

Czech Junior & Cadet Preview

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Can Tin-Tin keep up her winning ways in Hodonin?

Next week sees the first installment of international action for our English youngsters at the Czech Junior & Cadet Open 15-19th February.

From Wednesday, ten of our top Junior and Cadet players will be descending on the South Moravian Region of the Czech Republic to battle it out with a host of other top European youngsters.

While the town of Hodonin is known for its: 'viniferous landscape, wine tourism, water way and cycling tourism, folklore, folk dances and songs', next week it will be the host to over 250 young table tennis players.

Given the players are all under 18 years of age it is unlikely that they will benefit from the 'wine tourism' but they may wish to keep warm with the folk dances as the current temperature in Prague (the capital) is a chilly minus eight.

Hopes for the English players will be high though following the excellent performances at the Portuguese Youth Open last December.

Tin-Tin Ho will be the big hope for the English squad as she has shot up to 9th in the European Cadet Rankings following her victory in Portugal last time out. She will face stiff opposition though as six of the eight players ranked above her will be attending in Hodonin.

Helshan Weerasinghe in the Cadet Boys will also be setting his sights high with his current position of 13th in the European Rankings. His main rivals will include four French youngsters; Joe Seyfried, Romain Ruiz, Can Akkuzu and last year's winner Alexandre Cassin.

The English Junior Girls' team is boosted by the presence of Senior player Emily Bates who has gained valuable experience playing alongside Kelly Sibley and Joanna Parker.

However, their age group looks to be the most competitive with big international stars attending like last year's champion Bernadette Szocs (ROU), current under-21 world tour semi-finalist Yana Noskova (RUS), Portugal Youth Champion Maria Xiao (POR), Dutch star Britt Erland and the 2011 Cadet Champion Ekaterina Guseva (RUS).

Finally, there is the Junior Boys team of Sam Walker, Lewis Gray and Igor Morais. Their chances have been helped by the non-attendance of some of the big French stars that our neighbours from across the water seem to be relentlessly churning out.

Simon Gauzy, Tristan Flore, Quentin Robinot, Antoine Hachard, Enzo Angles and Benjamin Brossier are six of the top seven in the European Junior Rankings but none of them will be making the trip from France.

Also not attending is Italian Leonardo Mutti, which leaves last year's Junior Champion Tamas Lakatos as the top seed once more.

As well as the singles event there will be the team event for all the nations. Last year's winners were Russia for both the girls junior and cadet titles while France won the junior boys and Slovakia won the cadet boys.

The English squad selection can be [found here](#).

By Russell Moore



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