



Walsh and Payet are champs at Nationals

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Ethan Walsh and Denise Payet won the Junior singles titles at the PG Mutual Cadet & Junior Nationals in Nottingham – and both added a doubles title for good measure.

Top seed Payet overcame second seed Charlotte Bardsley in her final, while Walsh got past top seed Shayan Siraj in his.

Payet & Mollie Patterson won the Girls' Doubles, while Walsh & Bardsley took the Mixed Doubles title. Third seeds Naphat Boonyaprapa & Sam Wilson were the Boys' Doubles champions.

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Boys' Singles



Ethan Walsh

Ethan Walsh picked up the perfect present on his 17th birthday as he defeated top seed Shayan Siraj 4-2 in the final.

It was all the more remarkable given his inauspicious start, losing the first 11-1 as Siraj carried a bit of a bounce from a momentous 4-3 semi-final win into the final.

But Walsh worked his way back into the game and, from 2-2, took the initiative with a tactically smart game and closed out a 4-2 (1-11, 11-9, 11-9, 7-11, 11-8, 11-9) victory.

Walsh said: "It feels unbelievable and it's the best achievement of the season by far. I won the schools event (Butterfly School Individual Finals) two weeks ago, which was really good, but this is the ultimate.

"I played really well at the Spanish Youth Open and brought that form to this tournament. I felt confident going in. Halfway through the season, I wouldn't have felt at that level but it's been a good end to the season – I've really picked it up and proved myself."

The finalists had contrasting clashes in the last four. Walsh enjoyed a relatively routine 4-0 (7, 9, 7, 6) win over surprise package Ben Piggott, but Siraj's victory over Joe Cope was anything but routine.

It looked as though it might be when Siraj opened up a 3-0 lead, albeit in close games. But fourth seed Cope whittled it back to 3-2 and then edged a ferocious sixth 16-14. The decider was delicately poised at 9-9, but it was the top seed to dragged himself over the line.

The surprises started back in the first round, when two seeds fell, one of them in a decider, while two others escaped by the skin of their teeth.

Cadet National Cup champion Rhys Davies eliminated seventh seed Peter Smallcombe in five, but the biggest to fall was second seed James Smith, last year's beaten finalist, who went out 11-9 in the seventh, Piggott completing a 4-3 (11-6, 7-11, 8-11, 11-8, 12-14, 11-4, 11-9) victory.

Sixth seed Amirul Hussain was taken as far as 13-11 in the seventh by Will Dobinson. Hussain was 2-0 and 3-2 down though he never had to face a match point before he crossed the winning line at 7-11, 8-11, 11-5, 11-9, 8-11, 11-3, 13-11.

Ethan Walsh was also pushed by Louis Price, who was finally seen off 11-9 in the decider, the final score 4-3 (11-13, 11-3, 9-11, 11-8, 11-9, 7-11, 11-9) for Walsh.

Maxim Stevens took two sets off fourth seed Joe Cope, while fifth Naphat Boonyaprapa went through in five against Alexander Ahl. The other two first-round matches were done in four – Siraj beating Webster and eighth seed Wilson defeating the younger Boonyaprapa, Naphong.

Piggott was at it again in the quarter-finals as he dumped Hussain out in five, the same margin by which Walsh saw off Davies and Cope defeated Naphat Boonyaprapa. For Siraj, it was a sweet 4-0 win over Sam Wilson, who had beaten him by the same scoreline in the last 16 a year ago.

Group stage

That the Junior Boys' category is competitive was shown by the fact that only four of the groups were won by the top-ranked player.

Group 3 went to countback as Robert Pelc, Adam Webster and top-ranked David Gofton won a match each. Webster started with a 3-0 win over Pelc, who in turn beat Gofton in four. Although Gofton beat Ormesby club-mate Webster in four (6-11, 12-10, 15-13, 11-5), it was Webster who got the top spot on countback.

It was also countback in Group 4, where Will Dobinson got the verdict ahead of top-ranked Sam Chesterman and Leon Zacharkiw – the latter's 3-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-5) win over Chesterman blew the group open after Dobinson had beaten Zacharkiw 3-0 in the first match. Chesterman overcame Dobinson 3-1, but it was not enough.

As had been the case in Group 3, Ormesby club-mates also faced each other in Group 1, where Ben Piggott came to the fore ahead of Josh Weatherby. Piggott beat Uther Kingdom in the first match, but Kingdom then upset Weatherby in five (11-6, 11-6, 9-11, 9-11, 11-5) and Piggott's 7, 9, 6 win over Weatherby took him through to the main draw.

In Group 6, adversaries from the Cadet National Cup met again and it was gold medallist Rhys Davies who again came out on top over top-ranked Thomas Rayner, the National Cup bronze medallist, and Jie Fu Tham. The key result was Davies defeating Rayner 3-1 (11-5, 11-0, 7-11, 11-9).

Alexander Ahl won Group 5 as expected, but Kieran Wardell got above Harry Watson into second place by coming from 2-0 down in a match that could scarcely have been closer – Wardell taking it 3-2 (5-11, 12-14, 12-10, 12-10, 15-13) after both boys had had match points.

Maxim Stevens came through Group 2 as expected with 3-0 wins over Callum McRae (4, 8, 5) and Freddie Osenton-Brown (5, 6, 5). McRae upset Osenton-Brown 3-0 (13-11, 11-5, 11-9) to finish second.

Louis Price and Naphong Boonyaprapa were the other top-ranked players to win their groups, but they were both extended in one match – Price seeing off Connor Green 3-2 (11-8, 5-11, 16-18, 11-5, 11-8) and Boonyaprapa saving a match point as he defeated Felix Thomis 3-2 (10-12, 9-11, 12-10, 11-5, 14-12).

Consolation



David Gofton

David Gofton fought back from 3-1, 7-1 down to Callum McRae to take the gold thanks to a 4-3 scoreline (11-7, 9-11, 13-15, 9-11, 11-9, 11-6, 11-5).

It was a third decider of the competition for McRae, who edged Robert Pelc 15-13 in the seventh set back in the last 16 and then withstood a comeback Leon Zacharkiw in the semi-finals, taking than 11-9 in the decider having led 3-0.

Gofton's path to the final was smoother as he dropped only one game before the final – in the semi against Jie Fu Tham.

Gofton said: "I had expectations of getting through my group but had a bit of a nightmare, but that can happen sometimes.

"I'm happy to have won the consolation event because it's better than losing the consolation event – and I was happy with my comeback in the final."

Girls' Singles



Denise Payet

Denise Payet made up for missing last year's championships by winning back the trophy she claimed two years ago, defeating defending champion Charlotte Bardsley in the final.

She had to come from 2-0 down, as she had in the semi-finals, before recording a 4-2 (8-11, 7-11, 11-4, 11-8, 11-3, 11-9) triumph.

The champion said: "I really wanted to do well because it's my last year as a Junior and I wanted to finish on a high. Also, because I wasn't here last year but won it the previous year, it felt like I wanted to keep the title.

"It means a lot as top seed and shows my hard work is paying off. I haven't had the results I wanted at international events this year but this is a boost to my confidence for future events."

In the semi-finals, Payet had to stave off a minor crisis when she trailed third seed Jasmin Wong 2-0 – she came back to take it 4-2 (6-11, 8-11, 11-4, 11-4, 11-8, 11-8).

Bardsley's progress was more serene as she overcame fifth seed Megan Gidney in four straight (5, 5, 9, 11).

Two seeds went out in the last 16, including fourth seed Mollie Patterson, who tumbled to Anaya Patel, who won the first three sets and then had two match points in the fifth. Patterson saved those, but could do nothing to avert another crisis in the decider, which she lost 11-6.

Gemma Kerr, ranked seventh, also went out, in five at the hands of Millie Rogove. All the other seeds went through, though Darcie Proud (No 6) had to dig mighty deep to see off Ruby Chan 4-3 (8-11, 11-7, 7-11, 11-7, 8-11, 11-9, 11-7).

In the quarters, Bardsley and Payet beat Rogove and Mari Baldwin respectively in five; Wong came from 2-0 down to beat Proud in six; and it was six too for Gidney against Patel.

Group stage

In contrast to the boys' event, only one group was not won by the top seed, Lois Perryman causing the upset in Group 8 as she defeated Sophie Barlow 3-2 (11-8, 6-11, 8-11, 10-12, 11-3).

There were a few upsets for second positions, including Scarlett O'Neil defeating Jodie Morris in four (11-6, 10-12, 13-11, 11-7) in Group 1. O'Neil also took a set off group winner Ruby Chan.

In Group 2, Helena Dicken climbed from third to second by defeating Federica Bonato 3-2 (4-11, 6-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-4) to finish behind Tiana Dennison. While in Group 4, the No 3 Casey Nickle also came from 2-0 down to defeat No 2 Kirsty Maull 3-2 (7-11, 4-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-7) – Millie Rogove won that group.

Erin Green was, as expected, the winner of Group 5 thanks to 3-0 victories over Angharad Beman and Amillia Baker. Third-ranked Beman got above Baker thanks to another win in three straight.

The other three groups went with seeding: Amy Marriott took Group 6 ahead of Gracie Edwards and Niamh Scarborough; Bhavika Mistry topped Group 7 above Emily Haskell and Anna Green; and Anaya Patel won Group 3 with Charlotte Weatherby second and Samadhi Udamulla third – though it took five for Weatherby to over Udamulla (11-5, 11-6, 10-12, 14-16, 11-7).

Consolation



Sophie Barlow

Sophie Barlow claimed the consolation gold with a 4-1 (4-11, 11-8, 11-7, 11-7, 11-6) victory over Helena Dicken in the final.

Barlow had made swift progress through the field, dropping only one other set. In contrast, Dicken was taken to seven by Emily Haskell in the semi-finals before coming through 4-3 (11-7, 11-9, 6-11, 9-11, 11-5, 13-15, 11-9).

Barlow said: "I was gutted to lose against Lois (Perryman) in the groups. I was happy with my performance but

guttled to go out, especially in my last year as a Junior. I was hoping to do better.

“But afterwards I just had to forget about it. I thought if I’m in the consolation I might as well try to win it.”

Mixed Doubles



Ethan Walsh & Charlotte Bardsley celebrate victory

Third seeds Ethan Walsh & Charlotte Bardsley ended the run of unseeded Sam Wilson & Megan Gidney to win the title in a deciding fifth game.

The pair had some nervous moments at the end as their opponents saved three match points from 10-6, but they finally got over the line 3-2 (11-5, 9-11, 11-9, 6-11, 11-9).

Walsh & Bardsley overcame second seeds Shayan Siraj & Jasmin Wong in four (11-2, 12-10, 3-11, 13-11) in the semi-finals but earlier had some tougher tests, arriving at that stage by virtue of two five-setters, first defeating Freddie Osenton-Brown & Gemma Kerr 11-7 in the fifth and then, in the quarter-finals, seeing off David Gofton & Mollie Patterson 12-10 in the decider.

Wilson & Gidney had been given a fright by Cadet pair Naphong Boonyaprapa & Millie Rogove in the semi-finals before coming through 3-2 (7-11, 11-8, 4-11, 11-8, 11-2).

Two of the top four seeds had tumbled out in the early stages, including top seeds James Smith & Denise Payet, who were turned over by Wilson & Gidney in three straight (7, 9, 12) in the quarter-finals.

The others to go out were fourth seeds Joe Cope & Darcie Proud, beaten 7, 7, 9 by Rhys Davies & Anaya Patel in the first round. Davies & Patel went on to be defeated by Boonyaprapa & Rogove in the last eight.

Girls' Doubles



Mollie Patterson & Denise Payet

Mollie Patterson retained the title she won last year with Kate Cheer, this time in the company of Denise Payet, who claimed a double gold on the day.

It was another silver for Bardsley as she and Megan Gidney were edged out in a decider, the winners finally making a lead stick after being twice pegged back in a 3-2 (11-4, 5-11, 11-9, 8-11, 11-9) scoreline.

Patterson said: "We play well together and complement each other's styles. We had to fight for every point and we played well.

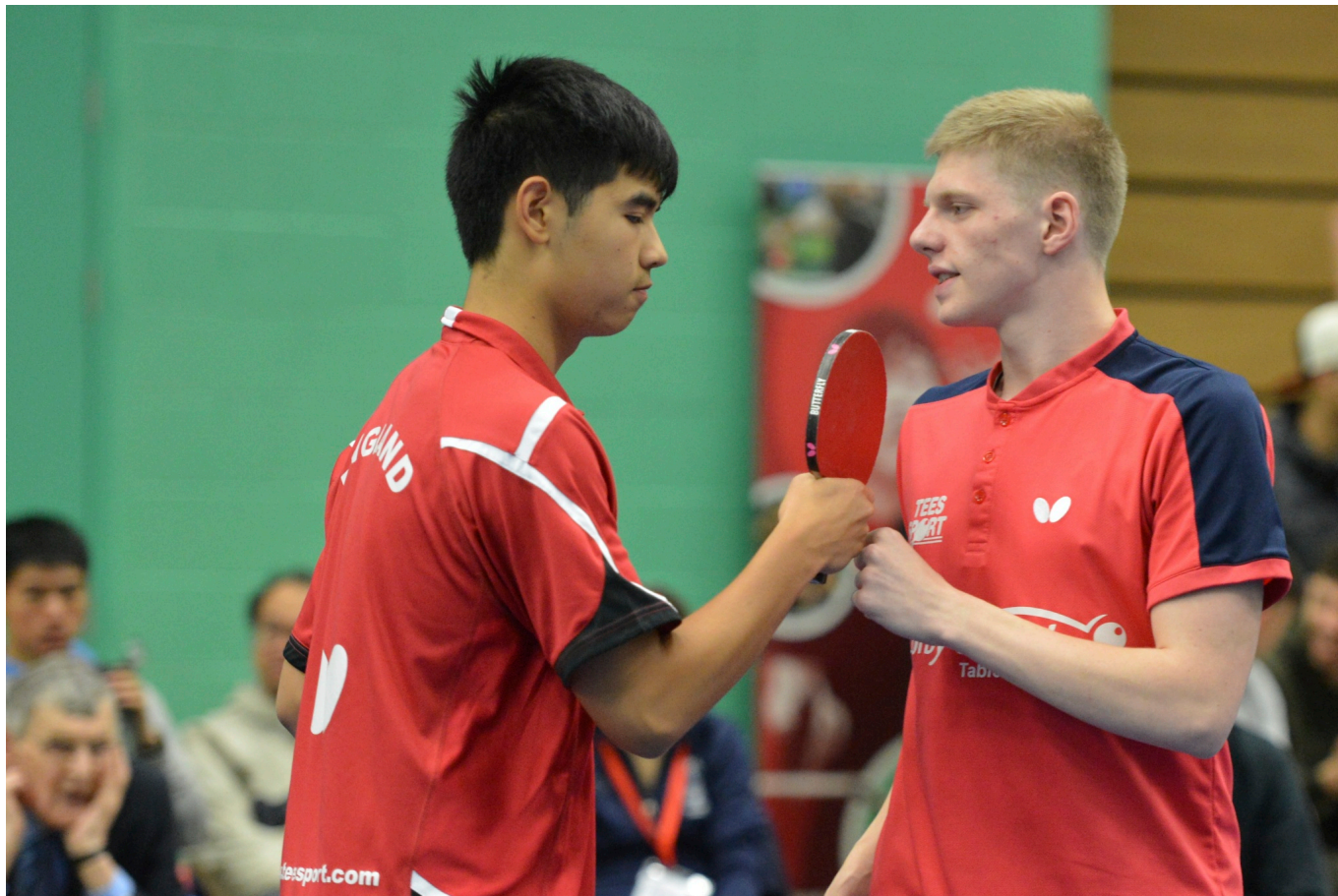
"I was really pleased with my comeback and my mental game was really strong. It was a really good match and she played well. I think I was unlucky to lose it."

Payet & Patterson had recovered from losing the first game to Jasmin Wong & Ruby Chan in the semi-finals, earning a 3-1 (8-11, 11-8, 11-6, 11-3) victory, while it was plain sailing for Bardsley & Gidney as they defeated Sophie Barlow & Gracie Edwards 3-0 (5, 4, 5).

Barlow & Edwards had arrived in the semi-finals courtesy of a good win over Darcie Proud & Anaya Patel, the fourth seeds. They needed four to get through, coming back from losing the first to win 3-1 (9-11, 11-8, 11-9, 11-8).

Back in the first round, they were taken to five by Amillia Baker & Kirsty Maull, a match which was one of three at that stage to go the distance. The others saw Kerr & O'Neil overcome Tiana Dennison & Lois Perryman and Baldwin & Haskell squeeze through against Erin Green & Helena Dicken 12-10 in the fifth.

Boys' Doubles



Naphat Boonyaprapa & Sam Wilson

Third seeds Sam Wilson & Naphat Boonyaprapa defeated fourth seeds Amirul Hussain & Sam Chesterman to take the title.

It was a 3-1 (11-8, 11-7, 9-11, 11-7) victory for the winners, who by their own admission made an awkward pair for each set of opponents to face.

Boonyaprapa said: "It's my first national title, so I'm very happy. We have to be the most disgusting partnership to win the Nationals – we blocked and chopped and slow-spun it but hit it past them when the chance was there. But it worked and it was a lot of fun."

Wilson added: "We weren't an easy pair for anyone to play and it's an ugly way to play, but that's why we chose each other."

"We've never played together before, it was a new combination and we dealt with that well and I felt we got better throughout the day."

Both semi-finals went the distance and, in the second to finish, Boonyaprapa & Wilson did it the hard way from 2-0 down in a desperately close affair, saving two match points at 8-10 in the decider as they won 3-2 (10-12, 10-12, 12-10, 11-9, 12-10) against James Smith & Ethan Walsh.

Hussain & Chesterman had taken down the top seeds in their semi-final, turning the tide after their opponents had levelled the match from 2-0 down and built a 9-5 lead in the decider. Six points later, it was Hussain & Chesterman celebrating a 3-2 (11-2, 13-11, 6-11, 3-11, 11-9) triumph.

The top four seeded pairs duly reached the semi-finals, though Hussain & Chesterman were pushed by Maxim Stevens & Adam Webster in the quarters, coming from 2-1 down to win 3-2 (6-11, 11-4, 7-11, 11-8, 11-8), while Smith

& Walsh had to perform similar escapology against Naphong Boonyaprapa & Louis Price to come through 3-2 (2-11, 11-7, 9-11, 11-5, 11-2).

Cadets Connor Green & Felix Thomis also put in a creditable performance in defeat to Naphat Boonyaprapa & Wilson – a match they lost 3-1 (11-7, 15-17, 15-13, 11-7). Siraj & Cope's quarter-final victory was 3-1 (5-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-2) against Josh Weatherby & David Gofton.

The only first-round match to go the distance involved Green & Thomis, who defeated Peter Smallcombe & Rhys Davies 11-2, 4-11, 11-9, 8-11, 11-8.

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