



Cliffedale and London Academy glory at dramatic JBL finale

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Cliffedale Chandlers Grantham College won a thrilling boys' Premier Division, while London Academy proved the class act of the girls' Premier as the Junior British League titles were decided.

Over two pulsating days of competition at Derby Arena, many divisions went down to the wire with two decided on countback and plenty of drama throughout.

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The winning Cliffedale Chandlers line-up with Table Tennis England Chairman Sandra Deaton

In the boys' event, the top four in the Premier Division going into Weekend 2 clinched their places in Premier A, though all dropped points in the two round of fixtures before the split.

Indeed, Dublin, who lost 4-2 to Fusion in the first match of the weekend, only just made it into the top four by virtue of a 3-3 draw in their final match against Cliffedale, who topped the standings.

The leaders had a one-point cushion over Fusion and Ormesby Boys and three points in hand of Dublin going into the Premier A fixtures and, as before the split, all the teams continued to take points from each other.

Dublin and Ormesby put themselves right back in the title picture with 4-2 victories over Cliffedale and Fusion respectively in the final match on the Saturday, but the picture shifted again in the penultimate round on Sunday morning as Cliffedale beat Ormesby 4-2 and Dublin triumphed by the same margin over Fusion.

That left Cliffedale a point ahead of both Dublin and Ormesby, who met to see who would emerge as the main title challengers. It was Ormesby who managed it with a 4-2 scoreline, in a close match in which half of the matches went to a decider. They included Joe Cope's comeback from 2-0 down to beat Alan Pattison in the first match and David Gofton's recovery from 2-1 behind to Dillon Byrne in Match 3.

Cope's second victory, over Art McLaughlin, put Ormesby 3-1 ahead, but they had to wait until the final tie and another five-setter to clinch the match victory as Josh Weatherby also overturned a deficit to beat Byrne 3-2 (11-8, 9-11, 8-11, 11-6, 11-8).

So Cliffedale needed a win to guarantee the title, but they found themselves 2-1 down to Fusion when Joseph Hee and Alexander Ahl beat Hippolyte Levy and Luc Miller respectively, overturning Shayan Siraj's win over Ben Hee.

Siraj made it 2-2 by beating Joseph Hee, but the younger Hee again put Fusion in front by coming from 2-0 down to defeat Levy 3-2 (5-11, 10-12, 11-8, 11-6, 11-8).

And so it all came down to Levy versus Ahl – a Fusion win would hand the title to Ormesby and a draw would mean countback would be needed to determine the champions. It was Levy who won it 3-0 (11-5, 11-7, 12-10) and

so countback it was.

With the teams level on 13 points and on sets (both had a record of 35-25), it came down to games and Clifedale shaded it 127-111 to 128-121 to end a dramatic tournament with the trophy in their possession.

Premier B came down to a duel between BATTs A and Tabletennisdaily A, who went into their final meeting with the former a point to the good.

It remained that way as BATTs – only just – clinched a draw having been 2-0 and 3-1 down. Joe Walker made it 2-3 in five sets against Louis Price (11-5, 9-11, 11-9, 6-11, 11-6) and Sam Chesterman secured the point BATTs needed by beating Edan Regan 3-1 (12-10, 11-6, 5-11, 11-4).

The Premier Division averages were headed by four players on 11/14 before the split, and it was Shayan Siraj who had the best record afterwards with five more wins to make a total of 16/20. Mention is also due to Daniel Simonson of Tabletennisdaily, who had 10/10 on the second weekend, having not played in the first.



The London Academy squad

The destination of the Girls' Premier Division title was always in the hands of London Academy, who led by three points after Weekend 1 with a 100% record.

They lost the 100% record, but remained unbeaten with 19 points, five ahead of second-placed Kingfisher. Cardiff City were third – they were the team which held London Academy to the draw – with Fusion also earning a place in Premier A after the split.

The champions also had the leading player in the averages – Nomin Baasan winning all 20 of the matches she played, two better than her team-mate Annie Hedlund.

Premier B went the way of Wensum, who won all three matches after the split, spearheaded by Mari Baldwin who won all six matches in that division.

The key victory was against Grantham College, who could have taken the title themselves with a win in the final round. Wensum, who had the stronger record on countback, made sure they would take the title by going 3-0 up and, after Grantham had whittled that back to 3-2, it was Baldwin's 3-0 (14-12, 11-6, 12-10) triumph over Raquel Sao Pedro which clinched outright victory.

In Division One, the weekend started with only four points covering all six teams, but it did not end that way as XLNT Draycott II took charge with a succession of victories, culminating in a 4-2 scoreline – their closest of the weekend – against Ellenborough Girls. By that stage the title was already won in any case and the winning margin in the end was five points.

Millie Rogove of Ellenborough was the top player in the averages, coming in for the second weekend and winning nine matches out of 10.



The Division 1 winning line-up from XLNT Draycott II

Brighton retained their two-point cushion over Wensum II to win Division Two – they had already done enough to take the title before their 4-2 defeat to Wensum in the final round as both teams dropped points earlier on the weekend. Wensum's defeat to Ulster in Round 8 was what ultimately cost them.

Brighton had the top two players in the averages, both Jodie Morris and Lauren Loosemore finishing with 17/20.



The winning Brighton team in Division 2

Division Three was the closest as Woodfield took it on countback ahead of Ormesby II, with halfway leaders Wensum II a point behind and Bishop Auckland another point back.

The teams all took points off each other – Ormesby beat Bishop Auckland, who in turn beat Wensum and Woodfield, while Woodfield beat Wensum, whose own title aspirations suffered because of three draws.

The Woodfield v Wensum match in the final round finished 6-0 in favour of the former, who consequently took the title.

Pravesha Ragi of Bishop Auckland won all eight of her matches to lead the player standings, with Maliha Baig of Woodfield second on 87.5% thanks to 14 victories from 16.



Division 3 was won by Woodfield

Back in the boys' section, Division One's halfway leaders Swerve were overtaken by XLNT Draycott II. Both teams started with a 5-1 victory followed by a 3-3 draw, but Swerve's draw against Formby and Draycott's 4-2 win over Fusion in Round 8 left them level on points. Matching 4-2 wins in Round 9 meant a winner-take-all scenario in the final round.

And it was Draycott who stepped up to the plate, the trio of Connor Green, Danny Bajwa and Georgios Gerakios opening up a 5-0 lead. The match ended with an old-school scoreline as Kieran Wardell completed a 3-0 win over Gerakios by taking the third set 24-22.

It contributed to Wardell finishing with a record of 17/20 to top the averages, though Bajwa actually had a higher percentage of 88.89% for 16 wins from 18.



The Division 1 winners from XLNT Draycott

Ormesby Boys B were untouchable in Division 2A, winning all 10 matches and dropping only seven individual matches in the process to finish four points clear of Cardiff City A.

Ormesby's Thomas Rayner was the pick of the players in that division as he won all 10 matches on Weekend 2 to end with an average of 94.44% for 17 wins from 18.



Ormesby with the Division 2A trophy

In Division 2B, Colebridge were almost as dominant, winning all five of their Weekend 2 matches to finish on 19 points, no fewer than six ahead of nearest rivals Crusaders.

Marcus Holba of the champions was top of the individual averages with 18/20 for 90%.



Colebridge won Division 2B

In Division 3A, Dublin B went into the second weekend with a three-point lead, but saw that whittled away to one point by Sussex Blades C, who defeated the leaders and won their first four matches of the weekend.

However, a 3-3 draw in their final match against Joola Plymouth Torbay Academy meant they had to settle for second place as Dublin also clinched a 3-3 draw, against Ormesby C, thanks to Maitiu Heckmann's terrific comeback in the final tie against Ben Savage, taking it 3-2 (9-11, 7-11, 11-3, 11-9, 11-9).

James Skelton of Dublin B was top of the player standings with 16/20 for 80%.



Dublin B won Division 3A

In 3B, Cardiff City B emerged from the three-way tie after Weekend 1 to take the title, two points ahead of Wigan and Kingfisher, the other two half-way leaders. Cardiff won their first three matches – Wigan lost one and Kingfisher drew two – and then drew 3-3 with their two closest rivals in the last two matches to seal the divisional title.

Cardiff's Louie Evans managed the unique feat in the boys' event of remaining unbeaten for the entire season, winning all his 20 matches to hit the magic 100% rating.



Division 3B was won by Cardiff City B

In 4A, where Bishop Auckland pulled clear of Generation 2 to win by a point as Rotherham Scorpions, who were level on points with the others after Weekend 1, fading away to end in fourth place.

Bishop Auckland won four and drew one on Weekend 2, the draw against the runners-up in Round 7 helping to hold off their nearest rivals. Their player Andrew McRae won 14 out of 19 to sit atop the averages, alongside William Poulter of Generation 2, with an identical record.



Division 4A went to Bishop Auckland

In Division 4B, Halton II saw their three-point halfway lead eroded to two points as they won three and drew two, one of the draws against nearest rivals Mid Ulster, who won their four other matches on the weekend. Top of the player averages was Joe Sheard of Mid Ulster with 16/18 for an average of 88.89%.



The winners of Division 4B, from Halton II

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