Loveder)

There was a wafer-thin margin between the top two pairs but it was Shayan Siraj & Joe Clark, the top seeds, who prevailed against Ethan Walsh & James Smith.

They did so from 2-0 down, though any of the five games could have gone either way as the final scoreline was 3-2 (10-12, 10-12, 11-9, 11-8, 12-10) – and Walsh & Smith managed to save four match points too.

Both semi-finals went to five as Siraj again ran into Sam Wilson. This time, in partnership with Joe Clark, he managed to get the better of the arch defender, who was partnering Alexander Ahl. The underdogs led 2-0, but the top seeds managed to sort out their tactics and pulled back to take the next three with relative ease. It ended 10-12, 9-11, 11-5, 11-5, 11-5.

In the other half of the draw, Walsh & Smith were up against Gaurav Aravind & Israel Awolaja and it see-sawed from 1-0 to 1-2 and back to 3-2 in favour of the second seeds, who won it 11-7, 7-11, 10-12, 11-4, 11-9).

Two of the quarter-finals were drawn-out affairs. Aravind & Awolaja were taken to five by Cachere! Mirjah-Mercer & Branislav Zivkovic but went through 6-11, 11-4, 5-11, 11-7, 11-8, while Walsh & Smith were troubled by Amirul Hussain & Sam Chesterman but prevailed 4-11, 11-7, 8-11, 11-8, 11-8).

Girls' Doubles



Kate Cheer (centre) and Mollie Patterson receive the trophy from Table Tennis England Treasurer Keith Thomas (picture by Michael Loveder)

Second seeds Mollie Patterson & Kate Cheer ended the hopes of a double celebration for Cadet champions Jasmin Wong & Ruby Chan in the final.

The older pair edged a tight – other than the second game – four-game clash 3-1 (13-11, 3-11, 12-10, 11-9), meaning Cheer retained the title she won with Denise Payet last year.

The Crawley player said:

It's not bad considering we've never played together before! Playing with new people, you can't predict how you're going to play and you have to take it seriously but joke around a bit as well because it's hard to win matches if you're concentrating on yourself.

The two semi-finals provided a big contrast in scores, Patterson & Cheer on the comfortable end of the spectrum as they beat Sarah Menghistab & Sophie Barlow 8, 7, 7.

It was quite the opposite for Wong & Chan, as you would expect against the top-seeded pair of Charlotte Bardsley & Megan Gidney. The first game was 16-14 in the senior pair's favour, but Wong & Chan bounced back to lead 2-1. The top seeds levelled, but the Cadet partnership edged a tight decider 11-9. The final reckoning was 14-16, 11-7, 11-9, 5-11, 11-9.

In the preliminary round, Lois Perryman & Bhavika Mistry were twice pegged back by Lisa Rinnhofer & Millie Rogove before coming through 3-2 (11-5, 9-11, 12-10, 6-11, 11-7).

They had another five-setter in the quarters, this time seeing a 2-1 lead overturned by Patterson & Cheer, who went through 5-11, 11-2, 8-11, 11-7, 11-8.

Also in the quarters, Menghistab & Barlow triumphed in a rollercoaster with Darcie Proud & Anaya Patel, going into the last four thanks to a scoreline of 11-6, 6-11, 11-8, 6-11, 11-4.

Mixed Doubles



James Smith & Mollie Patterson in action (picture by Michael Loveder)

James Smith & Mollie Patterson are the champions, but in many ways Jamie Liu & Ruby Chan deserve equal billing as the Cadets stormed through to the final with a series of brilliant performances.

After the relative comfort of a 3-1 win over Gaurav Aravind & Bhavika Mistry, Liu & Chan came from 2-0 down to knock out the top seeds Ethan Walsh & Charlotte Bardsley in the quarter-finals and repeated the feat in the semis against George Hazell & Sarah Menghistab.

They took the final to five as well, but just missed out as Smith – who won the title last year with Denise Payet – and Patterson won the decider 11-8.

Patterson said:

I'm pleased with the two doubles titles. I've never played with James or Kate before but I'm a good doubles player and in both pairs we talked and worked together really well and kept each other's spirits up.

In the semi-finals, Liu & Chan's scoreline against Hazell & Menghistab was 3-2 (9-11, 9-11, 11-4, 11-8, 11-8). By contrast, it was a straightforward 6, 4, 8 triumph for Smith & Patterson against Israel Awolaja & Kate Cheer.

In the quarters, Liu & Chan's clash with Walsh & Bardsley looked to be going to plan for the older pair as they opened up a 2-0 lead in comfortable enough fashion. But Liu & Chan then tore up the script and forced their way back into the match. They levelled, but in the decider they found themselves 10-8 down and apparently about to be filed in the 'near-miss' category.

But the younger pair got the ball on the table for the next four points, something Walsh & Bardsley could not do as four errors saw them exit 3-2 (6-11, 8-11, 11-8, 11-7, 12-10).

Another of the quarters went to five, with Awolaja & Cheer holding on in a tight decider against Sam Chesterman & Jasmin Wong. The final score was 3-2 (9-11, 11-9, 11-5, 3-11, 11-9).

In the last 16, Josh Millman & Gemma Kerr won in five against Anaya Patel & Cacharel Mirjah-Mercer (11-6, 6-11, 4-11, 11-4, 11-7) and Megan Gidney & Joe Cope went the distance with Darcie Proud & Olly Tyndall, edging it 11-8, 11-6, 9-11, 8-11, 11-9).

There were a couple of five-setters in the preliminary round too, where Naphong Boonyaprapa & Erin Green knocked out Kieran Wardell & Holly Williams 13-11, 8-11, 6-11, 11-4, 11-5 and Connor Whitehead & Millie Rogove beat the Weatherby siblings, Josh & Charlotte, 11-6, 11-13, 11-7, 7-11, 11-6.

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