

Colchester & District Closed Champs Preview

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HIGH CLASS FIELD IN COLCHESTER CHAMPIONSHIPS

With a high in class and volume entry for the Colchester and District Table Tennis League Closed Championships players should be in for an exciting weekend at the Rowhedge Table Tennis Club. This is epitomized by the openness of the Men's Singles event with some forty-three entrants, the top eight of which are seeded through to the knockout phase. The rest battle it out in eight groups of four and one tough, all-Division One group of three. Each group features one of the nine to sixteen seeds, with the winner of each going through to the main draw. Reigning Champion Antony Greenwood (H20 Rowhedge A) could have to face two former champions and two previous finalists if he is to regain his title that could see him face fellow Chelmsford semi-finalist and number one seed Gary Young (Gt Horkesley C) in the last four. Young's league form has been impressive and he should fear no-one other than perhaps 2010 winner Steve Joslin (H20 Rowhedge A) who beat him recently in that same Chelmsford tournament.

Joslin is in the bottom half of the draw and could meet dark horse Richard Goodhand (Gt Horkesley A) who has won both their league meetings this season. Goodhand may have to take out Tollgate A's teenage sensation Jason Yung first, a feat that is not beyond him, again going on their previous meeting in the league which he won. Add in also last season's beaten finalist Andy Warner, Nigel Hodder and Greg Green – all Tollgate A and the H20 Rowhedge trio of Michael Andrews, Kevin Gowlett and the dangerous three time champion David Moss and it difficult to predict a winner. The other candidate to watch out for is the stylish youngster James Denyer (St James A) who beat Greenwood only last week in the Clacton League.

Aimee Sparkes (Gt Horkesley A) is defending her title in the Ladies Singles which comprises of ten entrants in four groups. Sparkes should face former Colchester and Ipswich champion Janet Faiers (Gt Horkesley C) in the knockout stages with number two seed Gill Locke (St James A) meeting either of Tollgate's twenty-two time champion Sue Welham or the exciting Jane Li, who are in the same group.

The Men's Doubles is possibly the hottest contested event of all with 16 pairs vying to be the first to beat holders Antony Greenwood and Michael Andrews who have not lost in the league this season! Gary Young and Andy Warner are the number two seeds but will have to first get by the fellow Ipswich pairing of Richard Goodhand and Jimmy Farrow. The other seeds are Kevin Gowlett and Nigel Hodder and Greg Green and Jason Yung, not to forget the veteran pairing of David Moss and John Andrews who first won this event some thirty-six years ago!

The Ladies Doubles sees Janet Faiers going for a hat-trick of successive wins joined by Aimee Sparkes probably up against seventeen-time winner Sue Welham partnered by Hazel Hume (St Peters) whose first of six wins goes back to 1984.

The top two seeds have dominated the Mixed Doubles for the past five seasons with Aimee Sparkes and Mike Wright winning the past two and Sue Welham and Gary Young the previous three. Their main challenge will come from the well matched pairing of Janet Faiers and Richard Goodhand or the less experienced Jane Li and Greg Green.

With last year's Junior Boys Singles Champion Mark Smith ineligible, James Denyer takes on the mantle of number one seed and should reach the final if he can overcome the rapidly improving Jermaine Fearon (H20 Rowhedge G). The in-form Andrew Harvey (H20 Rowhedge D) or Tom Lewis (Tollesbury A) could be Denyer's

adversary in the final.

Jane Li is favourite for both the Junior and Cadet Singles where she could face stiff competition from either Jermaine Fearon or the talented Dan Rhodes from the Gilberd School.

Tom Lewis and Andrew Harvey are clear favourites in the Junior Doubles for the first time.

The Veteran events are always competitive and reigning Over 40's and 50's Singles champion Nigel Hodder will have his work cut out if he is to retain either title. The very consistent Kevin Gowlett now qualifies and with Andy Warner entering this year and 2010 champion Mike Wright (Gt Horkesley A) expect an exciting 40+ event. Hodder could come up against former England Ladies Vets player Gill Locke in the 50+ final and he will face stiff opposition in his first match against the wily Alan Burgess (H20 Rowhedge D). Three times 60+ Champion Burgess defends his crown against the likes of Ian Whiteside (Pegasus A) and Fred Button (H20 Rowhedge C).

The busy Alan Burgess is seeded one in the Division Two singles with Clacton's Terry May (St James C) and Colin Beaumont (St James D) holding the same mantle in the Division Three and Four events respectively.

The Tournament starts with the Handicap, Junior and Veteran's events on Saturday and the Closed Championships and Divisional Singles on Sunday with the Finals and presentations by the Deputy Mayor of Colchester starting at 7.00pm on the Sunday evening at the Rowhedge Village Hall. Spectators and former players are welcome to attend, refreshments are provided!

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