

King's Championships and Torch dream fulfilled

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Yolanda King's Olympic Torch story cloud finally ended with a silver lining as she completed her relay in Bromley after playing for England at the European Youth Championships.

After winning 3 out of the 4 singles she played in the junior (under 18) girls' team event, 17 year old Weald Club, Cranbrook member King did quite well in the knockout events in Schwechat, Austria, last week.

She felt that had she been fielded in one of England's first two matches, she would not have suffered her only team event loss the previous week in the match against Finland. "If I had played earlier, I wouldn't have been so nervous in the Finland match, and I was also put off by the umpire twice deducting points for foul serving, which I think was incorrect. I also learnt that I had to spin more. However, I got better the more I played."

King then raced home to Hastings on Sunday evening where she had just 4 hours sleep before going to Bromley for just before 10am to perform her leg of the Olympic Torch Relay. This had originally been planned for Hastings on 18th July, but the Relay organisers ultimately agreed to relocate Yolanda to Bromley, so that she would not miss it owing to her European Youth Championships duty for England.

A delighted Yolanda said, "It was absolutely amazing! I was really nervous until I started running. The crowds were huge, the weather perfect. I will treasure the experience forever".

Weald club-mate Lewis Gray, 18, from Benenden had his best form at the beginning of the championships, but experienced no success at the end.

He had beaten European number 12 Tamas Lakatos in the team event but fell to successive defeats as the tournament wore on.

Lewis's father Diccon considered that, "Lew always fought hard, but was too predictable and too loose in his touch play and didn't block well. Even so he got close and had several deuce games and several leads, but he too often gave away points and squandered leads."

After winning just 1 singles in the cadet (under 15) boys' team event, Dan Lawrence from Tonbridge had a good knockout singles win, easily defeating Sanan Aliyev (Azerbaijan) before being thumped 11-5, 11-3, 11-7, 11-3 by top French player Romain Ruiz. Playing with England colleague Sam Mabey (Northamptonshire) Dan reached the last 32 of the cadet doubles, where after a good match they were ultimately disappointed to go out 13-11, 11-9, 6-11, 11-13, 10-12 to Slovan duo Dark Jorgic and Tom Sfiligoj, having held 1 match point in the 4th game and 2 match points in the 5th.

Helsham Weeasinghe, also from Tonbridge, reached the last 32 of the cadet boys' singles, where he was worn down by Russian chop defender Maxim Chaplygin, 6-11, 6-11, 6-11, 7-11. However, partnered by Tomas Polansky (Czech Republic) he had a great cadet boys' doubles run to the quarter-finals, where they were narrowly beaten 12-10, 4-11, 8-11, 11-13 by Romain Ruiz and Joe Seyfried of France. With Tin Tin Ho (England, Middlesex), Helshan also got to the last 32 of the cadet mixed doubles, where they lost in 5 games to a Swedish pair.

By Ken Muhr

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