

High Drama at Barnsley

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High Drama in Banded Events at Tees Sport Barnsley Grand Prix

Close matches and tension abounded in the banded events on the first day of the Tees Sport Barnsley Grand Prix, the last major ETTA Grand Prix tournament of the season, held at the Metrodome Leisure Complex, Barnsley on Saturday 23rd July.

Neil Charles, new veteran and recently moved from Middlesex to Norwich, Norfolk, became king of the band 1 men's singles. Seeded 2nd, the England senior ranked no.31, who plays an unpredictable left-handed game of power and fades, had a by no means easy time. He had a close games 3-1 quarter-final win over Chris Main of Scotland, and then was extended to a final game, 6-11, 11-5, 5-11, 11-8, 11-8, by the determined Lancashire counter-hitter and second seed, Kevin Dolder, the England no.29, in the semi-finals.

In the final, Charles faced the smooth and classy power of Victor Guang Shi (Lancashire), and while the first 4 games were touch and go and equally divided, in the 5th Charles pulled clear to win 13-11, 10-12, 11-9, 10-12, 11-6. In his semi-final Victor, seeded 4, had a wonderfully entertaining tie with speedy paralympian lefthander, Kim Daybell the 3rd seed from Sheffield, South Yorkshire, and only just won 11-9, 8-11, 3-11, 11-9, 11-9. Also worth a mention is that Victor participated in the most spectacular rally of the day, when he came out best in high lobbing against Richard Smith's (Yorkshire) smash in the first round.

Third seed Calum Main (Scotland) was the winner of the band 2 men's singles, taking out surprise finalist Aaron McKibbin, (originally from Surrey but who trains with the British Paralympic squad at Sheffield), in an exciting 11-7, 11-5, 12-14, 6-22, 12-10 climax to this event. In the semi-finals Main had put out the top seeded Chris Lewis (Surrey) 11-9, 7-11, 13-11, 12-10, but earlier in his group was made to struggle 5-11, 6-11, 11-8, 11-7, 12-10 by John Magnall (Isle of Man). After winning his group McKibbin had got to the final via rated opponents Richard Smith, Dean Cundy (Wales) and Conor Edwards (Wales).

From an un-seeded position Tony Zeqiri (Norfolk) was the master of the men's band 3 singles. His toughest round was the quarter-finals when he bettered Laurence Sweeney (Warwickshire) 11-5, 9-11, 15-11, 11-9, 11-8, before comfortably beating Rob Owen (Yorkshire) in the semis, and ultimately Aaron McKibbin, 11-9, 7-11, 11-8, 11-6. McKibbin had been taken the full distance by Conor Edwards in the quarter-finals. In the previous round Edwards had eased out Chris Parker (Yorkshire) by the closest of margins, 16-14 in the 5th!

Top seed Laurence Sweeney so easily could have been knocked out in the band 4 groups but showed his metal in scrapping through 9-11, 9-11, 14-12, 11-8, 11-6 over local Barnsley player Raymond Hurst from a two game deficit, and also overcoming Michael Hahn (Durham) in 5 games. However, it was all to no avail, as he immediately succumbed in turn to Lincolnshire veteran Brian Allinson, who then was put out by scratch-entry Cleveland lefthander Michael Young. Young progressed on to the final with a comfortable straight games win over 3rd seed, Rob Owen (Wales). In the other half of the draw, Sheffield man Mohammad Khan also fought his way to the final with wins over Max Tupper (Jersey), in the quarter-finals, and from two games behind, 9-11, 6-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-6, over second seed Khamal Hussain (Lancashire) (who had saved 3 match points against Lincolnshire youngster William Ross in his group).

The final at first went Young's way, who applied persistent pressure to take the first two games. However, Khan hung on to win a close 3rd game, and then with an amazing display of power hitting won 11 consecutive points for the 4th game! The decider was hard fought, but 'Mo' was always slightly on top to take a 5-11, 9-11, 11-9, 11-0, 11-8 victory.





Mark Land, the second seed from Rotherham, triumphed over an even more local man, the 4th seeded Ian Denton from Barnsley, South Yorkshire, 12-10, 6-11, 16-14, 11-4 for the band 6 men's singles title, the long 3rd game perhaps being decisive. Earlier, another Barnsley player, Phil Jay, came through a tough group, winning two of his 3 matches in 5: Jouvalle Wilson (Surrey), 11-8, 11-8, 6-11, 10-12, 11-7, and David Evans (Staffordshire), 8-11, 6-11, 11-9, 12-10, 11-9. However, he was then beaten in straight games by Liam Fletcher (Cheshire).

Ian Denton gained his revenge by beating Mark Land 11-8, 11-8, 11-8 in the semi-finals of the band 5 men's singles. He topped this with a straight games win over Hugo Tupper (Jersey), 11-6, 11-8, 11-4 to lift the title. Raymond Hurst, also from Barnsley, had comfortably won his group, but was put out in 5 games by Kent's Alan Taylor in the first round. Taylor progressed to the semis where Tupper ended his run in straight games. An upset in the groups was top seed Chris Knowles (Cumbria) coming bottom in the group won by Joe Killoran, Cheshire, though Knowles did take two of his opponents to deciding games. Killoran was to reach the quarter-

finals, before being deposed by Hugo Tucker.

Welsh cadet superstar Charlotte Carey (and no.2 senior!), who a few days earlier had spearheaded her nation's 3-2 defeat of England junior girls at the European Youth Championships in Kazan, Russia, was the outstanding performer in the women's band 1 singles. After defeating Isabel Ashley (Derbyshire) (quarter-finals conqueror of her compatriot Megan Phillips), 3-1 in the semi-finals, Charlotte ultimately vanquished Jessica Dawson (Cleveland), 11-7, 6-11, 11-8, 11-7.

Jessica, the 3rd seed, had overcome considerable drama to get to that stage. In group 3, she, Jas Ould and Megan Phillips all beat each other. In a tense and fluctuating encounter, Megan had saved two match points with fast long pimples backhand serves to beat Jessica 11-5, 8-11, 9-11, 11-3, 12-10. Jas lost to Jessica 5 in the 5th game, but beat Megan 7-11, 11-8, 12-10, 11-13, 11-9. On points count-back, Jessica and Megan went through. Then in a fast and furious battle of dynamic lefthanders, Jessica just sneaked through her semi-final, 11-4, 5-11, 11-9, 3-11, 13-11 with second seed Angharad Phillips, sister of Megan and also a Welsh international.

The top two seeded players, juniors Jas Ould and Nicole Hall (Wales), both beaten in their groups, fought the women's band 2 final. Charlotte Spencer (Warwickshire) had saved 6 match points from 4-10 down to beat top seed Jas, 11-6, 4-11, 11-6, 6-11, 13-11. Fortunately Jas survived a 4-11, 5-11, 11-3, 8-11, 11-9 clash with Emily Standing (Cumbria) to come second in her group. Also in the groups, Isobel Ashley (Derbyshire) had achieved a tantalising close 11-7, 9-11, 10-12, 11-6, 13-11 victory over second seed and Welsh junior international Nicole.

However, in the knockout, Nicole reached the final with 5 setter successes over Kate Hughes (Worcestershire) and Charlotte Spencer, and Jasmine similarly beat Nicole Finn (Yorkshire) in 5, and Isobel Ashley 3-1. Although initially troubled by Ould's spin serves and big loops, Nicole worked her way on top with compact consistent and controlled attack for a 7-11, 12-10, 11-6, 11-9 win.

The women's band 3 was claimed by the hard grafting attacker Emily Standing (Cumbria), who secured the title with a 13-11, 11-6, 11-5 win over Annie Hudson (Cheshire). Emily had come from 2 games down to defeat Nicole Finn (Yorkshire) in 5 games in the semi-finals. A runner-up in the groups, Annie Hudson had put out the second seed Janay Gibson (Cheshire), also in 5 hard fought games, 17-15, 7-11, 11-9, 4-11, 11-8, to reach the final.

Results:

Men's band 1:

Victor Guang Shi (La) bt Kim Daybell (Ys) 9, -8, -3, 9, 9

Neil Charles (Mi) bt Kev Dolder (La) -6, 5, -5, 8, 8

Final: Charles bt Guang Shi 11, -10, 9, -10, 6

Men's band 2:

Calum Main (SCO) bt Chris Lewis (Sy) 9, -7, 11, 10

Aaron McKibbin (Sy) bt Conor Edwards (WAL) 10, -10, 6, 7

Final: Main bt McKibbin 7, 5, -12, -6, 10

Men's band 3:

Tony Zeqiri (Nk) bt Rob Owen (Y) 2, 1, 6

Aaron McKibbin bt Conor Edwards 4, -5, -13, 5, 5

Final: Zeqiri bt McKibbin 9, -7, 8, 6

Men's band 4:

Michael Young (Cv) bt Rob Owen 5, 9, 6

Mohammad Khan (Y) bt Khamal Hussain (La) -9, -6, 9, 8, 6

Final: Khan bt Young -5, -9, 9, 0, 8

Men's band 5:

Hugo Tupper (JEY) bt Alan Taylor (K) 7, 7, 10

Ian Denton (Ys) bt Mark Land (Y) 8, 8, 8

Final: Denton bt Tupper 6, 8, 4

Men's band 6:

Ian Denton bt Liam Fletcher (Ch) 5, 6, 7

Mark Land bt Alec Ward (Cv) 8, 2, 7

Final: Land bt Denton 10, -6, 14, 4

Women's band 1:

Charlotte Carey (WAL) bt Isobel Ashley (Dy) -4, 6, 6, 7

Jess Dawson (Cv) bt Angharad Phillips (WAL) 4, -5, 9, -3, 11

Final: Carey bt Dawson 7, -6, 8, 7

Women's band 2:

Nicole Hall (WAL) bt Charlotte Spencer (Wa) -5, 7, -6, 5, 7

Jas Ould (K) bt Isobel Ashley 6, -10, 4, 9

Final: Hall bt Ould -7, 10, 6, 9

Women's band 3:

Annie Hudson (Ch) bt Janay Gibson (Ch) 15, -7, 9, -4, 8

Emily Standing (Cu) bt Nicole Finn (Y) -5, -10, 7, 5, 3

Final: Standing bt Hudson 11, 6, 5

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