

# Jersey Royal Performances from Damien & Alice.

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Damien Nicholls and Alice Loveridge were simply the best at the 4th Nat West Jersey Satellite Open, part of the Grand Prix series of events and held at the Geoff Reed table tennis centre in St Clement on Sunday 4th of April. These two highly rated and respected players walked away with huge cheques for their magnificent efforts in taking the weekend's blue ribbon events.

For the reigning Men's Open Champion Nicholls it was a double celebration as he took back to Shropshire his cheque for £525. Alice, on the other hand enjoyed a profitable Island hop from neighbouring Guernsey to win the Women's Open title, working hard for her Easter bonus prize of £360.

The Men's Open event went to seeding with Damien (S1) and Paul McCreery (S2) fighting out a pulsating final. The local Jersey film crew set up their cameras around a packed centre court and as expected the scheduled final was played at a fast and furious pace. Paul was quickly into his stride taking the first game of the match. The enthusiastic audience were treated to spectacular table tennis at every point with Paul racing to a comfortable lead in the 2nd set and at that time looked the most likely winner! Shell-shocked Damien then switched on the after burners getting his act together and was soon back in the match after a sluggish start. He levelled at one set all, and that all important third leg could have gone either way and proved to be the turning point in the final with the reigning Champion getting the upper hand nicking it 13-11. From there on Damien was in the ascendancy stamping his authority with his artistry and imagination of shotmaking skills, going on to take his 2nd Jersey Open title with a three sets to one victory. It takes two to tango and Paul was a brilliant and worthy finalist however he could not conjure up the extra tricks to master the Magician, Nicholls. Damien's route to the title saw him ease past Jersey's Max Tupper, a close quarter final against Victor Shi Guang of France, and a straight sets semi final result over Ireland's Gavin Maguire. Losing finalist McCreery reached his allotted position with victories over local junior Josh Band, a four set win against Wilson Huart, followed up by a superb last four close encounter with Welshman Patrick Thomas.

In the Women's showcase event second seed Alice Loveridge had to be satisfied with runner up position in the group stage after a truly entertaining match against close rival Emily Bates from Lincolnshire, who won their encounter 13-11 in the fifth leg. Alice bounced back from that disappointment to gain a brilliant win over defending Champion Sanja Clements to reach the semi's as did Chloe Whyte by upstaging top seed and local heroine Kay Lefebvre. Loveridge took control over a gallant Emma Torkington (who had played brilliantly throughout) as she took the first semi final 3-1. Chloe Whyte and Emily Bates battled out a classic last four duel which could have easily gone either way. In the end the 5th seeded Chloe Whyte took the match 11-8, 14-12, 6-11, and 12-10 to enjoy a high stakes final with Alice. The Guernsey star soon dominated with her trademark topspin attacking strokes and although Chloe kept on fighting the result always looked in Alice's grasp, going on to take the Nat West Jersey Women's Open title 3-0.

With the under 21's competitions nearing a climax, first to finish was the Men's event which had a surprise or two in store. After his earlier Men's Open title it looked almost a formality that the reigning Under 21's Grand Prix points Champion for the last 3 years, Damien Nicholls just needed to turn up to collect another cheque, however a certain young Frenchman, Wilson Huart had not read that script. Monsieur Huart (Damien's Grantham College housemate) was absolutely pumped up and on fire in his semi final demolition of Champion Nicholls taking that match 3-0. In the earlier knockout rounds Wilson had been in blistering form to outplay Jake Collins and Patrick Thomas both in the minimum distance to look forward to his final opponent. In the lower half of the draw Paul McCreery (S2) was also easing past Jersey's Josh Band, and a last four victory over fellow Irishman Gavin Maguire to set up a final with the va va voom Frenchman Wilson Huart to decide the title. Wilson continued in his superlative earlier form taking the first set 11-5. Could he maintain this incredible form? McCreery weathered the

French invasion with a Masterclass combination of skilful soft hands blocking and counter looping to repel the early onslaught and go onto win the war of attrition over the Brave-Huart Frenchman taking the next three sets to be crowned Under 21' Men's Jersey Champion.

Seven young Ladies contested a round robin competition to decide the Under 21 Women's winner. It turned out to be a thriller with many top notch matches to enjoy. As the drama unfolded it appeared that it could go to any of the top three that included Alice Loveridge, Emily Bates or indeed Chloe Whyte. Emily had a battle on her hands with her England Junior International team mate Chloe going right to a 5th end finish with Miss Whyte getting the upper hand 11-6. Likewise Alice inflicted the same result over Chloe so it was all to be played for as Emily squared up to Alice for what might be either the Gold, Silver or Bronze as it was all down to sets won and lost. In yet another absolutely spellbinding encounter between these two fantastic competitors, that had more twists and turns than a ride at Alton Towers. It was the fourteen years young Emily Bates that came up with the goods when needed to reverse a 0-1 deficit and bounce back to take the next three sets and the title (on games count back won-lost)) with a well deserved Under 21's title. Chloe took the Silver position whilst Alice finished with the Bronze. Emma Torkington once again demonstrated her class and enthusiasm with 4th place. The Jersey trio of Kelsey Le Maistre (5th) Jodie Le Maistre (6th) and Emily Robbins (7th) all competed well to fill the final positions.

Warwickshire's Adrian Pilgrim was in brilliant form throughout to win the Mixed Veteran Singles crown over the master of disguise and former European Champion John Hilton in a 3 sets to 1 final. John had to dig deep and conjure up all his box of tricks to eventually come through in his last four match with the reigning England Women's Veteran Champion Sanja Clements, with an incredible scoreline that reads 15-13, 17-15, 5-11, 6-11, 11-7, just fantastic! Adrian's path to the final saw him enjoy straight set results over Geoff Ware, and losing semi finalist John Magnall from the Isle of Man.

The Mixed Restricted Singles event (age 22-39) finished off the Sunday events with Victor Shi Guang from France taking the title. Paul Marshall from Jersey finished in runner up position, with Sussex player Rory Scott taking 3rd place. Local players Trev LeFebvre (4th) and Nicola Duke (5th) enjoyed a competitive afternoon's play.

The 3 day Nat West Jersey Open kicked off on Friday the 2nd of April with a series of team events. The strong Irish pairing of Gavin Maguire and Paul McCreery won the Men's event, whilst the Women's tournament went to Emily Bates and Chloe Whyte. The dynamic duo of John Hilton and John Magnall took Gold in the Veterans, and rounding off a super days play saw the Jersey Boys pairing of Max and Hugo Tupper take the top spot on the podium in the Boys team event, with the runaway winners of Chloe Whyte and Emily Bates also enjoying the top position in the Girls event.

As is usual with Grand Prix events, Saturday was entirely devoted to the Banded competitions. Starting with Men's Band 1 played as a round robin saw Paul McCreery justify his seeding by filling top spot with Adrian Pilgrim in 2nd and Gavin Maguire in 3rd with Jake Collins 4th. Alice Loveridge was victorious in the Women's Band 1, also played as a round robin competition. Emily Bates finished runner up with Sanja Clements in 3rd and Chloe Whyte filling 4th place.

Classic defender and super competitor John Magnall won a 3 player Men's Band 2 with runner up Adrian Pilgrim and filling 3rd place was Rory Scott. Emma Torkington was in brilliant form in the six player Women's Band 2 round robin with Josie Marshall as runner up, Kelsey Le Maistre registering 3rd and the ever cheerful Dianne Kirkwood gaining 4th place.

Ryan re-opened the Jersey FLOOD gates to win the 5 player Men's Band 3 event. Josh Band took 2nd, John Magnall 3rd, Dean Rose in 4th and Rory Scott in 5th.

Emma Torkington celebrated a super weekend by winning Women's Band 3 with Josie Marshall as runner up, Kelsey Le Maistre in 3rd and Emily Robins in 4th.

Jersey's own superb talent of Josh Band won Men's Band 4 with surprise entry Geoff Ware as runner up. Losing semi finalists Luke Walker who took Josh Band right to the wire in five cracking sets, and Ryan Flood losing out in a 5 set marathon to yours truly made it an enjoyable contest.

Another Jersey legend in the making Max Tupper was just fantastic in winning probably the toughest Bands, that

of Band five AND Band six. In both events he beat his brother Hugo in the finals, having come through a dozen matches on the day.

Once again the Nat West Jersey Satellite Open Grand Prix was an outstanding event with three days of exciting table tennis. Congratulations must be paid to so many volunteers at the Geoff Reed Table Tennis Centre, none more so than Chris and Gilly Band who worked tirelessly to put on a great show, in the organisation of this extremely popular event. Many thanks to Nat West for their continued support as the sponsors, and last but certainly not least the hard working Referee Mick Strode ably assisted by Dianne Kirkwood. Also spare a thought for the Jersey Umpires who devoted their valuable time at Easter to keep the show running so smoothly.

Results as follows.

Men's Open Damien Nicholls (Sp) bt Paul McCreery (IRL) 6-11, 11-8, 13-11, 11-3.

Women's Open. Alice Loveridge (GGY) bt Chloe Whyte (Cv) 11-7, 11-4, 11-6.

Under 21 Men. Paul McCreery (IRL) bt Wilson Huart (FRA) 5-11, 11-8, 11-8, 11-7.

Under 21 Women. 1st. Emily Bates (Li) 2nd. Chloe Whyte (Cv) 3rd. Alice Loveridge (GGY)

Veteran Singles. Adrian Pilgrim (Wa) bt John Hilton (Ch) 11-6, 7-11, 11-3, 11-3.

Restricted Singles. 1st. Victor Shi Guang. (FRA) 2nd. Paul Marshall (JEY) 3rd. Rory Scott (Sx)

Men's Band 1. 1st. Paul McCreery (IRL) 2nd. Adrian Pilgrim (Wa) 3rd. Gavin Maguire (IRL)

Women's Band 1. 1st. Alice Loveridge (GGY) 2nd. Emily Bates (Li) 3rd. Sanja Clements (Do).

Men's Band 2. 1st. John Magnall (IMN) 2nd. Adrian Pilgrim (Wa) 3rd Rory Scott (Sx)

Women's Band 2. 1st. Emma Torkington (Sx) 2nd. Josie Marshall (JEY) 3rd. Kelsy Le Maistre (JEY)

Men's Band 3. 1st. Ryan Flood (IRL) 2nd Josh Band (JEY) 3rd. John Magnall (IMN)

Women's Band 3. 1st. Emma Torkington (Sx) 2nd. Josie Marshall (JEY) 3rd. Kelsy Le Maistre (JEY)

Men's Band 4. Josh Band (JEY) bt Geoff Ware (Do) 11-4, 11-6, 16-14.

Men's Band 5. Max Tupper (JEY) bt Hugo Tupper (JEY) 11-3, 5-11, 11-6, 11-8.

Men's Band 6. Max Tupper (JEY) bt Hugo Tupper (JEY) 11-5, 11-8, 11-9.

By Geoff Ware

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