

# Adeleke wins HEATT English Open

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Kazeem Adeleke wins HEATT English Open title

The Hardbat English Association of Table Tennis (HEATT) held their biggest tournament yet over the weekend of Saturday/Sunday 28/29 April 2012 at the BATTs Club in Harlow – their 2012 English Open event. It attracted a massive entry of 80 players with a very strong contingent of players from Netherlands and Hungary.

To accommodate everyone and to ensure that all players were involved throughout the day the initial stages were split into eight groups of 10 players. The winners and runners-up progressed into the main competition and the third and fourth placers went into the Band two knock-out event.

The final was contested between British League team-mates Kazeem Adeleke and Sule Olaleye (from the Fusion Club) and it was Kazeem – the top-ranked player on the HEATT Ranking List who came through to capture the title in three ends.

The Group matches started at 09.00 hours on the Sunday morning and they were played over the best of three games up to 11 points with the knock-out stages reverting to the best of three games up to 21 points format.

Group one was probably the most hotly contested of all and it was Billy Pegg (Shropshire) who came out on top. He was on unstoppable form and he powered his way past Marty Hendriksen (Netherlands) the 2010 World WUTTO Hardbat Champion 11-8, 11-4 as well as Kazeem Adeleke (Nigeria) 11-5, 11-9. The hard-hitting Adeleke finished second and he also saw off the challenge of Hendriksen surprisingly comfortably 11-5, 11-5.

Group Four was another one that didn't go to plan. The favourite Karl Bushell (Oxfordshire) could only finish third behind Lars Adema (Netherlands) and Ashley Stokes (Middlesex). Bushell paid a heavy price for losing to fifth placed Lukasz Janisiewicz (Essex). Janisiewicz also played very well to beat Lars Adema 14-12, 11-7 but a 14-16, 7-11 loss to Keith Baker (Shropshire) meant he eventually finished in fifth place.

Former England no. 2 Senior Graham Sandley (Middlesex) stood out in group five. A regular Hard-Bat player when he was in his "pomp" he won his nine games here which included a 11-8, 9-11, 11-5 win over second-placed Paul Worrallo (Shropshire).

Essex Junior James Denyer finished an outstanding fourth ahead of such experienced performers as Tom Hughes (Nottinghamshire) and Dave Langham (Hertfordshire).

Group six gave a glimmer of what would happen later in the day. B-BATT's British League Premier Division Super-star Filip Szymanski (Poland) won all nine of his matches two straight inflicting a 11-8, 11-6 defeat on second-placed Reg Kraaijenbrink (Netherlands) and he also beat third-placed Joe Kennedy (Kent) 11-8, 11-5. Szymanski (the Polish no. 8) – the most orthodox and free-flowing of attackers with a sponge bat had reinvented himself here.

He had become an out-and-out defender in the mode of the two great Korean choppers – Joo Se Hyuk and Kim Kyung-Ah. His footwork was superb. It was quite clear early on that he would be in the shake-up for honours later in the day.

It had also been obvious that Billy Pegg was on good form – a good player with a sponge bat he is even better with a Hard-Bat. He saw off Dave Harvey (Gloucestershire) 21-12, 20-22, 21-18 in a tense first round encounter in the Band One Competition. In the quarter-final he excelled again, downing the challenge of Graham Sandley 21-18, 21-10 – a superb win considering he had lost to Sandley twice in Saturday's team event.

Could Billy Pegg make it through to the final? Unfortunately not.

As hard as Pegg tried Sule Olaleye (Nigeria), the 1992 and 1996

Olympian had all the answers and he ran out a 21-15, 21-13 winner. Sule had given an indication in the preceding round that Pegg would have to produce an extraordinary performance to beat him.

Sule beat Hungarian no. 11 Viktor Vajda 21-15, 21-5. You have to feel sorry for Vajda here as every point in the 21-5 defeat was well contested with the 'Showman' Vajda chopping the ball back from all positions of the court for an incredibly scant reward. I doubt if you will see a longer game end in a 21-5 scoreline. On another day it may well have been closer.

Ashley Stokes looked on good form as he beat Paul Worrallo 21-14, 21-15 but he met his match in the quarter-final against Kazeem Adeleke (Nigeria) with Kazeem powering to a 21-9, 21-13 victory.

Filip Szymanski was the fourth player to battle through to the semi-final. He beat Fred Dove (Essex) 21-12, 21-15 and he displayed great patience as well as superb defensive prowess as he beat Gergely Urban (Hertfordshire) 21-14, 21-17.

The second semi-final between Kazeem Adeleke and Filip Szymanski turned out to be the best match of the day. Szymanski set his stall out early on – he was determined to chop his way to victory and in the early stages it looked as if he might be successful.

From 13-14 in the first game Szymanski pulled clear to win 21-14 and the Polish player made a good start in the second game as well.

However, it was Kazeem who managed to find another gear as the game progressed. He really put it together to win 14-21, 21-17, 21-12 – the most compelling game of the day.

The final wasn't as exciting – it was evenly contested but it seemed a little tactical at times and lacking in the intensity of some of the earlier games. It can't be argued that it lacked the spectacle of Kazeem's marvellous game against Szymanski.

It was Adeleke who retained his 100% record in Hard-Bat events – (he is the HEATT Association's top-ranked player) and he beat his Fusion British League team-mate Sule Olaleye in three ends 16-21, 21-19, 21-18 to claim the impressive £400 first prize.

Filip Szymanski finished in third place. He produced another defensive master-class to beat Billy Pegg 21-16, 21-17.

Marty Hendriksen won the Band Two title. He saw off Harry Kruizenga

(Netherlands) 21-19, 21-17, and then Keith Baker (21-11, 21-8) and in the semi-final he beat Derek Balding (Hertfordshire) 21-6, 21-15.

In the Final Hendriksen defeated yet another impressive Dutch player – Ian de Graaf 23-25, 21-16, 21-13 who had beaten Joe Kennedy 23-21, 21-17. Joe Kennedy and Derek Balding sportingly agreed to swap opponents in their semi-finals after a request from the Dutch players. In this country we are brought up to believe that a draw in a tournament should not be meddled with – so full marks to Joe and Derek for agreeing to a change in opponents.

The action on the Saturday had seen the introduction of a team event for the first time in a HEATT tournament. And it was England B who won the event, a massive upset after England B had lost 8-0 to England A in the initial stages.

In that first meeting – England A – Paul Worrallo, Trevor Kerry, Joe Kennedy and Graham Sandley had carried all before them. Sandley was also in sparkling form as England A hammered England C 8-0. On this occasion Sandley defeated Billy Pegg (to whom he lost on the Sunday) 21-10, 21-13. Sandley's good form continued in his side's win over Hungary A. He beat both Viktor Vajda 21-9, 20-22, 21-9 and most impressively Gergely Urban 21-11, 21-12.

England B's 5-2 win over England A in the final – saw Graham Sandley retain his 100 % record as he beat both

Fred Dove (2-0) and Billy Pegg (2-1) but good wins elsewhere tipped the scales in favour of England B.

Pegg had in fact replaced Tony West (Essex) who had to leave early. Chris Knight's 2-0 victory over Joe Kennedy stood out whilst Ashley Stokes made his mark with a 2-1 win over Paul Worrallo and a 2-1 victory against Joe Kennedy.

Fred Dove played his part defeating Paul Worrallo 2-0 and Billy Pegg beat Trevor Kerry (Nottinghamshire) 2-0. A very good all-round team performance from England B.

By Steve Kerns

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