

The Grantham Academy Roadshow

Author: Paul Stimpson

Posted On: September 14, 2009



The start of the eagerly awaited Southern series of Bribar supported Grand Prix events got under way on Saturday 12th September at the eighteen table venue of Exeter University's Streatham Campus sports hall.

After a summer break it was brilliant to be back amongst the action that came thick and fast with all the players seemingly refreshed and eager to make an impact. Table tennis is so much more than just matches – it's about life, emotion, passion and some of the highs and lows that we can experience!

Undoubtedly the event of the morning session went to the Women's Band 2. A young lady that hails from North Wales, Megan Phillips showed tremendous attitude to come back from an early defeat in the group stages against top seeded Penny Perry to bounce back in style eventually taking the title from a spirited Vicky Smith.

England cadet international Lewis Gray cruised to his first Men's Band 4 title at the expense of Lee Morgan from Wales, in a very one sided final. Lewis oozed with confidence throughout and his experience shone through. Dropping only one set en route to the title and that from rookie player Fevour Gariga in the penultimate round, Lewis ran out a comfortable winner.

The concluding Men's events were finished later in the day, with once again Lewis Gray demonstrating the immense talent he possesses by terminating all his challengers to take Band 3. Lewis enjoyed victories over Lloyd Gregory, Scott Cundy and finalist Nick Brown.

A new kid on the block, Fevour Gariga a 20 year old from Nigeria (who incidentally plays professional football for Winchester Town), was the main man in Men's Band 5. Gariga displays a unique talent with heavy spin on the forehand and good backhand serves to frustrate all his opponents, namely Matt Lancey, Phil Marshall, Stephen Foster and finalist Josh Jenkins to run out a worthy Band 5 champion.

On day 2 the Men's Open went exactly to seeding with Damien Nicholls S1 and Matt Ware S2, both members of the Alex Perry run Grantham Table Tennis Academy, fighting out the final.

Both these players had to battle their way through the rounds to reach this stage as there were no easy rides along the way.

The Damien Nicholls v Matt Ware final was played in a friendly yet ultra competitive spirit. Nicholls took an early 1 set lead with his razor sharp blocking and re-looping skills using all areas of the table. Ware came back strongly to level with blistering attacking on both wings. The third end was almost a carbon copy of the first where Nicholls seemed impenetrable, taking a 2-1 lead. The excitement built to a crescendo in the fourth with Damien looking the steadier of the two, and more likely winner. Ware then found even more pace and penetration to level at 2-2 and from there on in Matt took control with his lightning spin and speed using every inch of the table to close out a great final 11-4.

Could the Women's Open event prove as exciting as the Men's – simple answer, oh yes! With the results going almost to seeding to set up the much expected attack v defence final with Egle and Keta. Literally every point was a spectacle of long rallies with up to 30 returns to win a point. There was nothing to separate these two magnificent players and as expected it went to a fifth end. The enthralled audience were treated to a spectacular show of the highest order with patient and controlled attacking from Adomelyte, whilst Myskova just kept getting everything back with heavy chop and cute placement. In a tense last few points Egle kept her total focus to close out a memorable final 12-10. An absolutely outstanding and unforgettable contest!

In the Under 21 Women's, top seed Rachel Greener fell to Jas Ould in the first round who became favourite on route to meeting Charlotte Carey in the final. Charlotte grew in stature and belief to take the final by 3 sets to 1,

and a nice glassware trophy back to South Wales. A brilliant effort!

In the Under 21 Men's event there was a repeat of the earlier Men's Open final. Ware seemed the more energetic and took the match to Damien with all guns blazing and soon got the upper hand to run out a 3-0 winner.

The Bribar player of the tournament award and a £50 voucher was presented to Lewis Gray for his outstanding results throughout the two days' play.

Results

Men's Open

Matt Ware (Ha) bt. Damien Nicholls (Sp)

4-11, 11-3, 5-11, 14-12, 11-4

Women's Open

Egle Adomelyte (Mi) bt. Keta Myskova (Dv)

11-8, 5-11, 11-7, 9-11, 12-10

Under 21 Men's

Matt Ware (Ha) bt. Damien Nicholls (Sp)

11-8, 11-6, 11-9

Under 21 Women's

Charlotte Carey (WAL) bt. Jas Ould (K)

9-11, 11-6, 11-9, 11-2

Mixed Veterans

Paul Whiting (Dv) bt. Julien Gittens (Y)

11-6, 11-1, 11-3

Mixed Restricted

Jonathan Crawford (Cu) bt. Adam Laws (Sy)

9-11, 11-3, 9-11, 11-7, 11-5

Men's Band 1

Mark Simpson (Du) bt. David McBeath (Ha)

13-11, 12-10, 11-8.

Women's Band 1

Sally Smith (Dv) bt. Michele Cohen (Wi)

4-11, 11-9, 10-12, 11-7, 11-4

Men's Band 2

Dash Zhang (Sx) bt. Lloyd Gregory (Av)

11-6, 11-3, 6-11, 11-6

Women's Band 2

Megan Phillips (WAL) bt. Vicky Smith (Dv)

11-9, 10-12, 5-11, 11-9, 11-7

Men's Band 3

Lewis Gray (K) bt. Nick Brown (WAL)

11-7, 9-11, 11-3, 11-8

Women's Band 3

Vicky Smith (Dv) bt. Tressa Armitage (Ha)

13-11, 11-8, 11-8

Men's Band 4

Lewis Gray (K) bt. Lee Morgan (WAL)
11-1, 11-7, 11-3

Men's Band 5
Fevour Gariga (Do) bt. Josh Jenkins (WAL)
11-5, 11-4, 3-11, 8-11, 11-9

Men's Band 6
Dan Moore (Dv) bt. Sam Rose (Dv)
9-11, 7-11, 13-11, 11-5, 11-7

By Geoff Ware

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