

# Ellenborough are JBL Champions

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**Posted On:** February 21, 2012



Ellenborough: Coach Gergely Urban, Sam Cowan, Daniel Wright, Bradley Tuttle and Zsolt Szarka

A dramatic final weekend of the Boys Junior British League saw Ellenborough Table Tennis Club being crowned Premier League Champions: an incredible achievement for a newly promoted team.

Ellenborough's team of Zsolt Szarka, Bradley Tuttle, Sam Cowan and Daniel Wright travelled to Wolverhampton (home of table tennis legend Desmond Douglas) in second place with, if they remained in the top four, the prospect of a "Super League" scenario on Sunday to decide the title.

On Saturday after the full seven rounds of regular season fixtures the team had slipped from second to third place and was faced with the daunting prospect of having to play three teams who on the basis of individual rankings were arguably stronger than them on paper. But Ellenborough TTC had a good set-up with the ever improving Sam Cowan, who had earned a point against Olop-Impact on Saturday with an important five game win 11-7, 10-12, 6-11, 11-6, 16-14 over Michael Ho (England No. 17), at No. 3.

First up were regular season winners and the outstanding team from the previous day, BBAT. Ellenborough did well to draw the match 3-3 with an outstanding performance by Bradley Tuttle in the first match where he fought back from two games to one down against Helshan Weerasinghe (England No. 5) 12-10, 9-11, 4-11, 11-4, 11-7. This was arguably the game of the weekend and as well as being crucial in terms of the match set the tone for the day.



Bradley Tuttle taking advice from coach Gergely Urban

Next Ellenborough had to beat regular season runners-up Burton Uxbridge to have any realistic chance of the title. Having lost to a weaker Burton-Uxbridge 5-1 earlier in the season, and looking at the team sheets the most Ellenborough could hope for was a draw. But cometh the hour, cometh the man..... A series of stunning performances from the boys saw them sweep Burton Uxbridge aside 5-1! This included remarkable wins by Zsolt Szarka and Bradley Tuttle over Lewis Gray (England No. 2) and by Sam Cowan over Matthew Outhwaite (England No. 18). Not only an amazing win, but 5-1 had done their "For and Against column"" no end of good. Wow!

Would Ellenborough get over the last hurdle and clinch the title? They had to *beat* Olop-Impact to win the title. The 3-3 draw the previous day was a fair reflection of the relative strength of the teams. The first match was crucial with Bradley Tuttle beating Liam McTiernan (England No. 6) and in so doing overturning a loss from the previous day. With one hand on the trophy, Ellenborough weren't going to let it slip and ran out convincing 4-2 winners.

Whilst Zsolt Szarka and Bradley Tuttle will undoubtedly get the headlines with six wins out of six and five wins out of six respectively in the "Super League", Sam Cowan and Daniel Wright played an important part for the team. Sam's win over Matthew Outhwaite (Burton Uxbridge) in the penultimate game was very important in terms of stamping Ellenborough's authority on the "Super League". He also registered an important win over Michael Fraser (Grantham Tornadoes), amongst others, earlier in the regular season. Daniel Wright had an impressive win over Billy Forster (Ormesby) in the regular season.



Sam Cowan recorded several crucial wins

When asked for his reaction, club Coaching Officer, Nick McCoy said: "Still not sure how this happened, I think nobody is, well done boys!" After regaining his composure, McCoy explained: "In the Premier League a lot of teams include star players brought in from elsewhere. However, Ellenborough TTC has always prided itself in

developing local youngsters. The fact that three of our four Premier League winning players are local to the club is testament to that fact.

Success like this doesn't happen overnight. A few years ago the club reorganised its coaching structure so that youngsters have a player pathway all the way from local level to national level. It's great that the benefits are being realised in Olympic Year!" McCoy went on: "A lot of credit must go to Gergely Urban and his team of coaches: Tibor Kadar, Zoltan Hosszu and Kristina Dimitrova. After a season totaling 10 fixtures, the boys clearly produced their best table tennis in the final three matches. That is not luck. It is a result of the training, including fitness work, that their coaches have put them through during the season. Finally, I'd like to thank our new club sponsors **Bribar Table Tennis** and **Gannett Foundation** which have supported the club this season. "



Zsolt Sarka in action for Ellenborough

Liam Hope, Sports Development Officer at the **Tottenham Hotspur Foundation**, said that "the Premier League 4 Sport programme has enabled the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation to work closely with Ellenborough, one of the most respected table tennis clubs in the country. It is fantastic that the clubs junior section is thriving so much and the success of the junior boys team gives all young table tennis players locally and on our programmes something to aspire to. They are testament to the success of the club and a credit to themselves."



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