



Chelmsford & District: Players battle to Finals Night

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The 2020 Chelmsford & District Table Tennis League Closed Championships played at the Hylands School this weekend produced more than its fair share of excitement.

The group stages in the Men's Singles were no exception. Wudong Liu scored a fine 3-0 (12-10, 11-7, 11-4) win over the seeded John Poysden whilst Robert Shrimpton defeated another seed – Steve Kerns 3-1 (6-11, 11-3, 11-5, 11-3).

Lee McHugh, who could consider himself unlucky not to be seeded, found himself in the same group as Duncan Taylor and he pushed the 2018 champion all the way before succumbing 3-2 (4-11, 8-11, 11-5, 11-8, 12-10). Josh Bickles – one for the future – did well to beat Charles Yeung 3-2 (9-11, 4-11, 11-6, 11-7, 11-9) and Eren Gozcu had to battle hard to beat Peter Barrett 3-0 (11-8, 11-7, 19-17).

Top seed Gozcu battled his way through to the Men's Singles semi-finals on Finals Night. He beat Eric Green 3-1 (11-9, 9-11, 11-8, 11-6) and in a really high-class quarter-final he saw off James Denyer 3-1 (3-11, 16-14, 11-4, 11-6). Denyer had earlier beaten Lee McHugh 3-1 (4-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-7).

Gozcu will meet Paul Davison on Finals Night. Davison's renowned backhand was in the groove and he knocked out Reece Seddon 3-2 (11-4, 8-11, 11-8, 12-14, 11-6) in the quarter-final.

Liam Squirrell and Daniel Young came through the bottom half of the draw. Squirrell defeated Wiktor Delimat 3-0 (11-4, 11-4, 11-9), Peter Barrett 3-0 (11-6, 12-10, 11-4) and finally Charles Sweeny 3-1 (11-6, 11-6, 12-14, 11-5). Sweeny fought back from 2-0 down to beat Trevor Lloyd 3-2 (6-11, 5-11, 11-5, 11-9, 11-7).

Young, many people's tip to cause a big surprise in this tournament, didn't disappoint. The Burnham Men's Singles champion last year, he clearly has the temperament for the big occasion. He was a last-gasp winner against the hard-hitting Simon Webber (11-8, 6-11, 11-13, 11-8, 12-10) and he looked to be on good form as he beat John Poysden in four (11-5, 9-11, 11-8, 11-5). Poysden had really excelled to defeat Gary Young 3-1 (12-10, 6-11, 11-9,

11-9).

Young was locked at 2-2 against Duncan Taylor in an enthralling quarter-final. Ace defender Duncan stole a 6-3 lead in the decider but it wasn't enough. Daniel rallied and playing with huge conviction and determination he battled his way through to a superb 3-2 (11-9, 9-11, 11-9, 4-11, 11-6) victory. This means that there will be three new protagonists in this year's Men's Singles semi-finals –Gozcu, Squirrel and Young.

There will also be two new players in the Ladies' Singles Final. With 22-time champion Julie Johnson having to withdraw before the day of the event it had an open look to it. This was exacerbated when Sarah Austin beat last year's runner-up Jan Fuller 3-1 (11-9, 11-6, 10-12, 11-8) in their group stage.

Nyree Marsh in turn did well to beat Austin 3-2 (6-11, 12-10, 11-16, 16-18, 11-9) after a real hum-dinger of a battle. Marsh battled her way into Finals Night beating Annabel Sweeney 3-0 (11-4, 11-7, 11-9) and Melinda Abraham Victor 3-1 (10-12, 11-4, 11-6, 11-7).

Newcomer Weronika Bozek was hotly tipped to do well. She didn't disappoint. She beat Austin 3-0 (11-3, 11-6, 11-6) and in the semi-final she saw off the 2016 and 2017 champion, the hard-hitting Dawn Baldry, 3-1 (11-8, 10-12, 11-5, 11-3).

The Men's Doubles final will also feature the all-action Gozcu. Paired with Lee McHugh they beat the hard-hitting Paul Davison / Simon Webber 3-1 (11-6, 11-9, 5-11, 11-8) and in a really explosive semi-final they defeated last year's winners – Liam Squirrel / Reece Seddon 3-2 (12-10, 8-11, 9-11, 11-8, 11-6). They will meet the 2018 champions Duncan Taylor and Charles Sweeny in the final. Charles and Duncan did well to repel the challenge of Gary Young / Daniel Young 3-0 (11-5, 11-9, 11-6) in the semi-final having also beaten Wiktor Delimat / Robert Shrimpton 3-0 (11-8, 11-7, 11-9).

There are new champions in the Ladies' Doubles. Annabel Sweeney / Weronika Bozek beat Nyree Marsh / Melinda Abraham Victor 3-0 (11-5, 11-4, 11-9) to book their final appearance and they beat 2015 champions Shirley Carroll / Dawn Baldry 3-1 (11-8, 11-7, 9-11, 11-4) in the final.

Top seed Trevor Lloyd, the 2018 champion, booked his Finals Night appearance in the Veterans' Singles. He had a smooth run through to the final, beating David Gatheral (11-4, 11-4, 11-9), Dave Moles (11-4, 11-1, 11-4) and Eric Green (11-4, 11-5, 11-6). Moles scored a really eye-opening 3-2 (11-9, 6-11, 4-11, 11-9, 11-6) win over Babul McLeod. Green did well to beat John Poysden 3-1 (11-6, 15-13, 4-11, 11-9).

Lloyd will face Gary Young in the final. Young beat Victor Chan 3-1 (11-9, 11-8, 6-11, 11-8), Steve Kerns 3-0 (11-8, 12-10, 11-9) and in a thrilling semi-final Young showed great patience and no shortage of tactical awareness to beat Duncan Taylor 3-1 (12-10, 11-8, 5-11, 13-11). Taylor had beaten Paul Davison 3-2 (11-4, 7-11, 11-9, 8-11, 14-12) in the quarter-final. The last few points of this match were the most compelling of the whole weekend.

Gary Young / Paul Davison made no mistake in the Veterans' Doubles. They powered through to the title beating Neil Freeman / Michael Johnson 3-0 (11-5, 11-8, 11-7), Steve Whiteley / Eric Green 3-0 (11-6, 11-8, 13-11) and they produced a flawless display to win the final 3-0 (11-7, 11-6, 11-7) against John Poysden / Trevor Lloyd. The Lloyd / Poysden pairing came through a widely fluctuating semi-final 3-2 (11-4, 5-11, 4-11, 11-3, 11-5) against a new pairing Steve Kerns / Duncan Taylor.

Steve Kerns is the Over-50s' Singles champion. He faced a tricky group stage examination by Victor Chan and fell well short, losing 3-0 (10-12, 5-11, 3-11). Pumped up by this early reverse, Kerns then battled through four very close games to win his first Chelmsford Singles title. He beat Eric Green 3-2 (9-11, 12-10, 10-12, 11-3, 11-7) and Ian Whiteside 3-0 (15-13, 11-9, 12-10). Kerns trailed John Poysden, the 2015 champion 7-3 in the fourth end in the semi-final but he kept his nerve to sneak home 3-2 (9-11, 11-9, 6-11, 11-8, 11-9).

In the other half of the draw Chan beat Charles Yeung 3-0 (11-7, 11-2, 12-10) and then top seed Trevor Lloyd 3-2 (11-7, 11-9, 9-11, 7-11, 11-5). Chan finally missed out 3-0 (10-12, 11-13, 8-11) against Babul McLeod. McLeod, a three times champion in this event, had impressed with a 3-0 (11-4, 11-4, 11-2) win over Mike Johnston and a 3-0 (11-7, 11-6, 11-6) win over Gareth Joice.

Kerns took a 2-1 lead in the final against McLeod courtesy of a marathon 18-16 third game but he was outplayed

in the fourth end and trailed 7-3 in the decider. One last massive effort was required and Kerns managed to haul himself back into contention to win 3-2 (3-11, 11-8, 18-16, 4-11, 11-9).

Trevor Lloyd, the holder, retained his Over 60s' Singles title. He showed his class beating Babul McLeod 3-0 (11-5, 11-4, 11-9) in the semi-final and he held off Eric Green 3-2 (11-9, 11-5, 6-11, 5-11, 11-4) in the final. Green defeated John Poysden 3-2 (11-6, 2-11, 12-10, 2-11, 13-11) in a thrilling semi-final.

Daniel Young, as befits his status as a Men's Singles semi-finalist was a very heavy favourite in the Junior Boys' Singles. To his credit he showed no intention of taking any opponent lightly. Young showed his class, beating four players who are all making their mark, all in three straight. He beat Sudheep Kamma (11-5, 11-6, 11-7), Harry Buckle (11-8, 11-6, 11-7), Ben Porter (11-7, 11-7, 11-6) and, in the final, Thomas Page 13-11, 11-6, 11-8. Porter booked his semi-final appearance by beating James Donald in a thrilling quarter-final encounter 3-2 (9-11, 11-9, 11-9, 2-11, 11-9). Page beat Josh Bickles 3-2 (15-13, 9-11, 11-8, 10-12, 11-9) in his semi-final – another contender for the most dramatic match of the weekend.

In the Under-16 Singles, Daniel Young was again the player to beat and he again showed his opponents who was boss. He defeated Todd Martin 3-0 (11-4, 11-6, 11-8), Sam Mortimer-Ford 3-0 (11-7, 11-4, 11-9), Josh Bickles 3-1 (11-5, 11-6, 7-11, 11-5) and, in the final Sudheep Kamma 3-0 (11-7, 11-2, 11-8).

Kamma had disposed of Nikita Tkachuk 3-1 (11-6, 12-14, 11-3, 11-8), Saul Chivers 3-1 (11-8, 11-7, 9-11, 11-8) and James Donald in a really hard fought match 3-2 (11-9, 15-13, 9-11, 5-11, 15-13).

The standard in the Under-14 Singles was of a really high level. James Donald – who missed out so narrowly in the Under-16 Singles and Junior Boys' Singles – made no mistake this time. He took the title with convincing 3-0 wins over Elliot Gardiner (11-3, 11-6, 11-4), Jishkut Shah (11-3, 11-0, 11-5) and Sudheep Kamma (11-2, 11-6, 11-6). Donald was also in control in the final, beating Jenson Davis 11-3, 11-4, 11-9. The hugely promising Davis had impressed by beating Joshua Bickles (14-12, 11-7, 11-9) and Ben Porter (13-11, 11-7, 11-4).

There was a minor upset in the Junior Doubles. Second seeds Charlie Craig and Harry Buckle took the title by beating the holders Daniel Young / Aidan Noguchi in the final. They ran out narrow 3-0 (13-11, 12-10, 11-7) winners. Craig / Buckle beat Ben Porter / Sam Mortimer-Ford 3-1 (11-9, 11-8, 6-11, 11-9) in their semi-final after Porter / Mortimer-Ford had seen off Sudheep Kamma / Joshua Bickles really narrowly 3-2 (11-6, 8-11, 11-9, 8-11, 12-10) a round earlier. Young / Noguchi booked their place in the final by beating James Donald / Nyree Marsh 3-0 (11-7, 11-7, 11-5).

Nyree Marsh retained her Junior Girls' Singles title. She beat Melinda Abraham Victor 3-0 (11-5, 11-9, 16-14) in the final having seen off Annabel Sweeney 3-1 (7-11, 11-7, 11-7, 11-8) in the semi-final. Melinda battled her way to the final by beating Alesha Ellis-Austin 3-1 (9-11, 14-12, 11-7, 11-7).

Sunday's play was dominated by the four Divisional events. Gareth Joice, who was third seed, emerged as the winner of the Division two Singles. He looked to be in good form, beating Neil Freeman 3-0 (11-5, 11-7, 11-5) and, in the semi-final, David Gatheral by a last gasp 3-2 (11-5, 11-7, 7-11, 9-11, 12-10) margin. Gatheral had previously ousted the top seed Ciaran Whelan 3-1 (11-3, 10-12, 11-8, 11-3).

In the other half of the draw Thomas Page scored a superb 3-0 (11-5, 14-12, 11-6) win over second seed Paul Sturton. Rod MacLennan made his mark with a fine 3-2 (11-8, 5-11, 10-12, 11-9, 11-9) win over Victor Chan. The final went to five ends and it was Joice who emerged as the winner 3-2 (11-7, 12-10, 7-11, 10-12, 11-5) against Page.

David Gatheral came into his own in the Division three singles. He beat Trevor Collin 3-0 (11-5, 11-8, 11-6) and then Eamon Hall 3-1 (11-3, 5-11, 11-6, 11-8) and he annexed the title with a 3-0 (11-4, 11-6, 11-8) win over Mark Glenister. Full marks to Glenister who battled his way through to the final with five-game wins over Andy Hanlon (11-8, 8-11, 7-11, 11-5, 11-3), Jenson Davis (11-9, 6-11, 11-8, 11-13, 11-9) and Ken Sheard (16-14, 9-11, 11-6, 9-11, 11-9).

The Division four singles didn't go to plan. Takunda Nerutanga battled his way through to the final with wins over Neil Thompson (11-9, 11-3, 11-6), Mark Glenister (11-9, 11-8, 11-8) and top seed James Donald (11-5, 11-6, 9-11, 11-7) but he met his match against Denis Crapnell in the final. Crapnell ran out a 3-0 (11-4, 11-7, 11-9) winner. Crapnell survived a major scare in the first round where he only overcame Will Goodchild 3-2 (5-11, 11-7, 5-11, 11-5, 11-9), although he cruised past Alex Tkachuk (11-5, 11-4, 11-7) and Andy Hanlon (11-6, 11-4, 11-3).

Rising star Joshua Bickles is the Division five Singles champion. He defeated Takunda Nerutanga 3-2 (11-5, 9-11, 11-9, 8-11, 11-8) in a tense final having beaten newcomer 3-0 (Mike Lucey 11-6, 11-8, 11-7) in the semi-final. Nerutanga beat Sudheep Kamma 3-1 (11-5, 11-9, 8-11, 11-9) to book his final appearance having needed five ends to get the better of Melinda Abraham Victor a round earlier (11-9, 11-7, 8-11, 7-11, 11-3).

The Under-21 Singles had to be held over from Saturday. The Final will be held on Finals Night and it will be between Thomas Page and Daniel Young. Page won his semi-final 3-1 (6-11, 11-6, 14-12, 11-9) against Harry Buckle whilst Young saw off James Donald 3-1 (9-11, 11-7, 11-7, 11-6) and Vineeth Kamma 3-0 (11-4, 11-1, 11-7).

The Mixed Doubles saw a number of pairings pull out after the event couldn't be completed on the Saturday. Two new pairings Lee McHugh / Weronika Bozek and Steve Kerns / Sarah Austin will contest the Final on Finals Night.

It was no surprise that the Handicap Singles Final was fought out by two of the League's top Junior talents. James Donald eventually captured the title with a really hard-fought victory against Joshua Bickles in the Final (21-19, 19-21, 21-17). Donald had previously left a whole stream of players in his wake with a series of 2-0 wins. Donald beat Sarah Austin (21-15, 21-16), Neil Freeman (21-15, 21-11), Colin Barham (21-13, 21-14) and Nyree Marsh (21-19, 21-19). His semi-final against Sudheep Kamma couldn't have been closer and James won 15-21, 21-18, 22-20.

Bickles also impressed massively. He beat Jordan Corbett (22-20, 17-21, 21-17), Annabel Sweeney (21-15, 21-17), Eamon Hall (21-6, 21-7) and Lee McHugh (21-13, 21-19). McHugh beat Thomas Page by a last gasp 21-18, 16-21, 22-20 margin.

Joshua Bickles / Will Goodhild are the Handicap Doubles champions. They captured the title by beating Alex Tkachuk / Sudheep Kamma in a well contested final 21-13, 18-21, 21-18.

The League's Junior Handicap Tournament hasn't been completed and a report of that event will follow in due course.

All players are reminded that Finals Night takes place on Monday February 10 at Old Chelmsfordians Association, Roxwell Road at 7.30pm. Admission is free.

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