

# Midlands are School Games Champions

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England Midlands won the table tennis event at the 2012 School Games after reaching finals in all of the three disciplines at ExCeL.

Although they were defeated in both the boys and girls finals, their mixed disability team's triumph over South West in their last round-robin game proved crucial to securing the title.



2011 individual Champion Igor Morais claimed the final win

## South East retain boys' crown

The South East boys successfully defended their 2011 UKSG title when they beat Midlands 4-1 in the final at the Olympic venue in London.

Igor Morais, Helshan Weerasinghe, Daniel Lawrence and Michael Ho first defeated Scotland in their semi-final on Tuesday morning.

It began well for the South East as Morais beat Chris Wheeler 3-0 in the opening match to get the first points on the board. However, soon after it was back level as Scott Barton beat Lawrence 3-1 to give Scotland their first point.

Weerasinghe re-gave South East the lead with a 3-0 win over Blair Fowler and it was a lead they were not to relinquish. They reached the final with two consecutive 3-2 wins. First, in the doubles, where Lawrence and Weerasinghe beat Barton and Wheeler, and then in the final singles, where Morais held on to beat Barton 3-2 (6-11, 11-9, 12-10, 9-11, 11-6).

In the final they would meet Midlands who performed excellently to come from 2-0 behind to beat South West 4-2. After both Liam McTiernan had beaten Sam Mabey and George Downing had beaten Adam Harrison, the Midlands team got back on track.

A win for Lawrence Sweeney, couple with the Midlands team's doubles win helped them back level and then in a crucial tie, Harrison narrowly defeated McTiernan 3-1 (12-10, 11-9, 11-13, 11-8).

Their progress to the final was sealed when Mabey beat Jarred Knowles 3-1.

The first match in the final began nervously. A dramatic 15-13 game win for Mabey against Morais signaled Midlands' intent but Morais stormed back to win the match 3-1 in the end.

When Harrison defeated Ho 3-2 it looked as though we were in for a nail-biting final but that never came to pass as the South East's professionalism kicked in. In three consecutive victories, they only dropped one game and it was fitting for Morais, the 2011 individual Champion, to deliver the final blow.

In the third/fourth place play-off the South West beat Scotland 4-2 with a good double win for George Downing.



The Midlands and South West teams before the final

## Slot holds nerve in thriller for South West girls

Chrissie Slot's dramatic five-game victory against Olivia Churchill sealed an outstanding win for the South West as they took the girls' title home.

It all came down to the final match between Slot and Churchill after the South West and the Midlands had traded three wins apiece in an absorbing finale to the School Games.

At the conclusion of the doubles the score was 2-2 and a big match between Vicky Smith and Emily Bates loomed. Smith made the better start, going 2-0 ahead, but Bates fought back to level after 11-9 and 11-7 games. In the decider, the imperious Bates held her nerve once more to win it 11-9 and complete another victory for her, in what was, an outstanding tournament for the youngster.

However, the 3-2 lead that Midlands enjoyed didn't last long as Maria Tsaptsinos beat Isobel Ashley to take the final into a decisive last match.

It was a contest you could tell neither Slot or Churchill wanted the pressure of being part of but they had to bear the burden of their region's expectations on their shoulders.

Churchill was the quickest out of the blocks – taking the first game 11-4 before Slot retaliated with an 11-5 game of her own. The pair traded blows once more in the third and fourth games when Churchill won 12-10 and then Slot won 11-9 to take the competition into a final game.

For all the drama that had preceded it, the last game was dominated by Slot in a professional manner. Racing into an 8-1 lead from which she would never look back on, she won the match, and the championship, with an 11-5 game.

The South West had only made the final thanks to the 4-2 semi-final win they had recorded over the South East, which included a fine double win for Tsaptsinos. The Midlands had beaten the reigning champions, Wales, in their semi-final 4-2 with Emily Bates' 3-2 (9-11, 14-12, 9-11, 11-6, 11-8) win over Charlotte Carey the pick of the results.

Third place was taken by the South East, who beat Wales 4-2, after a fine sixth end victory for Lucy Zhu against Emily Roberts 3-2 (6-11, 11-9, 9-11, 12-10, 12-10).



Craig Allen receives advice from his coach during another win

### **Midlands win seal mixed disability and championship titles**

The Midlands victory over the South West team in the final match of the round-robin event ensured that they won both the mixed disability event, and the overall team championship.

Going into the match both Midlands and South West had won all their previous six matches so it truly was a title-decider.

The first match in the standing division class was between Craig Allen and Billy Shilton, which Allen managed to superbly win 3-0 (11-5, 11-8, 11-5). When his teammate Archie Taylor followed that up with an 3-0 (11-2, 11-3, 11-5) win against Jason Reynolds, the title was already going to the Midlands.

But, like the girls and boys winners, they were professional in finishing the job and, in a third straight games victory, Daniel Bullen beat Lucie Bouron in the wheelchair match 3-0 (11-8, 11-5, 11-7).

For full details of all the results visit the School Games website. More photos will appear later on the ETTA Facebook and Flickr sites.

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