

M&G Investments Chelmsford Closed Preview

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Alex Abbott out to win titles in three different singles categories.

The M&G Investments Chelmsford & District Table Tennis League Closed Championships take place from Friday 10 to Sunday 12 February 2012 at Anglia Ruskin University, Mildmay Sports Hall, Bishops Hall Lane, Rivermead Campus, Chelmsford starting at 19.00 hours on the Friday evening. Admissison is free and this year there are 98 players taking part. It is always appreciated if former players can drop in over the weekend.

Last year's Champion Neil Charles hasn't played in the League this year and won't be defending his Men's Singles title and the battle for honours should include top seed – Alex Abbott (Maldon/the England no. 17 Over 50 ranked player who leads the Individual averages with just one defeat), the 1995 and 1996 Champion Steve Joslin (ECC), four times former Champion Dave Cole (OCs) and the 2011 Colchester League Men's Singles Champion Antony Greenwood (Danbury).

Other players who can't be discounted are Peter Hayden (OCs), Paul Cuming (Writtle), Gary Young (Excalibur), Hamish Innes (Maldon) and Michael Andrews (Danbury). All players take part in the group stages and it is Group Five that looks to be the most competitive featuring Steve Kerns, Steve Northcott, Wasim Qureshi and Steve Cheesman.

It is Alex Abbott who is expected to have the busiest weekend of all the senior players. He is the top seed in three events – the Men's Singles, Veteran's Singles and Over 50s Singles. He is also the second seed in the Men's Doubles, Veteran's Doubles and the Mixed Doubles.

In the Ladies' Singles Julie Vansertima (Chelmsford) will be bidding for an incredible nineteenth title. Her opponent in the final over the last two years has been Debby Auvache (Writtle) and you would get good odds if you were to bet on anyone else contesting this year's final.

The holders Michael Andrews/Steve Joslin are top seeds in the Men's Doubles and they are expected to face Alex Abbott/Hamish Innes in the Final. Gary Young/Dave Cole and Peter Hayden/Steve Kerns are the joint third seeds.

David Cole/Julie Vansertima will be out to win the Mixed Doubles for a seventh time and their expected finals night opponents are a new pairing as far as this Tournament is concerned – Alex Abbott/Linda Attridge.

As top seed in the Men's Singles Alex Abbott will be favourite to win the Veterans Singles as well. He will have to overcome the challenges of last year's champion Dave Cole and last year's runner-up – Peter Hayden as well as other players who will fancy their chances on their day – Steve Kerns, Peter Ballard, Paul Cuming, Andrew Halling and Hamish Innes. Alex Abbott is a heavy favourite to win the Over 50s Singles where his most serious challengers should be Peter Ballard, Reuben Okai, Ian Whiteside, Hamish Innes and Andrew Halling. Peter Ballard should come into his own in the Over 60s Singles where he is expected to face Ian Whiteside in the final.

Steve Kerns/Peter Hayden, the holders are top seeds in the Veterans Doubles with Alex Abbott/Hamish Innes seeded second. The third seeded pairing – Dave Cole/Peter Ballard are very opposite in styles but will still be very difficult to beat.

Newcomer Darren Richardson (Chelmsford) is the top seed in the Under 21 Singles and he is expected to meet Mark Smith in the final with James Austin and Jack Crook expected to battle through to the semi-finals.

With last year's outstanding Junior/Under 21 player Brandon Crouchman not available this year there will be a new Junior Boys Singles Champion this time and top seed Jack Crook and the second seed Chris Denyer will be hoping to claim the Junior Boys Singles Crown. Wiktor Delimat and Charlie Mariner will be looking to feature in the semi-finals. In the Junior Doubles brother/sister pairing Sarah/James Austin are the top seeds with Martin

Hiskey/Wiktor Delimat seeded second.

At Under 16 level Chris Denyer should come into his own. He is top seed and is expected to meet Sarah Austin in the final whilst Charlie Mariner will be the favourite in the Under 14 Singles where his expected final opponent is Ryan Gooday. Ben Clifford and Daniel Berry are expected to battle through to the semi-finals. All four seeded players in the Under 14 Singles are products of the successful CLICK (Chelmsford Introductory League), which features two-a-side matches and subsequent earlier finishes than in the main League. Many players from the CLICK League have made it into the main Chelmsford League.

Sunday's play will see some new features. There will be divisional singles for each of the second, third, fourth and fifth divisions and in each division players will take part in Groups in the opening stages. The Division Two Singles is the best supported with an impressive 23 entrants. Andrew Haling is top seed although he will face some determined challenges from the likes of James Hicks, Gary Cattermole, Adrian Pitt, Simon Webber, Trevor Carter, Peter Mynard and Chris Buer. A very evenly matched field indeed.

Steve Cheesman is favourite for the Division Three Singles with Richard Storey, Tony Hallett and Graham Briggs also expected to feature in the battle for honours. Peter Sun and Allan Thomsson are expected to battle out the Division Four Singles Final with Ian Austin and Frank Hodge seeded to meet in the Division Five Singles Final.

Steve Kerns

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