



Clacton & District: James and Sue at double

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James Denyer and Sue Welham took the major honours at the Clacton & District League's 2019 Closed Championships, held last weekend at the Clacton Coastal Academy Sports Hall.

Both players picked up their respective Singles crowns for a second time, as well as each of them adding a Doubles trophy.

Pride of place goes to James Denyer in the Men's Singles who took the title in style, turning the tables by defeating reigning champion, Andy Warner, in a re-run of last season's final. Seeded two this year, Denyer wiped away the disappointment of losing 15-13 in the fifth to Warner last year to take the trophy in barn-storming style 3-1 (11-9, 11-8, 9-11, 11-5).



James Denyer

With both players standing away from the table to provide sublime entertainment for the spectators, Denyer had to fight for every point and, although Warner may not have been at his brilliant best, the force was certainly with Denyer who won crucial points at crucial times.

In the first set he was 9-7 down before taking it 11-9. In the second he was 8-2 up before Warner, never a player to give up, levelled at 8-8, only for Denyer to take it 11-8. A more aggressive Warner won the third 11-9 and, at 5-5 in the fourth, the match hung in the balance. But Denyer blasted the next six points to take the set 11-5 and with it the title he'd first won in 2014 as a 17-year old.

Indeed, such is the maturity Denyer has shown over the years, it's hard to believe he's still only 22, having already featured in three Men's Singles finals, as well as reaching the semi-finals on four other occasions.

There are surely many more singles titles due to Denyer in the future. But should he be thwarted, it may well be in the form of another home-grown player, Daniel Young. The 14-year old junior displayed his burgeoning talent by

reaching his first-ever Men's Singles semi-final and, although he went down on this occasion to Warner, the 2018 champion had to pull out all the stops, eventually winning 3-1 (11-9, 14-12, 6-11, 12-10).

That match was the third of three intriguing matches for Young on his way to the semi-finals. In round two, he won in three-straight against Ollie Rampton, the player who'd denied him the Junior Singles title the previous day, before defeating dad, Gary Young, 11-5 in the fifth in the quarter-final.

Paul Hume also played well to reach the Men's Singles semi-final stage for the first time, going down to Denyer in three-straight but having the satisfaction of eliminating Colin Stallwood 3-1 (1-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-8) in the quarters.

Kevin Gowlett and Gary Cattermole were the other quarter-finalists, Gowlett reaching the last eight by overcoming Greg Green 14-12 in the fifth in one of the closest matches of the Championships.

In the Men's Doubles, the new combination of Denyer and 23-year old Paul Hume proved an immediate success, the pair taking the title by beating three-time champions Greg Green and Colin Stallwood 3-0 (11-5, 16-14, 11-8), the hard-fought second set proving pivotal to their victory.

It was a well-deserved achievement for the youthful Denyer/Hume combination, the pairing having displayed their doubles pedigree with a key semi-final victory against top seeds, Andy Warner and Gary Young, 3-2 (12-14, 11-7, 12-10, 6-11, 11-6).



James Denyer and Paul Hume

In the other semi-final, Green and Stallwood beat Gavin Price and Daniel Young in three-straight but, once again, the defeated pairing had played well to get to this stage, having enjoyed a tense 15-13 in the decider quarter-final victory over Martin Edwards and Felipe Rodriguez.

It was a second Men's Doubles success for Denyer, who'd won in 2013 with Felipe Rodriguez, and also for Hume, a winner with brother Sam in 2017.

Gill Locke and Gracie Edwards have dominated the Ladies' Singles for the last seven years but neither was in the field this time, and so Sue Welham was in prime position to take the title for a second time. And this she did without losing a set in the whole event, in the final defeating surprise finalist Kayley Rodriguez.

It was the first time in many years a Third Division player had reached the final but Rodriguez was not fazed by the occasion and Welham had to be at her wily best to defeat the battling Rodriguez 3-0 (11-5, 14-12, 11-7).

Rodriguez's appearance in the final was one of only a number of shocks in this event, where Caroline Page and Debra Found also found themselves as unlikely semi-finalists.

In the group stage, Rodriguez had beaten number two seed Annabelle Stallwood to head the group. Both qualified for the knockout stage, where Page went on to defeat Stallwood 11-7 in the fifth and Debra Found, in the

other half of the draw, beat ranked player, Isabel Barton.

But through all the shocks, Welham remained calm, taking a well-deserved Ladies' Singles title for a second time, having won in 2011 and been a beaten finalist in 2012.

Welham secured a second trophy when, with partner Gary Cattermole, they took the Mixed Doubles title. Seeded number two, in the final they beat three-time champions and top seeds, Colin Stallwood and Annabelle Stallwood, 3-2 (11-5, 11-9, 8-11, 7-11, 11-4).



Sue Welham and Gary Cattermole

But it had not been an easy ride for the winners, having to fight all the way to overcome the semi-final challenge of Paul Hume and Caroline Page 11-6 in the fifth, the Hume/Page combination having done well to get to that stage by defeating Greg Green and Jenny Higgins 11-8 in round two.

So while it was celebration time for Sue Welham and Gary Cattermole, it was something of a disappointment for Colin and Annabelle Stallwood who have an exceptional, and perhaps unwanted, record in this event, having appeared in nine Mixed Doubles finals over the past 11 years but having won only three.

However, there was consolation for Annabelle Stallwood when, with sister-in-law Kayley Rodriguez, they paired up to take the Ladies' Doubles by beating 2015 and 2017 champions Isabel Barton and Jenny Higgins 3-0 (13-11, 11-7, 11-4) in an all-Windsor final. It was third time lucky for the winning pair who'd been runners-up in both 2016 and 2017.



Annabelle Stallwood and Kayley Rodriguez

In the semi-finals, Sue Welham and Sharon Gowlett had gone down 11-6 in the decider to the Barton/Higgins combination, thus denying Welham the opportunity to take a hat-trick of titles.

The ever-consistent Kevin Gowlett became a three times winner of the Veterans' Singles title by beating second seed Gary Cattermole 3-1 (11-8, 7-11, 11-9, 11-7) in the final. A winner back in 2012 and 2013, Gowlett also denied Gary Young, number one seed and winner of this event for the last two years, a hat-trick of victories, the new Veterans' champion enjoying a comfortable three-straight win against Young in the semi-finals.



Kevin Gowlett

Mel Rampton was the other semi-finalist, beaten by Cattermole, who had to be satisfied with a runners-up medal for the second time in four years.

The final of the Super-Veterans' Singles was between reigning champion, Gavin Price and Martin Edwards who, in the semi-final, had defeated number two seed and last year's beaten finalist, Phil Smith.



Gavin Price

Price, who'd won the 2018 title by conceding only 15 points in the final to Smith, this year conceded only 19 points, winning 3-0 (11-3, 11-9, 11-7) against a visibly tiring Edwards. In fairness, Edwards played some marvellous table tennis in a total of 13 matches on an exhausting Saturday of the Championships, including disposing of the obdurate Derek Willis and second seed Smith in the Super-Vets' event.

An honourable mention goes to the unfancied Paul Woolnough who reached the semi-final thanks to 11-5 in the fifth victories over both Roger Hance and ranked player Colin Dearman, before going down to Price in a tight semi-final, losing coincidentally by the same 11-5 in the fifth scoreline.

But one thing you can say about Martin Edwards is that he possesses a never-say-die spirit and he rallied for one last push and, with a monumental effort, won the Restricted Singles by beating Mel Rampton 3-1 (11-9, 12-10, 6-11, 11-7) in a closely-contested final between arguably the two best players in the field.



Martin Edwards

Once again, it was a close-run thing, Edwards having to eliminate a stubborn Jason Lloyd in the semi-finals 11-7 in the decider. Rampton meanwhile had beaten Jason Gale 11-4 in the decider in Round Two, scraping through his quarter-finals by an even closer 13-11 in the decider against John Hatley, before beating Adam Wilkin three-straight in the semi-final.

It was a second success for Edwards in this event, having won the title way back in 1994 when the event was only four years old. Along with Gavin Price, he's the only player to have won it twice.

With Sam Hume no longer in the junior ranks and away at University, there was always going to be a new name on the Junior Singles trophy – and that new name is Ollie Rampton.

The event was initially played on a group basis with the top two players going through to the final. And, as expected, 14-year old Daniel Young and 13-year old Rampton made it through, Young beating Rampton in three-straight in the final group match to top the group.

But when the two met in the final later in the day, it was Rampton who turned the tables, beating Young 3-2 (11-3, 12-14, 9-11, 11-9, 11-6), both players displaying excellent temperament as well as talent. It was a third Junior final defeat for Young, a runner-up in this event to Sam Hume in the two previous years.



Ollie Rampton

To add insult to injury, when the two players met in Round Two of the knockout stage of the Men's Singles, Young once again came out on top in three-straight.

Only two pairs entered the Junior Doubles but the four players involved were the top four juniors in the League. Daniel Young gained a measure of compensation when, with Liam Harris, they defeated Ethan Lloyd and Ollie Rampton 3-1 (11-6, 11-9, 7-11, 11-5), the winning pair, despite a blip in the third set, always in control.

Talented 14-year-old Liam Harris took the Division Two Singles in style, proving too good for surprise finalist Graham Parkes, the number two seed taking it 3-0 (11-9, 11-7, 11-4) with something to spare. Parkes, nevertheless, had played exceptionally well to reach the final, beating ranked player John Harvey in the quarter-finals and then, in the semi-final, inflicting a shock 11-6 in the fifth defeat on Brotherhood I team-mate and number one seed, John Owen.



Liam Harris

Harris, who won the Division Three Singles title last season, thus becomes only the fourth player in the 45-year history of the Divisional events to take the Division Two and Division Three titles in successive years. He follows in illustrious footsteps, the previous three players being Martin Hogg (1984 and 1985), Paul Bellinger (2000 and 2001) and Paul Hume (2012 and 2013).

Despite the Division Three Singles attracting a disappointing entry, arguably the Division's best two players, Tony Edmonds and Kayley Rodriguez, made it to the final. Edmonds, seeded one, made a slow start, losing the first two sets, but he rallied to take the next two to take the match to a decider. But Rodriguez was in determined mood and her aggression paid dividends, taking the match 3-2 (11-2, 15-13, 4-11, 8-11, 11-7) to cap a fine Tournament performance.



Kayley Rodriguez

Dominic Joannou and Sharon Gowlett were the beaten semi-finalists.

Once again the League is indebted to Paul Newbould Planning and Building Design Services, the main sponsors of the Championships for a magnificent 26th year. Paul has indicated this will be his last year of sponsoring the Championships and, in acknowledgement of his generous support for over a quarter a century, League Chairman, Peter White, presented him with a framed certificate of appreciation.

Thanks also go to The Skelmersdale Centre Ltd (Angela Barratt), Gary Cattermole and Jenny Higgins for their sponsorship of individual events.

2019 CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

Men's Singles (sponsored by Gary Cattermole): J Denyer beat A Warner 3-1 (11-9, 11-8, 9-11, 11-5)

Ladies' Singles (sponsored by Gary Cattermole): S Welham beat K Rodriguez 3-0 (11-5, 14-12, 11-7)

Men's Doubles: J Denyer/P Hume beat G Green/C Stallwood 3-0 (11-5, 16-14, 11-8)

Ladies' Doubles (sponsored by The Skelmersdale Centre Ltd: Angela Barratt): K Rodriguez/A Stallwood beat I Barton/J Higgins 3-0 (13-11, 11-7, 11-4)

Mixed Doubles: G Cattermole/S Welham beat C Stallwood/A Stallwood 3-2 (11-5, 11-9, 8-11, 7-11, 11-4)

Veterans' Singles: K Gowlett beat G Cattermole 3-1 (11-8, 7-11, 11-9, 11-7)

Super-Veterans' Singles: G Price beat M Edwards 3-0 (11-3, 11-9, 11-7)

Junior Singles (sponsored by Jenny Higgins): O Rampton beat D Young 3-2 (11-3, 12-14, 9-11, 11-9, 11-6)

Junior Doubles: L Harris/D Young beat E Lloyd/O Rampton 3-1 (11-6, 11-9, 7-11, 11-5)

Division Two Singles: L Harris beat G Parkes 3-0 (11-9, 11-7, 11-4)

Division Three Singles: K Rodriguez beat T Edmonds 3-2 (11-2, 15-13, 4-11, 8-11, 11-7)

Restricted Singles: M Edwards beat M Rampton 3-1 (11-9, 12-10, 6-11, 11-7)

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