

Gunn's blazing in Bristol hard bat win

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The Bristol & District Table Tennis Association held their fifth annual closed Hard Bat competition in which only the identical bats provided on the day were allowed to be used, which must surely make this the most unique and fairest competition of its kind in the country taking place today.

The main prize as usual was the **John Mycroft Boucher** Hard Bat trophy in honour of JMB who was the very first winner of the Championships of Gloucestershire in 1902 at the Victoria Rooms in Clifton and one of the founder members of our league that year, as well as being an inaugural committee member of the Ping Pong Association when that was formed in December 1901 to which the Bristol league was originally affiliated. However, this year, our Association has very kindly donated a perpetual silver salver for the Plate competition winner to be called the James Hamilton Hard Bat trophy. This is in honour of **James Edwin Sherrard Hamilton** who was instrumental in re-forming our league after the War in 1919 when he was elected as our very first Chairman and who was also the very first winner of our Bristol Closed Championships Men's Singles event in the 1919/1920 season.

As for the matches themselves, with last season's Main competition winner, **Steve Hall** unfortunately unable to defend his title, it was left to the top two seeds, **Dave Reeves** and **Martin Gunn** to stave off all opponents on the day in order to do battle with the alien bats in the final match of the day. With almost 2,500 hits on YouTube, last season's final between **Steve Hall** and **Shaun Hall** is sure to be eclipsed by the 2012 final that has just been witnessed, so do look out for that one soon. Some absolutely awesome shots ranging from ferocity of power interspersed with deft placement of drop returns were witnessed by the on-looking crowd as **Martin Gunn** ran out the winner (21-19, 21-19). In the Plate final, it was **Marcus Berry** who triumphed over **Mike Withyman** (21-12, 21-16).

As mentioned above, this event is now in its fifth year and endorses the Bristol league's keen interest in its history and tradition. Over the years Bristol has produced some great players, such as **Charlie Dawes**, **Aubrey Simons** (once ranked fourth in the world and now aged 90), **Gilbert Belsten**, **Chris Sewell** and the inaugural Daily Mirror competition and Calthorpe car winner in May 1923, **James Thompson**. We are extremely keen to make contact with any living relative of Jimmy who passed away in 1967, as we would really like to know the current whereabouts of that very famous trophy, and also verification of his West of England titles between 1907 and 1909. If anyone is able to help with this or indeed anything else Bristol-wise, please do take a look at our website and contact any of our committee members. Thank you.

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