

Sainsbury's UK School Games Finals Day

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In a dramatic end to the 2011 UK School Games at Ponds Forge, Igor Morais won the boys' singles title after coming back from 2-0 down against Scott Barton.

It wasn't an easy passage to the final for Morais though, because after winning his group, he found out he was facing team-mate and tournament favourite Lewis Gray in the first round!

Morais wasn't to be denied though. He raced into a two set lead before being pegged back at 2-2 by the dogged Gray. In the final set he came through 11-6 to ensure he scraped into the quarter-finals and a spot against Colin Dalgleish.

He had no problems against the Scotsman and quickly won 3-0 to set up a semi-final with another of his team-mates; Helshan Weerasinghe. Once again he showed no mercy to the colleague who helped him win the team event on Saturday as he won 3-1.

The final was a different match altogether. Scott Barton had beaten Morais' last compatriot Jared Patel in the quarters before squeezing past Lewis Gray's group stage victor; George Downing, in a titanic semi-final.

In that semi, both players released booming roars on every point won and the crowd were fully behind the spectacle. Downing took a 2-1 lead but Barton fought back and stole the win in the final set – cue a thunderous round of roars.

The final began in the same fashion for Barton. His stifling roars seemed to blow Morais off his stride and Barton took the first set with a skill/luck combination. At 9-9 he played a sublime point from deep in the court to lead 10-9 before winning the set with a tiny edge off the side of the table.

When Barton sealed the second set 13-11 (thus cueing more vociferous cheers and roars) it was hard to see how Morais could find a way back, but he truly did, and in style.

Seemingly switching from first gear to fifth gear, Morais demolished Barton 11-2 in the third set and this took the wind out of the Scot. After that it was all one-way traffic and two 11-4 sets later and Igor Morais took the 2011 UKSG boys' singles title to add to his team event win on Saturday. He was unbeaten throughout both competitions.

In the girls event Yolanda King showed great heart throughout the knock-out phases to take the title against Tin Tin Ho and put to bed the memory of her defeat in the 2010 UKSG final to Emily Bates.

In both her first round and quarter-final matches she fell 2-0 behind to Rachel Trevorrow and Vicky Smith respectively but fought back brilliantly to reach the semi-final where she set up a repeat of the 2010 UKSG final with the imperious Bates.

However, things turned out differently this time around as King raced into a 2-0 lead against the pre-tournament favourite, belying any worries there were over her stamina after those two previous exhaustive matches.

Bates pulled a set back in the third but it was only a temporary blip as King moved to the final with a comfortable 11-4 fourth set victory.

In the final she, like in the boys' tournament, met her South East team-mate Tin Tin Ho. Tin Tin's path to the final was untroubled as she dispatched Megan Knowles (3-0), Megan Phillips (3-1) and Charlotte Carey (3-1) with minimum fuss to set up a mouth-watering final.

Compared to the loud and abrasive match between Barton and Morais next door, the King v Ho game was a quiet affair, if not, very entertaining.

King proved in the first set her 'comeback Queen' abilities after trailing 7-3 to the diminutive Ho but levelling up at 7-7. She went on to win it 11-8 but the drama was not over there.

With a 10-5 lead in the second you assumed King would take a 2-0 lead but Ho fought back and levelled 10-10 in an exhilarating contest. Crucially at 11-10 Ho went long with a forehand and gifted King the second set. Although she fought back to win the third, King held strong and waltzed the final set 11-4 to take the title.

In the disability events there was a third UKSG wheelchair title for Jack Hunter-Spivy as he beat Nicko Anderson 3-0 in the final to prove his dominance in that form of the game.

The learning disability title was taken by Jordon Abbott who cruised to a 3-0 win in his final game while Sam Bell won the standing disability title with another 3-0 victory.

For detailed results see the UK School Games website.

By Russell Moore

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