

Tin-Tin is Champion in France

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Tin-Tin beat the world number 1 en route to the title

Tin-Tin Ho won the girls' cadet singles at the French Junior and Cadet Open in France after a series of excellent performances over a number of the world's top players.

Having beaten the world's number 1, 12, 23 and 33 en route to the final in Metz, she then defeated world number 24 Audrey Zarif in three straight games to confirm a quite brilliant ITTF title was heading back to England.

The final was rarely in doubt despite Tin-Tin falling 3-1 behind in the first game. She returned fire by unleashing a barrage of down-the-line winners against her French opponent to lead 6-3. However, Zarif fought back to level 7-7 and then again at 9-9 after Tin-Tin had been 9-7 up.

The crucial 19th point went to the English girl when Zarif went long and wide and soon after the game was wrapped up 11-9 to create a crucial 1-0 lead.

The second game followed a similar pattern as Tin-Tin lead 4-2 before Zarif called a time-out. This worked for the French cadet who, like in game one, levelled once more for 6-6. However, Tin-Tin's extra sharpness proved the cutting edge as she raced 10-6 ahead at an important stage in the match.

Although Zarif claimed two points back, Tin-Tin eventually forced her long to go 2-0 up with an 11-8 game.

You could sense the fight being drawn out of the French girl point after point – visibly she reached for the towel at every break while Tin-Tin did not once head for refreshment to her brow. This resulted in a one-sided third game that Tin-Tin led both 3-0 and 7-3 before finally sealing the victory, and the title, 11-4.

Tin-Tin had won a sensational semi-final against the current cadet world number 1, Yui Hamamoto from Japan, in order to reach the final.

She lost the first three points of the match but fought back immediately to level 3-3. It stayed close right until the end of the game as Tin-Tin matched Hamamoto blow for blow until the Japanese star went 12-11 ahead. However, Tin-Tin saved the game point and took her own to take the game 14-12 and lead 1-0.

The girl from Middlesex then raced 8-4 ahead in the second game on her way to securing it 11-7 and a confident 2-0 lead. Not surprisingly though, the world number 1 wasn't done there and fought back to win the third 11-8 after Tin-Tin had been level at 8-8.

However, Tin-Tin made no mistakes in the next game. From 4-2 down she forced her way 6-4 ahead. Again it went close as the game closed on 10-10 but this time Tin-Tin held out and took it 12-10 to complete a spectacular win.

To even reach that stage she had to beat the world number 12, Miu Hirano (JPN) 3-1 and then the world number 23, Yuan Wan (GER) by the same scoreline. Both victories were excellent in their own right but outshone by her performances in the final and semi-final as she became the deserved champion.

In the cadet boys competition there was more good news for the sole remaining English junior when Helshan Weerasinghe reached the quarter-finals with a victory over Sweden's Simon Berglund.

Berglund, the cadet number 31, was no match for Weerasinghe who strolled into a 2-0 lead with 11-7 and 11-6 games. However, the Swede fought back to win the third 11-6 and pushed Weerasinghe all the way in the fourth before finally succumbing 12-10 to give the young star from Sussex another high-ranking victory.

He met world number 11 Tonin Ryuzaki in the last eight but the Japanese player proved just too strong. The

number 1 English cadet did actually lead 5-1 in the first but Ryuzaki stormed back with eight consecutive points to lead 9-5 before sealing the game 11-6.

Ryuzaki then raced 8-2 ahead in the second which eventually led to another 11-6 game win before he completed the victory in the third. It was neck-and-neck all the way until Ryuzaki broke free at the crucial time to win it 11-7.

Overall, another fine performance from Weerasinghe who, apart from Tin-Tin's heroics, would have been the big story from the French Open. The next ranking points should see both players rise considerably in their respective ranking lists.

Cadet Boys Results:

Singles Round of 16:

Helshan Weerasinghe bt Simon Berglund (SWE, 31) 3-1 (11-7, 11-6, 6-11, 12-10)

Singles Quarter-Final:

Tonin Ryuzaki (JPN, 11) bt Helshan Weerasinghe 3-0 (11-6, 11-6, 11-7)

Cadet Girls Results:

Singles Round of 16:

Tin-Tin Ho bt Miu Hirano (JPN, 12) 3-1 (11-5, 11-9, 9-11, 11-7)

Singles Quarter-Final:

Tin-Tin Ho bt Yuan Wan (GER, 23) 3-1 (9-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-6)

Singles Semi-Final:

Tin-Tin Ho bt Yui Hamamoto (JPN, 1) 3-1 (14-12, 11-7, 8-11, 12-10)

Singles Final:

Tin-Tin Ho bt Audrey Zarif (FRA, 24) 3-0 (11-9, 11-8, 11-4)

Doubles Round of 16:

Ho/Tsapsinos bt Soposki/Ogrine (FRA) 3-1 (8-11, 11-8, 11-7, 11-4)

Doubles Quarter-Final:

Lemmer/Wan (GER) bt Ho/Tsapsinos 3-1 (11-6, 8-11, 13-11, 11-6)

By Russell Moore

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