

Gavin and Egle victorious at GLC

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RUMGAY – THE 2012 GREATER LONDON CHAMPION

A new top-class venue, an absolutely massive entry of 185 players, victories for two very well established London based players – Scottish number one Gavin Rumgay in the Men's Singles and England number five lady Egle Adomelyte in the Ladies Singles and three titles for 13-year-old London Academy prospect Hiba Feredj. These were the main highlights of the 2012 Greater London Championships played over the weekend of 26/27 May 2012 at the Morpeth School, Bethnal Green.

It has to be said – the Men's Singles lacked the real depth in quality of recent years and, as a result, many of the leading junior players who were contesting the later stages of the Men's Banded Singles were still involved in the Men's Singles as it reached it's final stages on Saturday night.

There were quite a few upsets – none more so than when England number 93 junior Amagan Huseyin ended the hopes of England number 117 senior – the vastly experienced John Payne 3-2 and then recorded another good win over Leo Veinsrider (3-1) before somewhat inevitably falling 3-0 (11-4, 11-4, 11-5) to the top seed Gavin Rumgay.

England number 48 junior Tyla Anderson also battled his way through to the quarter-final defeating Mikel Miller 3-0 (11-9, 11-6, 11-6). Anderson fell to Zoltan Koszo 3-0 (11-5, 11-8, 11-4) who in turn lost to Gavin Rumgay 3-0 (11-6, 11-9, 11-7) in the semi-final.

In the bottom half of the draw England number 22 Emran Hussain, the second seed, fought his way through to the final. He looked shaky in the second round when he dropped a game against Mohammed Owadally before pulling through 3-1 (11-2, 6-11, 11-5, 11-7). But, he then hit the ground running against Zoltan Hosszu who he brushed aside 3-0 (11-6, 11-7, 11-6) and against surprise semi-finalist Marcus Giles who he beat 3-0 (11-6, 11-7, 11-7).

Zoltan Hosszu had ended the hopes of another fancied player – Soren Wegner 3-2 (12-10, 11-6, 9-11, 8-11, 11-7) a round earlier. Marcus Giles had done well to beat Joseph Langham-Ferreira in five fiercely fought ends and then Zayd Mauthoor (3-1) whilst Langham-Ferreira had also made his mark by beating Tom Hughes (3-2).

The final was a good one (they always are when the all-action Rumgay is involved) and the first two ends were very evenly contested. However, Rumgay gradually began to impose his authority and he pulled clear in the fourth end to win 3-1 (16-14, 9-11, 11-8, 11-5).



Egle Adomelyte, who to her credit always enters this Championship, was a huge favourite for the Ladies Singles. Realistically she was always going to win and her three young opponents – Hiba Feredj, Eda Aydin and Samantha Lai will have gained a great deal of experience playing someone of her class. It was England number one under 13 Hiba Feredj (who has only been playing seriously for just over a year) who took the main plaudits. She scored a fine 3-2 (5-11, 11-9, 11-9, 9-11, 11-6) victory over England number 30 veteran lady Carmen Vajdi to finish second.

England number 19 junior Reece Placid won the Junior Boys Singles title. He came through tricky encounters against Musa Sharif Ali 3-1 (11-8, 11-6, 5-11, 13-11) in the second round, against England number 44 Sam Cowan 3-1 (11-7, 9-11, 17-15, 11-5) in the quarter-final, and against Joseph Langham-Ferreira 3-0 (11-8, 11-4, 11-5) in the semi-final.

England number 38 Junior Langham Ferreira had to pull out all the stops to get the better of England number 73

junior Mikel Miller 3-2 (4-11, 9-11, 13-11, 11-5, 15-13) a round earlier. The very promising England number 9 cadet Gabriel Achampong dominated the other half of the draw. He beat the second seed Adam Reed in the semi-final after running away with the fourth end to win 3-1 (11-7, 9-11, 11-9, 11-1). The final was close but Reece Placid always looked the more likely winner and he pulled through to win 3-0 (11-8, 11-9, 14-12).

The number of entrants in the Junior Girls Singles – a mere four was disappointing. However, Hiba Feredj took it all in her stride as she beat Eda Aydin in five ends and Samantha Lai (3-0) to take the title. Eda defeated Samantha 3-0 to finish second.

Joseph Langham-Ferreira came through a large field to win the Men's Banded Singles. There was a big shock when little-known combination-bat exponent Leslie Samuels (a stalwart of the London Bank's League) defeated England number 233 Zayd Mauthoor in five ends. Samuels also extended Langham-Ferreira to a fourth game.

Langham-Ferreira had made his presence felt by defeating Gabriel Achampong 3-2 (6-11, 11-9, 7-11, 11-8, 11-6) in the most compelling game of this event. Micah Salmon did well to battle through to the final with wins over Jake Mitchell 3-0 (11-6, 11-4, 11-4), a walkover against Reece Placid, Osman Bawa 3-0 (11-9, 11-9, 11-9) and Tyla Anderson 3-0 (11-7, 11-8, 13-11). But, try as hard as he did, England number 111 junior Micah Salmon was no match for Joseph Langham-Ferreira in the final and Joseph won 3-0 (11-7, 11-6, 11-7).

Hungarian pairing – Zoltan Hosszu and Zoltan Koszo are the 2012 Open Doubles Champions. Unseeded, and in Koszo's case pretty unknown, (no offence) they came through a thrilling semi-final encounter to beat John Payne/Soren Wegner 3-2 (11-5, 8-11, 9-11, 14-12, 12-10).

Galvanised by the close nature of this victory they barely put a foot wrong in the final where they beat the top seeds Gavin Rumgay/Paul Beck 3-0 (11-5, 16-14, 11-8). Gavin and Paul had to fight back from 2-1 down to get the better of Emran Hussain/Tom Hughes 3-2 (7-11, 11-3, 8-11, 13-11, 11-7) in their penultimate game.

Sam Cowan/Amagan Huseyin did very well to capture the Under 18 Boys Doubles Crown. They required five games to get the better of Tyla Anderson/Adam Reed in the semi-final and they looked dead and buried in the final against Reece Placid/Joseph Langham-Ferreira when they trailed 9-5 in the fifth end. Amazingly however, they turned it round to take the title 3-2 (9-11, 5-11, 11-6, 11-5, 11-9).

Top seed John Payne made no mistake in the Veterans Singles. He won the title from a modest field of eight competitors, taking the title without dropping a game. His final opponent Steve Kerns was brushed aside 3-0 (11-7, 11-9, 11-5).

Sunday's play saw huge entries contest the younger junior events. Free-flowing "livewire" Liam Grant won the Under 13 Boys Singles crown from a field of 56 players but he had to pull out all the stops to do so.

He needed five games to get the better of top seed Omar Khassal 3-2 (11-7, 8-11, 8-11, 11-8, 11-8) in the final having earlier been extended by England number 67 Kester Pardoe 3-1 (11-9, 12-10, 8-11, 11-2) and by England number 16 James Smith 3-0 (11-9, 11-8, 11-9).

Omar Khassal had been taken to five ends by England number 35 Jay Ghazi Timms (who had previously made a monumental jump up the national rankings from number 88) but Khassal eventually edged home 3-2 (11-5, 9-11, 11-7, 9-11, 11-5) in this one. He then had to work hard to see off England number 21 Jack Merton in his semi-final 3-0 (11-8, 11-8, 11-9).



There was more success for England number one under 13 Girl Hiba Feredj in the Under 13 Girls Singles. With three of the top four national ranked girls in the field this event certainly did have strength in depth. Hiba beat Jestina George 3-0 (11-9, 11-3, 11-8) in the semi-final and England number 3 under 13 Girl Zahna Hall 3-0 (11-9, 11-5, 11-4) in the final.

Hiba had been pushed in her group to get the better of Denise Payet before she won 3-1 (11-6, 11-8, 12-14, 11-9) whilst Denise had to work very hard to see off England number 21 Tiana Dennison 3-1 (8-11, 16-14, 11-9, 11-9). Jestina George secured second place in her group by beating Talia Banin-Reid 3-2 (13-11, 11-2, 11-13, 12-14, 11-7).

Denise Payet, already ranked number four nationally at Under 13 Girls level came into her own in the Under 11 Girls Singles. She recorded successive 3-0 victories to take the title ahead of Talia Banin-Reid, Federica Bonato and Abbie Morris. Talia secured second place by beating Federica 3-1 (11-13, 15-13, 12-10, 11-5).

Top seed James Smith, like Under 11 Girls Champion Denise Payet, is already well established nationally as an Under 13 player. James is the 2012 Under 11 Boys Singles Champion. He defeated Kai Ghazi Timms 3-0 (11-9, 11-7, 11-2) and Kidi Martin-Paulo 3-1 (12-14, 11-4, 11-5, 11-4) to take the title.

Gabriel Achampong and Player of the Tournament Hiba Feredj had more success in the Under 15 Open Doubles. The scratch pairing took the title without dropping a game, beating Hassan Jiwajee/Rinor Ramadini 3-0 (11-8, 11-4, 11-8) then Shaquille Webb-Dixon/Olamide Wuraola 3-0 (12-10, 11-4, 11-7) and finally Charlie Austen/Zachary Mandel 3-0 (11-7, 11-4, 11-8) in the final.

With wins in the Junior Girls Singles, under 13 Girls Singles and Under 15 Open Doubles, 13 year-old Hiba Feredj was an obvious favourite in the Under 15 Girls Singles.

However, she met her match in the semi-final against another fine prospect – England number 3 Under 13 Zahna Hall. In an excellent game (played in good spirit by both girls) Hiba had her nose in front as she took a 2-1 lead and she also led 9-8 in the fourth end. However, on this occasion Zahna held her game together superbly. She pinched the fourth end 11-9 and ran away with the decider 11-4. When asked if she could play the final straight away Zahna showed no hesitation. She was on top form and scored an impressive 3-0 (11-5, 11-6, 11-7) win over Viona Fejullahu to take the title. Viona had booked her final appearance by beating Sanaa Jaber (3-0) and Tiana Dennison (3-0).

The last event of the weekend featured the biggest entry. A massive 96 players contested the Under 15 Boys Singles. Marcus Giles, the top seed who is ranked 21 in England at junior level dominated the top half of the draw beating Jay Ghazi Timms 3-0 (11-7, 11-7, 11-4), Senyo Owusu 3-1 (11-2, 11-5, 9-11, 13-11) and Karim Khassal 3-1 (11-6, 9-11, 11-5, 11-8).

The biggest upset took place in the bottom half of the draw, with England number 28 cadet Liam Grant utilising his silky smooth free-flowing forehand to great effect, beating second seed Gabriel Achampong – the England number nine cadet 3-2 (6-11, 12-10, 7-11, 11-9, 11-8). Grant was on a high and he carried this form into his next game. He beat England number 48 cadet Olamide Wuraola 3-0 (11-5, 11-6, 11-5) in his semi-final.

Could the obviously in form Grant topple the well established Giles? The answer turned out to be 'no'. Giles won the first end, lost the second narrowly and withstood a barrage of shots from Liam in the third and fourth games to win 3-1 (11-7, 9-11, 11-9, 14-12). An excellent final amidst a very good day's table tennis.

Steve Kerns

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