

OTTA junior trial

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L-R: Anthony Howgego, Lewis Sumner and Jack Shardlow

Lewis Sumner (Oxford) has been in indifferent form of late, but is a class act and asserted his authority by winning all his matches in the County junior trials, held on Sunday at Kidlington Forum. His clean sweep was not without its exciting moments, as he was extended in a series of compelling encounters by Jack Shardlow (Banbury), Niall Harris (Didcot), Cameron Patterson (Didcot) and Anthony Howgego (Oxford), who gave him the closest call at 11-6, 11-5, 9-11, 9-11, 11-8. Jack finished second, losing only to Lewis, though he was driven to the limit by Simon Price (Oxford) in a splendid battle. Jack emerging as victor by a 13-11, 6-11, 10-12, 15-13, 11-6 score-line. "Old hand" Anthony belied his lack of practice, using all his experience and a good level of fitness to come third. Top player of cadet age was 13-year-old Niall (fourth), an excellent prospect, who pushed Lewis to 11-9, 12-14, 11-5, 12-10. Although David Smart (pulled hamstring) and Jonah Stott (at a funeral) missed this extravaganza, the top six players all produced some splendid table tennis.

There were also some fine performances lower down the rankings, led by Oliver Base and Ethan Ball (both Didcot). James Rowan (Oxford) began the day magnificently, but his effort faded as the day wore on. Two young newcomers from Moreton (Didcot), Benedikt Neumeier (13) and George Sheppard (13), lasted the pace well, fighting out an amazing duel with one another (9-11, 11-7, 11-8, 16-18, 13-11), won by Benedikt, who went on to defeat James over four games, thus taking ninth place overall.

The whole event was run by OTTA Chairman, Neil Hurford, whose unruffled efficiency enabled it to flourish as it did.

Finishing order: Lewis Sumner, Jack Shardlow, Anthony Howgego, Niall Harris, Simon Price, Cameron Patterson, Oliver Base, Ethan Ball, Benedikt Neumeier, James Rowan, George Sheppard.

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