

Medal for England at ISF WSC on Day 3

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ISF WORLD SCHOOLS' TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS

CAGLIARI, SARDINIA ITALY

Day 3 Tuesday April 3rd

Day three and we arrived at the sharp end of the team competitions and the individual competition in the disability classification.

In session eight, all four of our teams were playing, which meant a hectic session for the coaches Gail Johns, Paul Birch, Simon Hoang and Eli Baraty, whilst team manager John Blackband had the job of seeing that all players and coaches were at the correct place at the correct time.

In the girls' school team section, Morpeth came up against a team from Bulgaria in the 9-16 play off places and although giving of their best lost 4-0, meaning that they had to play for places 13-16 later in the day.

In the boys' school team section, Harefield Academy had a tough match against Luxembourg and after a nail biting finish, won 4-3 leaving them to play Turkey in the 5-6th play off. Daniel Lewis won two singles, Tyrone Wells won one and Tyrone and Daniel combined to take the doubles and the match.

The girls' National team came up against Chinese Taipei in the semi-final and although giving of their best, Emily, Vicky, Emma and Tin-Tin were no match for a very strong Taipei side. This now leaves them with a very difficult bronze medal play-off match against host nation Italy.

The boys' National side completed their event with a match against Greece and ended the competition with their best result winning 6-1. Helshan Weerasinghe and Liam McTiernan both won two singles, Adam Harrison helped himself to his first win of the competition and Igor and Helshan rounded off the match in the doubles to leave England as comfortable winners and a final place of fifth over all.

In the disability competition, the England team of Sam Bell and Charles Sketchley took the silver medal, losing 3-2 to France in the final, after defeating Bulgaria and Italy 5-0 in the semi-final.

In session nine, Morpeth in the girls' school team section was our only team in action and unfortunately, after a very close match, they finally went down 4-3 against Belgium Flanders, when Sayeeda lost 11-7 in the fifth against Brenda Wan Welde. Earlier in the game Harriet had won 2 singles and Sayeeda 1, but unfortunately the ever important doubles escaped the Morpeth girls.

At last we reach the final session of the team competition and the individuals in the disability event and guess what folks;

MEDALS FOR ENGLAND!

Firstly, in the disability individuals played as a round robin tournament, Charles Sketchley won three matches and lost five, one against compatriot Sam Bell, to end in sixth place overall, whilst Sam and the French number 1, Lewis Dalby, went into the final round unbeaten.

Lewis quickly opened up a two game lead before Sam reduced the arrears in the third game. In the fourth game, Sam opened up a comfortable lead which he held until 10-6. At this point, nerves began to show and Sam eventually went down 13-11. A deserved victory for the French boy but Sam is still delighted to be returning from his first international adventure with a silver medal.

Whilst this was happening, the girls' National squad took on Italy in the bronze medal play-off match. Emily lost the first game in four, before Vicky levelled at 1-1, after being 2-0 down. Tin-Tin then restored England's lead, only to see the Italians, supported by a very vocal partisan crowd, level the match 2-2 with a doubles win against Tin-Tin and Emma.

The Italians continued their come back when Emily went down in the fifth game, only to see Tin-Tin level again at 3-3. With the crowd roaring the Italians on and the atmosphere becoming more electric by the minute, the final game changed hands several times before Vicky finally came through securing the match and the bronze medal for England.

Today sees a rest day in the competition before the individual starts, so more news to follow later.

John M. Blackband

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