

Paul and Jo cheque out at Guildford

Author: Paul Stimpson

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Team GB leading contenders for next year's London Olympic Games, Paul Drinkhall and Joanna Parker were simply in a different class to all their opponents on their way to winning the Men's and Women's Open events at the Briar Guildford Grand Prix on Sunday 12th of June. Between them they "chequed out" with just under £500 which will do very nicely for their well earned forthcoming summer holiday break in Spain in a couple of weeks' time.

Ability may get you to the top but it takes character to keep you there and this was precisely what our number 1 ranked senior player Paul Drinkhall continually demonstrated en route to the title winner's cheque for £305. Paul had a comfortable final match 3-0 victory over Scotland's number 1 player Gavin (Mr Grand Prix) Rumgay. Throughout his first Grand Prix this season Paul continually combined artistry with imagination, touch and feeling like no other to control every match he played. He simply oozes class. No-one could catch him racing like a pure thoroughbred in a hack canter around a race track leaving all the other runners flat footed a distance behind him.

Fair play to Gavin Rumgay for reaching the final. After easing past Jersey's Max Tupper, he then had a match on his hands with last sixteen opponent Paul McCreery from Ireland. After cruising to a 2-0 game lead Gavin then was bombarded with the Irishman's spinny attack on both wings to level at 2-2. The last game had a packed audience in awe of the high level of play with both players duelled in long rallies to win a point. No one wanted it to end as Gavin nosed ahead 10-9 with Paul serving to stay in the match- ouch he served in the net, such a shame to end that way. Gavin then raised the bar again to overcome the next challenge posed by quarter finalist David McBeath by 3-1. Second seed Danny Reed stepped into the melting pot to try and halt the Scottish invasion from Rumgay after enjoying a straight games win over 6th seed Matt Ware. But try as he did Danny gave his all but in 5 top class semi final games Gavin came through to the final.

Meanwhile in the top half of the draw Paul Drinkhall was safely through to the last four with results over Dan O'Connell, Neil Charles and Tom Cutler. On a nearby table fourth seed Chris Doran was fighting for his survival. After a four game win against Lloyd Gregory, Doran found himself 1-2 down in games and looking in trouble with Craig Bryant! Chris levelled at 2-2 over the clever Bryant who fought all the way but could not contain the spirited fight back from Doran. Chris then had to face Gavin Evans and that too was a masterclass match for any enthusiast with back from the table topspin rallies from both players with Chris taking a 3-1 quarter final win. Doran's run came to a dead end when the Champion Drinkhall just moved in for the kill after exploiting every inch of Doran's side of the table creating the right opportunity to put the ball away with a 3-0 last four result. Paul then showed us all why he is our Champion with a comfortable result over finalist Gavin Rumgay.

The Women's event had finished a little earlier with top seed Jo Parker taking the title against finalist and 2nd seed Egle Adomelyte. It is always a pleasure to admire the supreme retrieval skills Jo possesses with her unequalled defensive play intermingled with hard flat punched backhands that whizz by. Egle has the type of game to upset the Champion with her ability to attack with controlled topspin and flat hit when she can and this proved the case with Egle taking the top seed to four games but the result was rarely in doubt for Jo.

However long before the final game was played the large audience were treated to some spectacular Women's matches. None more so than 4th seeded fifteen year old Emily Bates (The England ranked number 1 Junior Girl) who produced stunning performances to outplay Alice Loveridge in her group by 3-0. She then endured an unbelievable five game battle against Sanja Clements (a former National Veteran Champion) coming through to the semi final. There she faced 2nd seed Egle Adomelyte and gave as good as she got taking her all the way to the bitter end of five close games with the much more experienced Adomelyte making it through to the final. Jo Parker's route to the title was made by displacing Emma Tovey and Lauren Spink (who had fought an earlier four set top class spinkling of spin win over Alice Loveridge) to meet Egle in the final.

Shortly followed the Women's Under 21 competition where Emily Bates continued in her superlative earlier form

to take yet another title. Emily enjoyed a second win on the day against finalist Alice Loveridge by 3-1 (which is no mean feat) after cruising past Emma Tovey in the semi final. In contrast Alice had to work her socks off to come through to the final in five games with a hard fought win against last four opponent Jas Ould coming back from a 0-2 deficit in games.

It has to be said that displaying such strong performances throughout the year and today it really came as a huge surprise that our England Number 1 Junior Girl Emily Bates was not selected to compete for her country at the European Youth Championships in Russia this summer.

What can you say to describe Damien Nicholls who seems to be almost indestructible in the Under 21 Men's events! He came up with an incredible entertaining performance to dispatch England number 9 and 3rd seed David McBeath by 3 games to 1 in the final. En route to Damien's success he outplayed Liam McTiernan to set up a semi final match against Ireland's Paul McCreery (4th seed) who beforehand triumphed over the fast improving Emran Hussain in four games. The semi final match between these two friendly rivals proved to be a classic. In a rollercoaster 5 game thriller Damien played the big points slightly better running out a 14-12 victor to meet David McBeath in the final.

Top seed Matt Ware had an unexpected five game defeat against Ashley Robinson who in the fourth set saved 3 match points to level at 2 games all. Ashley finished off the job with some talented aggressive play to set up a last four contest with David McBeath. In the top half semi final David soaked up everything that Ashley could throw at him with a tight three close game victory to fill the last piece in the jigsaw with eventual champion Damien Nicholls.

Costas Papantoniou dropped just the one game on his glory trail to the Veteran's title and that in the semi final with Steve Kerns. His last opponent Hari Gehlot succumbed to Costas in a straight games final.

Owe Karlsson was the top man in the Restricted event outpointing Zoltan Hosszu in the final. Chris Bush and Rory Scott enjoyed a fine tournament to make the last four.

The Bribar Player of the Tournament award was presented to Emma Tovey from Kent. She also collected Bribar vouchers to the value of £50.

Referee Eileen Allison ably assisted by Steve Smith and Diane Webb together with the blue coats kept the event running smoothly and on time.

Results from day 2 at Guildford.

Men's Open.

Paul Drinkhall (Cv) beat Gavin Rumgay (SCO)
11-9, 11-4, 11-6.

Women's Open.

Jo Parker (Sy) beat Egle Adomelyte (Mi)
6-11, 11-5, 11-1, 12-10.

Under 21 Men.

Damien Nicholls (Sp) beat David McBeath (Ha)
11-7, 11-9, 6-11, 11-5.

Under 21 Women.

Emily Bates (Li) beat Alice Loveridge (GGY)
11-2, 6-11, 11-6, 11-7.

Veteran Men.

Costas Papantoniou (Mi) beat Hari Gehlot (Bk)
11-7, 11-7, 11-4.

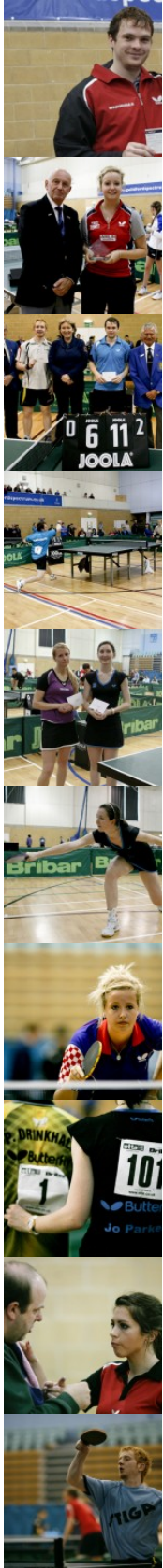
Restricted Men.

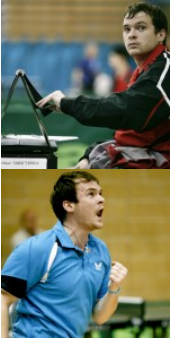
Owe Karlsson (K) beat Zoltan Hosszu (Sy)

11-6, 11-9, 11-7.

Photos taken at Guildford can be viewed and purchased from the following site at;
www.photoboxgallery.com/aldeman

A reminder that the last in this year's series of Grand Prix events takes place at the Metrodome Leisure Complex in Barnsley, South Yorkshire over the weekend of the 23rd and 24th of July. At the completion of this event the Grand Prix prize fund in excess of £13,000 will be distributed to the eligible winning players.





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