



Walker & Ho are top pair again

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Sam Walker & Tin-Tin Ho brought down the curtain on the first day of the Mark Bates Ltd National Championships in Nottingham by winning the Mixed Doubles title.

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The top seeds duly lived up to billing to lift the trophy for the fourth time together and the first since 2016, beating Chris Doran & Charlotte Bardsley 3-0 (11-7, 11-9, 11-8) in a final littered with some exciting shot-making.

Doran & Bardsley were the second seeds, elevated after Tom Jarvis & Maria Tsapsinos had to pull out because of an injury to Tsapsinos.

Ho said: "I'm really happy to win another mixed. We played quite well – there were some games where we had some trouble but we managed to come through them. We play well together, we've played together a lot."

Walker added: "After Tom and Maria pulled out we were heavy favourites but there's still a job to do and we're pleased to have done it.

"It's two years since we played together at the Nationals, so it's nice to come back and get the win."

Bardsley's reaction was: "I'm happy, I feel like we worked well as a team. We had some difficulties in the semi-final and managed to work it out.

Doran said: "It's nice to be back, especially as I was coaching Sam Wilson in the under-21s who got to the final.

"Charlotte said she hadn't played much mixed doubles before, so to get to the final was great. I think we actually played our best match in the final and we lost competitive 3-0, so hopefully if we play again in the future we can play even better."

Back in the semi-finals, it was serene for Walker & Ho against Alim Hirji & Emily Bolton, coming through in three straight (5, 8, 5) against last year's silver medallists.

The other semi was more convoluted as Doran & Bardsley came from 2-0 down to Ethan Walsh & Mollie Patterson to triumph in a decider and ensure the final was between the top two pairs. The scoreline was 3-2 (8-11, 9-11, 11-8, 11-8, 11-4).

Walsh & Patterson had in turn defeated third seeds Josh Bennett & Denise Payet in the quarter-finals when, after losing the first game easily, they bounced back to win 3-1 (3-11, 11-9, 11-8, 12-10).

James Hobson & Evie Collier took the first set off Doran & Bardsley, who came back to win 3-1 (8-11, 11-6, 12-10, 11-6), while Walker & Ho and Hirji & Bolton had 3-0 wins over, respectively, Jack Bennett & Gemma Kerr and Naphong Boonyaprapa & Millie Rogove.

Bennett & Payet had nearly gone out back in the first round. Up against Nottingham duo Naphat Boonyaprapa & Eri Green, the match ebbed and flowed but it looked as if the younger pair had the momentum as they levelled at 2-2 and then led the decider 5-0.

But the more experienced duo whittled away the lead, took the initiative at 8-7 and saw it out for a 3-2 (11-4, 9-11, 11-9, 10-12, 11-8) victory.

Naphong Boonyaprapa & Rogove overturned rankings to defeat Louis Price & Anaya Patel 3-1 (11-5, 11-8, 9-11, 12-10).



Charlotte Bardsley & Chris Doran in action (photo by Alan Man)

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